

CINDERS



MAY 2022

IN THIS ISSUE:

- P1—OUTGOING/INCOMING PREZ MESSAGES
- P2—CHAPTER INFORMATION
- P3-5-PHILADELPHIA EXPRESS
- P-6-FROM THE STORAGE UNIT
- P7- 8- AAPRCO SUGARLAND EXPRESS

Vol. 83 NO. 5
 OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER of the
 PHILADELPHIA CHAPTER OF THE NRHS
 PO BOX 7302
 PHILADELPHIA PA 19101-7302

OUTGOING PRESIDENT’S MESSAGE

Kevin Feeney

It has been my privilege to serve as Chapter President for the last year. I stepped into the role reluctantly [because no one else was interested in the position] but now am glad that I did. I was able to largely empty our Willow Grove storage unit that was literally stuffed full and was able to start digitizing the prior issues of *CINDERS* [see page 6]. My only regret is that we were not able to convert *CINDERS* to electronic delivery as is done by most railroad historical organizations these days. This would allow for an expanded issue with color photos and would save our Chapter over \$6000 per year.



Thru the efforts of Harry Garforth and Eric Dervinis, the Chapter continued to function during the COVID crisis by offering ZOOM and later hybrid ZOOM/in-person monthly presentations on various RR topics. One benefit from these presentations was that we were able to engage members that no longer live in the Philly area and are unable to attend our meetings in-person.

I have been the editor of *CINDERS* since September 2020 and will continue in this role thru the Summer issue. **We need someone to take over starting with the September issue.** I am certainly willing to assist with the transition by making a .docx version of the newsletter available to the new editor and helping in other ways, such as being a proof reader. However, in looking at other chapter newsletters, I see that many are no longer using a two-column format. I would expect to continue to write up my travel trips and other features, which folks seem to enjoy reading.

I will be travel to California on May 13th and will attend the NRHS Board of Director’s meeting there on Monday May 16th. I am a candidate for the revised nine-member BOD that will take over in September and would welcome your vote in the upcoming election. Thanks!

INCOMING PRESIDENT’S MESSAGE

Larry Eastwood

Philadelphia Chapter held its “annual” election of Chapter officers at the April 21st meeting. The Chapter did not hold elections for either the ‘21-‘22 or ‘20-‘21 years, with some positions appointed by then-President Larry Eastwood.

Elected were President Larry Eastwood, returning to the position he had held for many years. Chapter President Kevin Feeney did not wish to run for another term. New to Chapter leadership is Senior Vice President Stephen Ferrell, who currently serves as Co-Editor of the Lancaster Chapter’s *Dispatch* and is the outgoing Treasurer of the Friends of the RR Museum of PA. Ferrell joined Philadelphia Chapter during 2021. Marie Eastwood was re-elected Chapter Secretary but is relinquishing her duties as Chapter Treasurer. New to this position is Robert Young, of Harleysville, PA. Young has been a Chapter member since 1975. Re-elected to the position of National Representative is William Welk, of South Philadelphia, PA.

I would certainly be remiss if I did not acknowledge a tremendous amount of energy over the “COVID-19” period by outgoing President Kevin Feeney, who devoted countless hours to the Chapter’s storage unit in Willow Grove, selling off much excess donated railroadiana. He and a cadre of volunteers devoted much energy in this area. Kevin will remain as Editor of *Cinders* for the June, July and Summer issues, but the Chapter will need a new Editor beginning with the September 2022 issue. I look forward to stabilizing our Chapter leadership going forward in the 2022-2023 year.

Our next meeting will be on Thursday May 12st at 7PM in the now proven **hybrid** format. We will meet in the community room at the **Elkins Park SEPTA Station**, and the presentation will also be available by ZOOM.

<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/85220493906?pwd=LzdmL3hsYmk1RisxYmVMZ1RBY1N4Zz09>

Meeting ID: 852 2049 3906; Passcode: 307192

The meeting will feature a remote presentation by Chapter member Dale Woodland on the surviving RDG T1s. Hopefully, it will include recent shots of RBMN 2102.

At the April 21st general membership meeting, two changes were approved to our By-Laws:

1. In recognition of changes made at the national level, our **National Director** position was retitled as **National Representative** [*Article VII -Section 5*]
2. Wording was added to *Article VIII Election of Officers* specifying when the term of office begins.

