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I have debated whether this is a year where it would be better to let my FAPA official duties take care of my need for renewal credentials, for I'm not overly anxious to deal with my mimeograph, nor with the need to decide how I'd like to say the minor things that I felt I'd like to ramble about in this issue. I may not have too much of a problem. This seems to be the one and only stencil in the house; perhaps using it will convince me, one way or another, of my proper course for this November Fapa mailing.

A couple or three years ago I mentioned a slight interest in model railroading. There was a fair response to the subject, so I've decided it's safe to bring up another railroading issue here. Not even an issue, but rather just a question.

Do foreign railways have (or did they once have) a variety of independent lines?

My small home town was on the Union Pacific mainline, and there was practically noplac we could go without the UP being a part of our world. The nearest towns were twelve miles west and fourteen miles east of us, and the connecting highway - US Route 30 - paralleled the UP mainline, so on almost any trip we'd almost surely see either a freight or a passenger train. Dad ran not only the general store, but also the postoffice, so quite often as a kid I'd go with him to hang up the mail sack for the train to catch on the fly as it steamed through town, and to take back to the store the scanty sack of mail it might leave. One of my adult friends had a shack just off the tracks, and an occasional hour or two would be spent with him, whittling and talking, or maybe peeling potatoes for his evening meal, with usually a train passing at some point during the visit to let us know it was still part of our lives.

Anyone under these conditions will occasionally look at a train. There often isn't much else to do, particularly if you're waiting at a grade crossing for the train to clear the crossing. Passenger trains were basically dull to look at. They were always Union Pacific, and they were bas&cally the same design except for the combine and/or baggage car. Freight had more visual appeal. There were of course the different types of cars, much as they are today - flatcars, boxcars, gondolas, stockcars, tankcars - but here in the States there was always the added spice that the cars might be from a number of different lines. The Union Pacific, of course. But also the Southern Pacific. The Great Northern. The Atchison, Topeka, and Santa Fe. The Rio Grande. Each with its own special emblems, distinctive colors, and--if you looked closely--differences in design. If you were lucky, you might see a car from a far-away railroad. To me, then, the Pennsylvania was a far-away railroad.

I still look at the freight cars, in large part because my subway is an elevated (well, actually, it's ground level) where I catch it, and it's on another mainline, Conrail. Conrail didn't exist when I was a kid. It came into being as a result of various bankruptcies and consolidations, and I don't even know what companies are merged under its banner. The tracks used to belong to the Pennsylvania, so I believe they are included. But whatever the companies included within Conrail, the mixture of owners of the cars used continues. Western Maryland. Maryland and Pennsylvania. Canadian National. Raritan River. Buffalo Creek. McCloud River. Alabama State Docks. Delaware & Hudson. St Mary's. Baltimore and Ohio. Atlantic Coast Line. It becomes a game--you see a familiar color or symbol or abbreviation and try to associate it. BAR? Oh, yes, Bangor and Aroostock. Pine tree? That's Maine Central (or is it Central Vermont?)

If a car is owned by one line--say McCloud River--and in use on another--say Conrail--then a daily fee is due from the using line to the owning line. If your line has an excess of cars, the demourage fees can provide nice income. If you own a line, then obviously you want to use as few cars from other lines as possible. But when you see a car on a line you, the casual bystander, don't know who's using the car. That McCloud River car on the Conrail line might be under lease by almost anyone, with Conrail providing the motive power and tracks, or it might be in use by Conrail with demourage fees owing. I've only seen one McCloud River car, and I wondered about it at the time, for it was a new name to me. Just a bit later I found out where it came from. The McCloud River line is a short line road at the foot of Mt Shasta, some 3000 miles from here. What, I wonder, came from there or was going to there to cause one of their doubtless scarce box cars to turn up in the Washington, D.C. area?

There's a train whistling now, and the rumbling of freight on the Baltimore & Ohio (now Chessie System) tracks less than a mile west of here. It could be a coal drag, with a hundred or half or half again a hundred cars, mostly Western Maryland but a few Baltimore and Ohio or Chesapeake and Ohio cars mixed in--all three lines are part of the Chessie System, and coal drags usually are made up solely from the parent line's own rolling stock. Chances are, however, that it's a mixed freight, with boxes and flats and reefers from at least a dozen different lines. Watching freights is a dull business at best; how much duller it would be if it weren't for the occasional interloper that makes you wonder what it's doing there.

There's one more item that I'd like to mention on railway names before going off on another subject. Our railroads came into being when the USA was still young, and when the population was still concentrated strongly in the east, but going West was a strong drive. The railroad names reflect this. Atlantic and Western. Union/Southern/Northern Pacific, Rio Grande & Western, Norfolk & Western, and countless others. Yet I know of only ~~two~~ roads with "atlantic" in its name, and none named (Point x) and Eastern.

