

STEAM RAIL NEWS

Rocky Mountain Rail Society

www.6060.org

Nov./Dec. 2009

A Volunteer's Work is Never Done

It is early November and Locomotive 6060 is in the shop awaiting the winter works program to start up. CMO Harry Home, Larry Potter and Zac Brewer have opened up the nose cone to inspect the smokebox area.



Inspecting the smokebox after nose cone removal

There was a brief inspection review and then Harry and the mechanical committee discussed the servicing priorities for the next few months. Budgets will be reviewed, funds allotted and grants prepared as we look to getting 6060 ready for another operating season in 2010.

Meanwhile a group of dedicated volunteers under Don Totten spent a Saturday in the Warden area, fixing tools, cleaning the tool car, winterizing vehicles, speeders, the diesel, the caboose and the tool car. The group found a few buckets of staybolts and began identifying and cleaning up of these valuable boiler pieces.

The group including Don Totten; John Visser; Kevin Quigley; Zac Brewer; Neil Dowdell; Larry Potter and Russ Grycan invested close to 100 hours including



Kevin and Zac add fuel and stabilizer for the caboose heater

travel and work. They have fun and after a safety review tailgate meeting they get to work doing the "must do" items that keeps the society's assets in good shape.



Neil, John and Kevin enjoying a 5 star lunch break in the CN caboose (A volunteer benefit!)

A Volunteer's Work is Never Done (cont.)



Don T. salvages many staybolts from old parts stored in a boxcar. Not a glamour project, but one that needed doing. (The essence of volunteerism!)



John, in the tool car, cleans up and measures the recovered staybolts from the parts storage. (All for the romance of Steam!)

There is **ALWAYS** a need for more volunteers. Please contact **Don Totten** at **403-617-6360** to indicate your interest in helping out for future projects. No matter what your skill level – you can always help and your efforts will make a difference. **Call today and get on the list!**

Go to www.6060.org and send us an e-mail that you would like to help. Most of our volunteer work is in the Stettler AB area.

Thanks, Russ Grycan

RMRS Annual General Meeting

This years RMRS AGM was again held at Iron Horse Park in Airdrie, AB. Members in attendance were treated to various presentations as well as taking a trip on Iron Horse Park's very impressive railway. A copy of the full AGM minutes will be enclosed with this news letter. Thanks again to Iron Horse Park for the use of their facilities. Be sure to check out our web site, www.6060.org, for more photos



RMRS Christmas Social

Hello members we are planning our annual Christmas Celebration at William Roper Hull School. The school is located at 2266 Woodpark Avenue SW Calgary at we will begin celebrations at 7:00pm on the 15th of December. Please feel free to bring your photos to share with all

who come. We will have a short presentation by a recently retired CPR manager as well as a little RMRS business. Bring a some food and we will have a little pot luck meal. We will also have a 1/2 price sale on a number of RMRS souvenir items so bring your cheque books.

If you are planning to attend please send we an email at dtotten@telus.net or give me a call at **403-201-2917**.



RMRS Christmas Souvenir Sale

The following items are reduced to our cost and are in limited supply.

Engineer Hats embroidered were \$20.00 now **\$15.00**

Sportsman Hats embroidered were \$25.00 now **\$18.00**

Golf shirts limited sizes were \$50.00 now **\$35.00**

Greg Scholl DVD Rocky Mtn. Snowplow, Military Trains, Rail Industry Films were \$35.00 now **\$18.00**

DVD The last logging Road were \$30.00 now **\$22.00**

Wooden Whistles were \$ 6.00 now **\$ 4.00**

T-shirts - Spirit of Alberta limited sizes were \$25.00 now **\$15.00**

Freight and handling are extra.

Please call **Don Totten** ph. **403-201-2917** or email: dtotten@telus.net

Employer – Employee Volunteer Grants

We're asking for donations again – but this time in a more indirect way. We have found that many companies prefer to do their charitable giving through the efforts of their employees and these are the ways we are asking our members to check out at work in their own cases.