**NATIONAL RAILWAY HISTORICAL SOCIETY
PHILADELPHIA CHAPTER, INC.**

Post Office Box 7302, Philadelphia, PA 19101-7302
 Founded 1936, incorporated 1973 as a 501c3 non-profit corporation

CHAPTER WEBSITE:

For current Chapter information, as well as vintage views of Chapter trips and activities, visit:

www.nrhsphiladelphia.org

Our website can support photos from member fan trips, etc. It can link to member’s YouTube videos and news articles, that are not included in *Cinders*! Please send content to our webmaster at:

webmaster@nrhsphiladelphia.org

CHAPTER OFFICERS (*Elected*)

President	<i>Larry Eastwood</i>	215.947.5769
Senior VP	<i>Steve Ferrell</i>	610.812.1020
Secretary	<i>Marie K. Eastwood</i>	215.947.5769
Treasurer	<i>Robert Young</i>	215.808.5136
National Rep	<i>Bill Welk</i>	215.681.1957

COMMITTEE CHAIRS (*Appointed*)

Editor	Kevin Feeney	203.246.1675
Editor Emeritus	R. L. Eastwood, Jr.	215.947.5769
Equipment Chair.	David R. McGuire	856.241.8046
Membership Chair	Sheila A. Dorr	610.642.2830
Program Director	Harry Garforth	215.266.3180
Webmaster	Daniel Knouse	814.631.9436
ZOOMmaster	Eric Dervinis	610.613.2828

ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP DUES

Effective September 1, 2021, dues are \$20 per person, which covers Philadelphia Chapter thru Dec. 31, 2022. (NRHS National membership dues for 2022 are \$50, billed directly by NRHS.) NRHS chapters bill members separately for Chapter dues.

Anyone interested in becoming a member of Philadelphia Chapter, NRHS should forward remittance in the amount of \$20.00, payable to:

Philadelphia Chapter, NRHS
 Post Office Box 7302
 Philadelphia, PA 19101-7302.

Please be sure to include name, complete mailing address, telephone number and E-mail address.

ADDRESS CHANGES:

Send to Editor Emeritus at
 Post Office Box 353
 Huntingdon Valley, PA 19006-0353.
 (Include your CURRENT TELEPHONE NUMBER and E-MAIL ADDRESS so our records are complete.)

Also contact the Editor Emeritus if your copy does not arrive or arrives in a damaged condition.

CINDERS is published 11 times a year by Philadelphia Chapter, NRHS, Inc.

Correspondence regarding *Cinders* or exchange newsletters should be directed to the Editor by email “ic4277eb@yahoo.com” or mailed to:

Kevin Feeney, Editor
 1447 Wheatsheaf Lane
 Abington, PA 19001-2619

UPCOMING EVENTS

Model RR Open House, Saturday- 05/14/2022, NOON - 3PM, GATSME [Rockledge Model RR Museum] 323 Montgomery Ave, Rockledge, PA 19046

Flash Train Meet, Saturday 5/21/2022, 8AM–2PM
 Renninger's Antique & Farmers' Market., 740 Noble St, Kutztown, PA 19530 Kutztown PA.

Dutch Train Meet, Sunday 6/5/2022, 10AM–4PM
 Hamburg Field House, Pine Street, Hamburg PA

FUTURE CHPT MEETING DATES

June 16th, Frank Tatnall -KY Derby Trains, live presentation only NO ZOOM

August 18th Summer Get-Together? with revised date



FRANK G. TATNALL, JR.

After the April 12 mass shooting in a Brooklyn (NY) subway station, SEPTA immediately sought to reassure its riders that it was doing everything possible to keep them safe.

An extensive system of 28,000 closed-circuit security cameras is deployed throughout the system, and every effort is being made to keep all of them in operation. (It was reported that some of the cameras in the Brooklyn station where the shooting occurred were not in service.) About 2,000 of SEPTA's cameras provide live feeds from Broad Street and Market-Frankford Line stations as well as from other stations in Center City, which are monitored around the clock. Cameras also are in service on its bus and rail vehicles, including Regional Rail cars. These are not live but images can be quickly sent back to headquarters. In addition, SEPTA's own police force stepped up its presence with extra patrols, and officers from other agencies also provided extra vigilance at transit stations. Buses have from eight to 12 cameras on board and each rail car has ten to 12 cameras.