Corredtion. Make that name above Denver & Rio Grande Western.

A month or so ago it came to pass that our office wanted to send a couple of its employees to a three-day training course held outside of the Washington D.C. area. Since we have some 800+ employees, involving the full range of programming and allied skills, the need for outside training is not unusual. In this case, however, there was an unusual aspect. The training was being offered in Toronto, Ontario, Canada. And despite the efforts of Glicksohn and Raeburn to shatter natural barriers, Canada is a Foreign Country.

I really don't know what the general rules of most agencies of the Federal Government are about official visits into Canada. I work for the IRS. And the IRS is most careful about the conditions under which people are sent to foreign countries. The basic set of rules come about because the normal cause for IRS travel is a tax investigation, and tax investigations in foreign countries are damn touchy issues.

No big deal, but there is special clearance required for a visit (official) to a foreign country. Time was pressing, and I was tossed the job of finding out what was required and getting the paperwork through the system like yesterday.

Seven phone calls, half an hour of reading, and a few words to a good secretary took care of getting the paper work ready. The approving office, however, is located away from our main office. I work in the Federal Triangle area--call it 12th and Pennsylvania Avenue, in North West Washington. The approving office - our Office of International Operations - is some six blocks north, at 13th and K Sts, NW. The only way to get something approved yesterday is to handcarry it today, so I hopped on our subway, rode it two stops north, got the needed signatures, and stepped back out of the building into a beautiful September day, mission accomplished. Seemed like a lovely chance to walk back to the office.

I walked over to the 14th Street I've used so many hundreds of times, turned south toward 14th and New York, really home grounds, and found I was in a foreign city. The skyline (or what passes for one here) was changed. Open spaces existed where something (what?) had stood when last I was here. It had been--and I had to think back--it might have been six or eight years since I'd been here. And someone had been rebuilding the city while I worked, unconscious of those changes, a scant six or so blocks away.

So much gone. In the forties there were three down-town movie theaters in the old style--really grand, plush velvet, door-men, stage show as well as first run features (high school friend Dot danced with the group, name now forgotten, that danced at the Capital Theater), and now both the Capital and the Palace are gone. (The Warner still exists, now Stage only, saw Fiddler on the Roof there only a couple of weeks ago.) There was an Esso (yes, Esso, not Exxon) station here--the 13 story building on its corner looks like it should be ready in a month or two. Garvin's Restaurant. Al's Magic Shop. Stein's Shoe Repair. Gone, replaced by a hole, a new building, even a little park.

The point of this narrative? One of the reasons that I hesitated to write it was because I don't know that it has a point. Spcer and Perdue and others who once lived here might find some memories flickering, but that fact was not my motivation in writing and certainly was not part of the consciousness of change that I felt that day. There was also a "you Can't Go Back" message which carried the same feel as one I'd gotten in the Wisconsin Dells area during our vacation there this June.

We'd first visited the Dells in June, 1979. Following Midwestcon we had a free week, and I saw the chance to visit Upper Michigan--where I'd never been--and also to visit the Dells before coming back East. The kids complained about too much driving, and yet we did have a good time, with lovely vacation weather, superb luck on finding good restaurants, no tourists ((they thought there was a gas shortage, but any shortage seemed to stop at about the Pennsylvania/Ohio line), and really nice scenery. Particularly including the Dells. We took the standard boat trip through the area, and fell in love with what we saw.

We returned there this year, planning to spend more time in the area, and specifically planning to find road access into the Dells. Why not? We could dawdle, stop where and when we wanted, and avoid the herding aspects natural to organized tours. We didn't expect to have much of a problem--one of the couples we'd taken to at one of the stops last year told us they'd come in by car.

Yes, access by car is possible. It is also difficult and requires either a pass or an inability to read No Trespassing signs. The roads in to the two spots we wanted aren't marked, but are just dirt roads off the main road heading in the general direction of the river. The whole area is fenced--the Dells are private property. We searched for public access for an hour or more, and finally sought directions from a friendly native Indian (Winnebago) guide, who told us which private roads to take. We took one, and got into the area with no trouble, but learned a couple of things. One: the Dells area is small. You see all that there is to be seen from the boat, and far better than by land access. Second: we're lousy crooks. We both felt guilty. Third: When there's space to park four cars, and three spaces are filled by cars with Wisconsin plates, a fourth car with Maryland plates looks out of place. We not only felt guilty, we looked guilty. Not even the to Wisconsin bumper sticker quite atoned for our foreignness. Escape/

In brief, our planned venture into the Dells didn't work. We all enjoyed other aspects of our trip, but it did not recapture the one highlight of last year's trip that we'd planned to. You can't really return. That is not a truth for all time, but that was the message from this year's Dells trip.