In the first method, the employee is asked to submit a form to the employer indicating their involvement in a particular charitable organization (RMRS is a charitable organization as per the Canada Revenue Agency) and the employer will send a cheque to the organization based either on a fixed amount per person or perhaps based on the number of hours donated.

In the second method, the employee is asked to choose from either a given list of organizations to choose from or provide the name of an organization that is registered with the Canada Revenue Agency. Again, RMRS is registered. In this case, the employee is asked to make a donation to the organization and they, the employer, will match it.

In either case we can send a thank-you letter to the company in your name. Charitable giving receipts will be issued according to the situation.

This program appears to be fairly common in large organizations such as the banks, oil companies, railroads, insurance, financial, service and telephone companies. Please check it out.

If you have any questions or comments, call me.

John Pinter, Email: 2pinter1@telus.net, Phone: 403-271-2169, Fax: 403-225-0617

The Canoe River Wreck *by Harry Home*

Exactly 59 years ago today as I write this story (21 November 2009, 11:35 MST) a west-bound troop train hit No. 2 The Continental Ltd head-on at Mile 82.3, Albreda Subdivision, just east of the east switch at Canoe River, BC. The troop train was carrying Canadian troops en route to Korea – Ezra and Fox Companies of No. 2, RCHA (Royal Canadian Horse Artillery).

Records indicate that 17 troops lost their lives in this terrible crash and there were many injuries amongst the soldiers. There were no passengers killed on No. 2 but there were some injuries.

However, both locomotive engineers and locomotive firemen on the two locomotives also lost their lives in one of the worst accidents in the history of the Canadian National Railways. The memory of that terrible day is just as clear in my mind today as though it were yesterday. I wish to share my memories as I note that with the passage of time, the records need to be corrected in memory of the many brave men and women who were involved in this unfortunate incident.

My railroad career started at Boston Bar, BC on 28 July 1949. Our railroad, in my opinion, had an excellent safety record right from its beginnings close to the start of the 20th century. However, the law of averages does call for the rare failure of any and all safeguards. In the case of the Canoe River wreck, a number of circumstances combined to cause the head-on collision.

Early on the morning of 21 November 1950, the call-boy went to the home of Locomotive Engineer Harvey Church and informed him that he was called

for a troop train to Blue River on Engine #3538 with fireman Bill Prosinuk. The day before, Bill Prosinuk had moved his clearance back to Jasper from Edmonton and upon booking on, was pleased to see that he was lined up with Harvey Church, one of his favorite engineers. (Harvey was also a favorite of our very own Joe Cernak) As Church, Prosinuk, Conductor Jack Mainprize, Tail-end Brakeman Ken Allen and Head-end Brakeman Dale Mainprize were preparing for the run on the troop train, the train itself was proceeding west towards Jasper from Edson. The crew were experiencing big problems as the coaches were becoming colder and colder, even though the locomotive was providing 110 lbs of steam heat.

The weather had changed – it was well below zero Fahrenheit and the coaches being used had been sitting idle on passenger coach storage tracks for a considerable time. Consequently, the bellows and the drips, etc were rusty and not functioning properly so that the steam, once used was not being discharged and was freezing and causing blockage in the pipes.

The soldiers were very cold and had wrapped themselves in blankets to try and keep warm. Upon arrival in Jasper, the incoming steam locomotive was cut off and went to the shops to be replaced by Church and Prosinuk on the #3538. They provided steam to the coaches so the Car Department could thaw out the frozen pipes before they burst from the ice. After a lot of hard work, the pipes were thawed out and the coaches changed from being very cold to becoming uncomfortably

warm! The troop train did not leave Jasper until about 0800 Jasper time – much later than planned.

In the cab of the 3538, Engineer Church did his best to adjust the cut-off so that the big Mikado handled the train well and at passenger train speed. Bill Prosinuk kept the steam gauge on the pin at 185 psi, a clear stack, and the injector set to maintain a half a glass of water in the boiler. All was well.