But then came an article in the April 26 edition of the *Inquirer* with the headline "Rising crime adds to SEPTA problems." An alarming statistic was cited: "Robberies and aggravated assaults jumped more than 80% on the Philadelphia region's transit system from 2020 to 2021, even if it was carrying fewer than half the number of passengers who rode buses, trains, and trolleys in the last pre-COVID year." (Across the city violent crime overall was down 1% from 2019 although gun violence produced a record number of homicides.) Transit Police Chief Thomas Nestel III said "We want to make sure people feel safe on SEPTA, and we're trying to address their concerns." He was referring not only to the incidents of violent crime but to the increasing presence of homeless people and drug users in stations and on trains, which may discourage some potential riders from returning to SEPTA.

More serious crimes are reported on the Market-Frankford Line than anywhere else on the system. In response to the need for better security the SEPTA board has approved \$1.6 million to hire unarmed outreach personnel from three security agencies to ride the Broad Street and Market-Frankford trains and to patrol stations. A group of hires is currently going through training and eventually there will be 88 of these specialists to supplement SEPTA's armed police force. But it's uncertain how these

unarmed patrol people will be able to deal with the increasing violence on the system, which drew a lot of media attention in late April—particularly to attacks on the subway trains and in stations. One common response would be to increase the size of the SEPTA police force and raise pay levels to attract new officers.

SEPTA last month unveiled both its operating and capital budgets for Fiscal Year 2023, which begins this July 1. The \$1.6-billion operating plan reflects a 1.6% rise over the present budget, a result of inflation-induced cost increases for everything from diesel fuel to electric power to materials used for maintenance of facilities and the fleet of buses and rail cars. There will be no fare increases, thanks to some \$400 million in extra funding from the Federal government.

SEPTA is one of the five original signers of the Equity in Infrastructure Project (EIP), which is designed to insure that smaller, historically underutilized businesses receive contracts from public agencies. This especially applies to agencies that receive funding from the new Federal Infrastructure Act. SEPTA was one of only two transit agencies that signed the pledge, the other being the Chicago Transit Authority.

SEPTA's proposed capital budget of \$1.1 billion for FY 2023 is the largest in its history, enhanced by proceeds from the recently passed Infrastructure Act in Washington. It is the first such budget to break the billion-dollar mark. The 12-year capital program of \$11.4 billion also is a record high for SEPTA and is expected to advance such projects as the King of Prussia rail extension, a fleet of new trolleys, new cars and equipment for the Market-Frankford Line and improved handicapped accessibility at many stations. Public hearings on both the operating and capital budgets will be held this month.

Thanks to a Federal court order issued on Monday, April 18, SEPTA riders could legally remove their masks. While the CDC a few days earlier had extended the mask mandate for airline, railroad and transit passengers, the action by a Florida judge voided the CDC mandate nationwide. The government later filed an appeal of the order, but a reversal seemed unlikely. Ironically, on the same day as the judge issued her order, the City of Philadelphia reimposed its indoor mask mandate until suddenly cancelling it just three days later. So, for a few days the silly situation existed where passengers could ride maskless aboard a plane, train or bus, but as soon as they set foot in the city they were obliged to again don their masks! The news media of course lost no time in making light of this odd spectacle.

A SEPTA police officer was shot and seriously wounded last month while assisting Philadelphia police in a 90-minute standoff with a shooter in an apartment in Frankford. The man had shot two women waiting for a bus at Arrott & Griscom Streets near the Arrott Transportation Center, which brought police to the scene. In the exchange, the shooter was killed by

police gunfire. The SEPTA officer, a three-year veteran of the force, was treated at Temple University Hospital and was said to be on the road to recovery.

Readers of *Time Magazine* must have been startled when they opened the April 11-18 issue, which featured a lengthy piece on “100 Most Influential Companies,” only to find a full-page color ad for SEPTA! With a drawing of a SEPTA rail car at the top of the page, the large lettering beneath reads “The Benefits of Public Transportation Are Larger Than They Appear.” A paragraph below points out the favorable environmental impact of its service. “Did you know that SEPTA operates a fully-electrified multi-modal rail system and has one of the largest ‘green’ bus fleets in the nation –and SEPTA commuters have 1/3 the carbon footprint of those who travel by car?”