The message I found in finding part of "my" Washington missing was similar. Maybe nostalgia is permitted. That's sometimes all that's left.

New, stencil, new subject.

I've complained before that I don't like rock. Occasionally there has been a song (yes, I think song is an appropriate word) that I like (if I didn't like it, it wouldn't be a song, right?) but there have not been many such. As a result, radio has been essentially a barren wasteland since, roughly, 1964.

I do like to have the radio on when I'm driving the car. Gospel, country and western, and rock didn't please. "Good" music and the classics didn't satisfy. My choice was either silence, or the all-news station, or searching the dial in hopes of finding an occasional bit of music that I did like.

Within the last year two stations that I can receive made a switch. They call themselves "big band" stations, but basically they play swing with a smattering of jazz. And that I can happily listen to.

How long I'll be able to is another question. There evidently are still a few big bands in existence, but judging from the maybe half-an-hour I listen daily they are few, and they play the old songs. Caravan and Sing Sing Sing and Opus One and Stardust are great, but repeats of these oldies aren't enough to attract and retain an audience. Time says big band is coming back. Maybe--but it was killed in part by financial problems, and these haven't eased. It takes a lot of customers to pay for the cost of feeding, lodging, transporting, and paying a big band.

At least for a while joy is mine. I can find music that I can enjoy on the radio.

The next page is set aside for a bit of Fapa chatter, but there's space enough here to mention that I finally managed to visit Maine. We had long planned to go to Noreascon this year, and just a couple of weeks before it was to start I mentioned to Peggy that I really wanted to see Maine some time. "Why not now?" she asked. She had to be in Boston a week before the con, Missy was off with the Kyles in New York, so Eric and I could drop her in Boston and spend four or five days in Maine before returning to Boston for the con.

I saw very little of Maine. I kept looking for "rocky coasts," and the side trips down to ocean and then back to the main road are real time and mileage eaters. But I found my rocky coasts, and ate lobster every chance I had (the lobster was cheap and superb; the motels were expensive and lousy), and enjoyed boats and old houses--looking nothing like any houses anywhere else I've ever been--and sea breezes and really nice people. The ones that we ran into just didn't live up to the Maine stereotype, and were friendly even when they weren't hoping that we'd buy something. Eric found starfish and sea urchins, interesting shells and rocks, and the best clam chowder he'd ever eaten--high praise from that chowder expert. In short we had a ball.

During our year in office as ST some of our thoughts on the Fapa constitution have solidified. We're considering putting some proposed amendments up to vote in the next annual ballot. We'd appreciate any comments on the following proposals:

Equalize US and foreign dues. Foreign dues were set lower than North American dues many (20?) years ago, when the only foreign members lived in the UK, and the dollar was much stronger than it is today. We propose that all members pay the same dues.

Eliminate the "black ball." This served its purpose when Wetzel and Lance were chucked off the waiting list. It was used twice since, but the result was overturned in both cases, once by vote of the membership and once by an obstreperous ST. It's our opinion that we can do without this provision.

Eliminate the "early admittance" provision. It's never been used. We are not saying the idea is bad. The implementation-- via a line on the egoboo poll--has not worked, so why keep it?

Eliminate the five-year provision on re-running for President or Veep. We see no purpose served. The rule would seem to be aimed at preventing the continuance of a clique in office. When Fapa develops cliques it also develops competition for office. The rule can be safely discarded.

Eliminate the three-mailing rule (activity by third mailing for new members or out). The idea behind this rule was to wipe out deadwood fast. It has wiped a few people out faster than might have otherwise been the case. However, it's actually affected very few members, and its administrative complications exceed its advantages. (Shucks, and it was in part my idea when it was implemented). It doesn't do Fapa much good, it confuses: do away with it.

Raise the dues again. Sorry, but simple math says there's no choice. A \$3 assessment looks to be mandatory with the February mailing, since we are now operating (or will be after the November mailing goes out) on money advanced rather than on our own funds.

Comments/amendments/other suggestions/co-sponsors appreciated.

I'd also like a suggestion on another area. Peggy Rae says that a couple of people have commented to her that they wished they would be nominated for Fapa office. How do you tell people that, in Fapa, you nominate yourself? Should we propose one further amendment, to the effect that all 65 Fapa members should be listed on the Fapa ballot as candidates for each of the four Fapa offices?