They had a good run to Red Pass Junction where they stopped for inspection, water and train orders. The troops had doors open to the vestibules including the coach next to the engine as it was just too warm for comfort. This was a big change from the night before! The weather continued to be very cold and snowy.

The troop train received the following train order at Red Pass Junction, addressed to the Engineer and Conductor:

**“Psg Extra 3538 West
Meet No. 2 eng 6004 at**

.....

**No. 4 eng 6057 at Gosnell
AET”**

Away from Red Pass Junction went the Passenger Extra 3538 West (the troop train) on through Resplendent and down the hill towards Valemount. Jim Bolding received a friendly wave from Harvey Church just before the troop train entered the tunnel at Mile 48. The troops enjoyed the heavy snow and the majestic spectacle of Mt. Robson at 12,972 feet – the highest peak in the Canadian Rockies. At Jackman, BC, Mile 65, an east bound





Canoe River Wreck (cont.)

freight train cleared the troop train. Locomotive Engineer Dave Hartley exchanged a friendly wave with Harvey Church. Dave has told me that he believes that he and his head end brakeman were the last people to see Harvey Church and Bill Prosinuk alive. At Valemount, the train order board was clear, meaning no more train orders, so the troop train continued and began its climb up the hill toward Albreda, BC – the next planned stop for water and inspection.

At Blue River, BC, the eastbound Train No. 2, the Continental Ltd received the following train order about the same time as the troop train received their orders at Red Pass Junction, BC.

Psgr Extra 3538 West

Meet No. 2 eng 6004 at Cedarside

No. 4 eng 6057 at Gosnell

AET

No. 2 also had orders to meet a passenger extra west (another troop train) which was preceding the Passenger Extra 3538 West.

That morning in Blue River, Jack Stinson and Adam Oleschuk were called for No. 2 – eng 6004. They had breakfast in the beanery with Jack Home and his Fireman who had been called to take the preceding troop train to Kamloops BC. Operator Bill Fisher had just finished his night shift and boarded No. 2's coaches to go to Jasper for his days off. He and Adam Oleschuk were good friends. They often played whist together.

No. 2 departed on-time with Engineer Stinson and Fireman Oleschuk

handling the 6004. The 6004 was an "Eastern Engine" and had recently been converted from coal to oil burning. She had 73" drivers, 210 psi boiler pressure, a feed water heater and a newly installed dirigible headlight. These mountain type engines were a pleasure to work on and no doubt Jack had her breezing right along with the draught and cut off just right so that Adam could "keep her hot" with a clear stack and a ½ glass of water in the boiler. Not long after No. 2's departure for Jasper and Montreal, Continental Train No. 4 followed en route to Jasper and Toronto. The engine crew on the 6057 for Train No. 4 was Locomotive Engineer Bill Louth and Fireman Bob Lewis.

No. 2 proceeded without incident to Albreda where Engineer Stinson spotted the 6004 at the water tank so that Fireman Oleschuk could take water, likely about 8,000 gallons. Close to the time of No. 2's arrival at Albreda, the Passenger Extra 3538 West was westbound at Valemount. There were several card games going on among the soldiers in the coaches. One poor fellow lost everything he had on the table as the train was approaching Cedarside. This card game was in the first coach behind the engine and the loser informed his partners that he was going back to his coach to retrieve some savings from his kit so he could continue playing and hopefully win some of his money back. The front door of the coach was still open and the soldiers could clearly read "3538" on the back of the Vanderbilt tender (same type of tender as that on 6060).

Up in the cab of the 3538, Harvey Church would be adjusting the throttle

and cut-off – having just successfully ascended the "velocity grade" at mile 78 – 79. Bill Prosinuk would be able to cut back on the firing valve and injector. No doubt the 3538 was making music at the stack as she ascended the controlling grade toward Albreda. At this point, the troop train had passed Cedarside where it was supposed to meet the No. 2. The Eastbound No. 2 was now drifting down the hill towards Canoe River, expecting clear track to Cedarside.