Board members of major U.S. transit systems often do not accurately reflect the race, gender, and location of their riders, according to a study reported in the April 27 *Inquirer*. In the case of SEPTA’s board, membership by law is largely drawn from the five counties in the agency’s service area—two members from each county, plus other members named by the Governor and legislative leaders. For instance, 38% of residents in the SEPTA area live in Philadelphia but the city’s two members make up only 13% of board membership. Five of the 15-member board are people of color, while only 13% of the members are women.

The timeframe is becoming a little clearer for opening the extension of the Media-Elwyn line to the new Middletown station at Wawa (see March *Cinders*). It now appears that systems testing and crew training for service to Middletown will begin in early summer, with actual service set to be launched sometime in August, possibly after completion of the annual Southwest Connection Improvement Project in the city.

Member Larry DeYoung reports that he saw two SEPTA ACS-64 locomotives passing through Devon westbound on Tuesday, April 26th, hauling four deactivated AEM-7 units. As noted here last month, it’s believed that SEPTA has sold all seven of its retired AEM-7s for scrap, as well as its lone ALP-44.

New timetables were issued effective April 24 for six Regional Rail lines—Airport, Chestnut Hill East and West, Trenton, Warminster/Glenside, and West Trenton. The changes include two additional roundtrips between center city and Glenside, improved weekend service on the Warminster Line with hourly through service to and from the Airport, and adjusted weekend arrival and departure times at Trenton to better connect with NJ TRANSIT service. A revised timetable for Paoli-Thorndale is likely to appear on August 21.

Commissioners in Montgomery, Chester and Berks Counties voted last month to create a Schuylkill River Passenger Rail Authority to push for the restoration of rail passenger service between Philadelphia and Reading (see March *Cinders*). The counties are putting up funds to advance the project with various

studies and partnerships. It would be necessary to reach agreements with the present owner of the railroad, NORFOLK SOUTHERN, and with State and Federal agencies. The last passenger service to Reading was suspended by SEPTA in 1981.

AMTRAK has added three more weekday trains in each direction to its Philadelphia to Harrisburg Keystone Service, raising the daily total from nine roundtrips to 12 roundtrips, effective April 25. This brings the *Keystone* schedules back to their pre-pandemic levels. More direct service between Harrisburg and New York also is now offered.



AMTRAK has unveiled the new “Phase VII” paint scheme that will adorn most of its fleet of 75 ALC-42 “Charger” diesel locomotives now being built by Siemens. Basically, the streamlined units will have a dark blue front end highlighted by



red and white colors surrounding the engineer’s cab, with a lighter blue shade on the rear half of the locomotive. A diagonal white stripe separates the dark blue front end from the lighter blue to the rear. A few of the 300-series locomotives wearing special paint schemes already are in service on western trains such as the *Empire Builder*, but #309 delivered in mid-April was the first of the Chargers to sport the new “standard” livery. This new look is the seventh exterior paint scheme adopted by Amtrak over its 51-year history, although numerous variations and “one-of-a-kind” schemes have appeared from time to time.

April 27th marked the 70th anniversary of the final closing in 1952 of the Pennsylvania Railroad’s old Broad Street Station in Center City Philadelphia. The station buildings, opened in 1881-1884, together with the elevated eyesore known as the “Chinese Wall” that carried tracks to the station, were demolished to make way for the new Penn Center office building complex. This made 30th Street the main intercity passenger station for Philadelphia, eliminating the inefficient stub-end operation at Broad Street. Suburban Station continued to handle all electrified suburban trains.

Four of AMTRAK’s seven long-distance trains that currently run only five days a week will be restored to daily operation effective May 23. Two other trains, the *Crescent*, and *City of*

New Orleans, will remain on five-day schedules while the cancellation of *Silver Meteor* service to and from Florida will continue until September 11. One of the reasons Amtrak has always cited for its service cutbacks during the pandemic has been the shortage of available crews, as well as a steep reduction in demand. But with the summer season approaching, demand for long-distance train services apparently has substantially increased (*Trains*).

AMTRAK said last month that additional modifications will be necessary on the 28 new *acela* trainsets before they can be placed in service. The modifications range from tilting adjustments and adding weight in some cars to seemingly minor changes, such as the need to relocate magnets on the seats because they might affect passengers' implanted medical devices. As a result of these changes and additional testing, introduction of the new trains will likely be delayed until sometime in 2023. The trains are engineered to operate at a top speed of 160 mph where conditions permit, such as the "racetrack" straightaway between Trenton and Monmouth Junction, NJ, and for better performance on the many curves along the Northeast Corridor.