In those days we had no speedometer or radio on the locomotive. You ran the engine by the seat of your pants, the sound and the smell of the locomotive and landmarks. When Jack Stinson was looking at Mile 83 (between switches at Canoe River), he very likely made a brake pipe reduction of about 10 psi which would develop close to 25 lbs brake cylinder pressure on the coaches. This was to slow the train down for the curves at Mile 82.4. About this time Harvey Church, having crossed the big bridge at Mile 80.6, was well into the curves leading to the straight track at Mile 82.4. Harvey, like so many of us, was always cognizant of the danger of being scalded with super heated steam. Therefore, he would be leaning out the window, in the fresh air, away from the steam vapor which often made seeing ahead very difficult.

So the two trains entered the last curve – totally unaware of each other's proximity. It is difficult to imagine the horror that would go through Harvey Church and Adam Oleschuk's minds as they saw each other. The two massive locomotives hit very hard, flue sheets failed and the lead coach on the troop train was demol-



The Canoe River Wreck (cont.)

ished. All the air that ever went into a Westinghouse air brake could not have prevented this head-on collision. The brakes on No. 2 were likely still set.

No trace of Harvey Church was found after the crash. As I recall, his body showed up about April 6th, perfectly preserved and frozen in the snow beside the wreck site. He just might have had time to put the Automatic Brake Valve Handle into the Emergency Position. Likewise, Stinson and Oleschuk had precious little time to react and Bill Prosinuk likely didn't know what hit him.



The unlucky card player became very lucky indeed as he had not yet rejoined his card-playing pals who all lost their lives in the first coach. Bill Fisher helped the conductor to hook up the Dispatcher's phone to call the Train Dispatcher in Kamloops (AET – Albert Edward Tisdale). At Red Pass Junction, 22 year old operator Jack Atherton was horrified to realize he had neglected to put one word: “CEDARSIDE” on the train order to the Troop Train. The section crew from Valemount with Section Foreman Lionel DaForge rushed to Canoe

River to give assistance as did the Albreda Sub Ditcher. Train No. 4 was stopped at Pyramid so they could arrange to go by Gosnell and render assistance to the passengers, troops and crews at Canoe River. There was a total of 60 injured and 21 dead at the crash site. The soldiers reacted valiantly by administering to their injured comrades.



Locomotive Fireman Bob Lewis immediately thought of the night before when he was firing the 6057 for Jack Stinson on Train No. 1 and approaching Canoe River. About Mile 81, they received three short whistles on the Communicating Signal Device. This means “Stop at Next Station”. Jack Stinson acknowledged the Signal with 3 short blasts on the locomotive whistle and hollered across the cab words to the effect, “This is very unusual.” They continued on and Bob said that they once again received 3 short, sharp whistle signals at the exact spot where the head-on collision occurred the following morning. They did stop at Canoe River Station and were eventually informed by the train crew that no signal had been sent to the engine from the coaches. Very

strange indeed. They were still able to arrive in Blue River O.T. (on time).

In Jasper, Glenda Church, Wilma Stinson and Margie Lewis were all taken from school as no definite information about their fathers was available. As quickly as possible, a hospital train was dispatched from Jasper to the head-on site, followed by the Jasper Auxiliary (THE BIG HOOK). The townspeople were overwhelmed with grief as were many of us in Kamloops. I was attending school and working part-time as an engine watchman at Kamloops Jct shops on the day of the collision. I remember hearing of the news from Al Fraser whose father was George Fraser and a cousin of Jack Stinson. I also remember my dad coming home in shock. He and Jack Stinson had worked together many, many times.

There is much more to this story which I plan to put down on paper as soon as possible.

For now, let us remember all the brave people involved and their families who had to suffer through this devastating loss.

Submitted from Jasper AB by Harry R.J. Home on 21 Nov 2009.





Bill's Notes

Now that we are in the “quiet time of the year” – running season is over and winter maintenance work hasn't really started yet, your executive has been busy working to ensure Rocky Mountain Rail Society continues to thrive.

As you may have seen in the news this fall, the Alberta government set up a task force to examine the distribution of proceeds of licensed casino events in Alberta. As the casino funding provides a major source of our revenue, we sent Russ Grycan, Treasurer, and John Pinter, casino chairman, to one of the Consultation Meetings to ensure our viewpoint was expressed. Each of these meetings (there were about 15 all over the province) had about 100 participants giving their input to the committee who in turn will present their findings to the Cabinet. We were able to speak with the MLAs present who are convening the task force and came away with the feeling that there should not be any major shifts in the way casino funds are distributed.

The Executive also held an all day planning session in November to review a number of very important issues for our society. These included the development of a 2010 / 2011 operating budget, a review of the board and it's portfolios, grants and donations, 6060 mechanical and other rolling stock priorities, member recruitment, leadership recruitment, training issues, souvenir guidelines and 2010 events.

As a result of this meeting, we are canvassing our membership looking for people who are interested in taking on a more involved role. We feel at this time that we must recruit a membership chairman and a marketing chairman. The membership chairman would assist in recruiting new members as well as developing programs to maintain and at to our current membership. The marketing chairman would work to promote the Society to the public, work with souvenir sales and generally make us more visible, especially to the media.

I have been your president since 2003 but think it is time to allow for a leadership change and give me more time for personal and business endeavors. Therefore, the position of president will be open for election at the next Annual General Meeting.

All members are invited to attend our board of directors meetings generally held the 2nd Tuesday of every month. Call for meeting location.

As always you can contact me any time day or night at

Email: billwill@telusplanet.net or Telephone **403-803-6805** (Direct) or Fax **403-225-6669**

“You Can Help”

As an ongoing society, the **RMRS** is always looking for people who enjoy taking a lead role in a specific area of our endeavours. If you like marketing, accounting, presentations, looking after souvenirs, people contact, soliciting new members and would like to practice your skills - **You can help!**

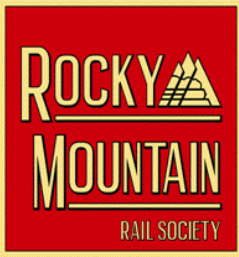
Please call any one of your directors and let us know what area you would like to become more active in. Or on the website - send us an e-mail. We would really enjoy talking with you and giving you the opportunity to contribute to our growth and success.

Your involvement may even include you considering being a Director of the RMRS. We are always looking for people who are passionate about trains, railroads, and helping to maintain our Heritage Resource.

As an old Wiseman once said “The greater your input, the happier you will be with the output”.

Give us a call! **Your Directors.**





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www.6060.org

RMRS Board of Directors:

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	Al Watch	403-271-6924	watch@telus.net
Casino Chairman,	John Pinter	403-271-2169	2pinter1@telus.net



Casino Dates

We have been given tentative dates for our casino in the new year! Our dates will be Saturday and Sunday, April 3rd and 4th, 2010 at the Elbow River Casino. This is Easter weekend. The casino never closes!

Please keep these dates in mind as we will be looking for volunteers. If you have any questions, please contact me or any member of the executive.

John Pinter, RMRS Casino Chairman
Home: **403-271-2169**, Cell: **403-540-2339**, Work cell: **403-998-4127**,
Email: 2pinter1@telus.net

Monthly Meetings

All members are invited to Board of Directors meetings each month. Contact **W.E. (Bill) Williams**, RMRS President, for time and location @ **403-803-6805**

*Merry Christmas
and all the
Best in 2010*

2010 Membership Renewal

Well another year has gone by and it's time for Membership Renewals for 2010. Please find enclosed a renewal form that can be sent in with your membership fees. If you know someone who might be interested in joining, this would make a great Christmas gift.

Donations

RMRS would like to thank the following people for their gracious donations to our society in the recent weeks.

- Mr. and Mrs. David Thompson - Calgary, Ab
- Ernie Chappell—Brentwood, Tennessee