The new trainsets are only 35 feet longer overall than the present "legacy" trains, with nine shorter articulated cars versus the six 85-foot cars that make up the current trains. The two power cars also are shorter than their present counterparts, and the new trains have only one pantograph in order to reduce the vibration of the catenary wire which sometimes affects a trailing pantograph. In the coaches (or "business class" as it's designated), all seats are fixed with no reclining feature, similar to the TGV design in Europe. There is slightly less space between seats. One first class car and one food service car are included. Total seating in the new *acelas* will be 380, compared with 304 in today's trains. Weight of the new sets is 25% less than the legacy trains which were built to earlier Federal standards, whereas the new "Tier III" standards allow crush zones to absorb impacts. In a statement, builder Alstom said that "given our 40+ years expertise in designing and manufacturing high speed trains, we do not anticipate any physical alterations."

NJ TRANSIT has pulled its buses out of the cramped Greyhound terminal at 10th & Filbert Streets in Philadelphia

NJ TRANSIT
The Way To Go.



because of "unsafe" conditions caused by physical changes to the entrance way. Five South Jersey bus routes that formerly operated into the city now originate and terminate at the Walter Rand Center in Camden. The Route 551 express service from Atlantic City to Philadelphia continues to operate into the city but now drops off passengers at 10th & Market Streets and other locations. Unfortunately, riders on the other South Jersey lines have lost their one-seat rides to and from Philadelphia.

NJT is moving ahead with its fare modernization program by introducing a fare card system, which is expected to reduce the use of cash and paper-based tickets. "This is the next step in a complete modernization of NJ Transit's fare collection system where we have already deployed new technology such as handheld mobile devices for trains crews, new onboard bus validators and upgraded ticket vending machines," said NJT Board Chair Diane Gutierrez-Scaccetti. She went on to say that "contactless" fare payment methods have proven especially popular with customers returning to the system as the State emerges from the pandemic.

We erred here last month in stating that Jim Wrinn had stepped down from his post as editor of *Trains Magazine* a few months before his death on March 30th. Actually, Jim continued to hold the title of editor until his passing. Former Editor Kevin P. Keefe has returned to the job as interim editor of the magazine. He will remain in that position until Kalmbach Media names a permanent successor to Wrinn. This information was provided by Chapter Member Rob McGonigal, who recently retired as editor of companion publication *Classic Trains*.

U.S. Transportation Secretary Pete Buttigieg was the first



witness last month at the Surface Transportation Board's hearing on the state of rail freight service across the nation. At the start of the hearing, STB Chair Martin J. Oberman made it clear that his agency wanted to find out why the service has become so "inconsistent and unreliable" and what impact that has had on shippers—as well as the public at

large. What role does this decline in rail service quality play in the supply chain issues that continue in the midst of a painful period of inflation?

The STB has been deluged with complaints about poor rail service, with Chairman Oberman laying the blame directly on railroad management. "During my time on the Board, he said, "I have raised concerns about the primacy Class I railroads have placed on lowering their operating ratios and satisfying their shareholders even at the cost of their customers. Part of that strategy has involved cutting their work force to the bare bones in order to reduce costs. Over the last six years, the Class I's collectively have reduced their work force by 29%--about 45,000 employees cut from the payrolls." This evidently was a direct shot at the Precision Scheduled Railroad model first brought to CSX by its late Chairman E. Hunter Harrison and later adopted by NORFOLK SOUTHERN and UNION PACIFIC (but not BNSF). Executives from all of those carriers were scheduled to appear at the hearing to face questioning by board members and attempt to defend their actions in addressing the service problems (*Trains*).

FROM THE STORAGE UNIT

Kevin Feeney

On April 20th, Bill Fitch, Larry Ryan and Harry Garforth joined me for a work session focusing on the *Cinders* digitization project. Most of the issues back to the 1970s have been scanned and are now posted on our website. Bill took home a large pile of older issues to be scanned. He later reported that at this point in the project, we are missing the following issues:

Anything 1964 and older

1970 Jan, Feb, Mar, Apr, May Jun, Jul, Aug, Sep

1972 Apr, Jul, Aug

1973 Jul, Aug, Sep

1975 All

1993 Sep, Oct, Nov, Dec

Members are requested to review their collections of past issues and contact Bill [bifitch981@gmail.com] if you have any of the above issues.

Member Henry Posner III contacted me asking if we had any of the following in the storage unit: [sorry nope!]

- FREIGHT TARRIFFS [he teaches a class at Carnegie Mellon on RR deregulation]
- PENN CENTRAL PHONE BOOK
- PENN CENTRAL LUGGAGE TAG

Please contact me if you have any of these items and I will put you in contact with Henry.

Net Chapter sales on eBay [under ic4277] for April totalled \$336. Among the better selling items were: an 1881 PRR timetable for lines in South Jersey for \$56, a 1936 excursion trip flyer to see the Hindenburg for \$41 and a 1903 Philadelphia & Reading train schedule for Atlantic City for \$46. Direct sales including another \$100 of bus paper items, \$120 for 12 unsorted 35mm Kodak carousel slide trays and \$50 for an assortment of train tricketts. As mentioned last month, we sold \$13 at a train and toy show in New Castle, Delaware on Saturday 4/2.

On Saturday 4/30, the Chapter had a table at the NORTHEAST PHILADELPHIA 2022 HISTORY FAIR, held at the Cannstatter Volksfest Verein on Academy Road.



Manning the table were: Harry Garforth, Larry Eastwood and myself. A few chapter members stopped by to say hi. A goodly number of folks stopped by our table and we gave out a flyer with information about our Chapter along with a copy the April issue of *Cinders* that had an article about the upcoming 100th anniversary of the Frankfort Elevated Extension. At 1PM, there was a presentation on the *Centennial History of the Frankfort Elevated* by Professor John H Hepp IV of Wilkes University. We sold \$74 of donated books, timetables, maps and postcards at the FAIR.

As mentioned last month, member Brad Phillips had contacted me about buying some RR tickets. I send him a number of scans showing what tickets we had available [00s] and he picked out an assortment. His check arrived just before I left for Florida to chase the *AAPRCO 2022 SUGARLAND LIMITED* [see page 7] so I did not have time to mail them before I left. At one of the photo runbys in Florida, I was talking with a woman riding the special train who asked me where I was from. When I told her near Philly, she said "I need to introduce you to my friend riding the train who is from there". Well, that friend turned out to be Brad Phillips! Small world and even smaller as I will deliver the tickets personally when I will be near his home in Menlo Park California in mid May.

I have managed to sell off many items over the last year raising perhaps \$5000 for the Chapter and have cleared out much of the storage unit. What primarily remains are: 00s of back issues of *Cinders* that will be recycled once the digitization project is completed, approximately 50 railroad coffee table books that have little if any resale value [if any one knows of an upcoming library sale where we could donate them please let me know] and 000s of sorted slides in file cabinets. Something must be done with the slide collection because while the storage unit is located inside the building, it does NOT provide the proper archival storage. Going forward, the Chapter should adopt a policy of what items will be accepted as donations so that we do not end up accepting magazines, books and other paper items that have no resale or historic value. The storage unit currently costs \$3720 per year and after the above actions are completed, this expense could be reduced considerably.

We also still have 00s of passenger timetables [PRR, RDG, P-RSL, PENN CENTRAL, CONRAIL AMTRAK, early SEPTA, NJT and a few vintage PTTs from CLASS I RRs], PENN CENTRAL/P-RSL/SEPTA employee timetables plus 00s of railroad, trolley & other postcards. Please contact me if you are interested in buying any of the items mentioned here or previously. I can bring items to our monthly meetings for your inspection or make other arrangements. We have a somewhat rusty crossbuck for sale.



Kevin Feeney

When I learned about this special rare mileage train earlier this year, I was ready for a chase, having NOT done one in a long time. Since my normal train travel friend, Eric Dervinis, could not go due to scheduled work at his house, I enlisted my wife as the driver. We flew from PHL to Fort Lauderdale [FLL] on Friday April 22nd, and stayed in a Holiday Inn there. To reduce costs, I used 42K AA miles for the two roundtrip airfares.

I had done extensive research beforehand and had printed out many pages of maps and relevant information to have with me on the chase. So that everyone reading this is on the same page, I should explain that AAPRCO is the American Assoc. of Priate Rail Cars Owners and they have not had a special train in several years. The various privately-owned cars had arrived in Miami [MIA] earlier that week. A few cars were offering the opportunity to ride but the cheapest one I saw was for \$450 for just one day. The schedule I had showed the special AMTRAK train leaving MIA at 830AM on Saturday April 23rd. I planned to catch up with the train at



the West Palm Beach [WPB] Amtrak station, which is 67 miles north of MIA [and 45 miles north of FLL]. I figured it would take an hour+ to get to WPB but to be safe, we left our FLL hotel just after 8AM. We arrived at the WPB AMTRAK station just after 9AM and saw a railfan standing there. Talking with him, I learned the special train had left early and it whizzed by a few minutes later. I was glad we got there early. Let the chase begin!

I ran back to my wife in the waiting car and we took off but had to go south to get onto I-95 north. We took the first exit and headed to FL RT 710, the BEE LINE HWY. We drove

a short distance on it and stopped at a grade crossing where I waited for almost 15 minutes. Bummer, we must have



missed it so we headed west on RT 710] that [along with the adjacent track] literally makes a straight line to the NW for some 55 miles to Okeechobee FL. We passed one railfan and I said he missed the train too. We keep driving for another 15 miles or so till we saw a well-

equipped railfan with a tripod and scanner and did an immediate U-turn and I joined him waiting for the train., This railfan was actually a high school



senior from Miami and we saw him several times during the course of the day. He knew exactly what was going on. An air hose had separated just after WPB delaying the train there. Now,

there was an issue with a south-bound CSX freight train on the single-track, former SBD/SCL/SAL line. We were at control point **Zana** [MP925.2] where there was a passing siding. Eventually, special AMTRAK train came up and took the siding while the CSX freight passed by on the main track.

We took off chasing but soon lost the train as the tracks veered off to the left. We headed for Okeechobee hoping to catch it at the AMTRAK stop there but had no luck.



So, we headed to Sebring where the train would switch to an ex-FEC, 4-6-2 steam locomotive #148. This 1920 ALCo engine was recently restored and had returned to service last fall when *Trains Magazine* chartered it for a special train.

The Sebring Station was built in 1924 by SAL and is a current stop for AMTRAK's *Silver Star* train between NYP and MIA. Folks were leaving the station just as we got there meaning we missed it again. However, an Amtrak employee told me it was just a few block away, running on the interchange track to the SOUTH CENTRAL FLORIDA EXPRESS [SCFE]. SCFE, which is common-carrier owned by U.S. Sugar Corp., would operate the train using #148 for

the next few days. U.S. Sugar Corp. also owns U.S. Sugar RR, which hauls sugar cane from the fields to the mills in the area. We drove a few blocks and parked at the Highlands County Fairgrounds. The special train was waiting there along with a group of surprisingly younger rail fans. Soon #148 backed in with a baggage car and attached to the *Caritas*, a private railcar now owned by the **Friends of the 261**.



After an air and brake test, the train headed south. I caught it at the next grade crossing and then we jumped ahead to its next stop in Lake Placid FL. One of the chasers told me a great place to get a picture there and this picture is the result.



The car owners and their guest were treated to a catered lunch at the Lake Placid Depot [ex-SAL], which is now the local history museum. In the museum, we learned that the man, Dr Melvin Dewey, who named the town also invented the **Dewey Decimal System** used in public libraries.



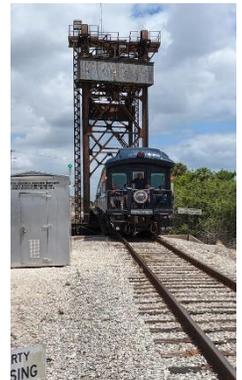
We caught the train on a bridge south of Lake Placid as the tracks ran parallel to US RT 27. We rushed ahead to Clewiston where the train [and us] would spend the night. In the yard there were several nicely maintained GP38 engines from the US Sugar RR. All along the ROW there were many pieces of cut sugar cane.



We were back at the yard early the next morning and watched as the train was put back together with #148 leading the way.



As I got into the rental car to begin the day's chase, my wife told me she would NOT be doing this again. We followed it for a bit and then the road went by cane fields being burned before harvest. We caught up to it at a photo run by and then again when #148 stopped for water in Belle Grade. After there, it ran along the southern edge of Lake Okeechobee on trackage leased from the FEC. Our last view was as the train crossed the canal at Port Mayaca after which the tracks were not viewable from the car. The special train supposedly traveled up to near where the SCFE crosses the same CSX



line on which the special train had traveled the day before. Our chase over, we headed west to Punta Gorda to visit family. The map here shows the part of Florida where this action all took

place. [Email me to receive a more detailed trip report.]