

Hobo Times

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Hopalong Chet hoboing through the rustic Northeast (see page 4).

The 88th Annual Hobo Convention

Indicative of the history and tradition surrounding the hobo, Britt, Iowa hosts the National Hobo Convention and welcomes 'boes from around the world for one weekend a year. The festivities include the election of the "King of Hoboes", the "Knighting" of Dukes, mulligan stews, campfire stories, a main street carnival, a parade, hobo artifacts, and other activities for all ages. The gathering is August 12-14, 1988.

Kings of the Road

In 1933, on the anniversary of this historic event, Hairbreadth Harry was honored as the first King. He held the title until 1936 when Scoopshovel Scotty attended the celebration and cooked a hobo soup that was so delicious the 'boes decided they'd rather have a good cook as King. Scotty became unruly under his kingship and was in Cedar Rapids Jail the following year so was unable to run for re-election. He did regain the throne a number of times in the 1950s and, at the age 90, wore the crown for the last time in 1960. The most colorful King of them all---Ben "Hobo" Benson was another big winner, ruling from 1940-46 and off/on again until his death in 1963. During his reign the fiesty (90 lbs.) Benson kept the hoboes in line, worked in Bond and Red Cross drives throughout WWII, traveled coast to coast addressing Rotary, Kiwanis, and Lions clubs, and performed many broadcasts over radio networks.

30,000 Attended Convention

The largest crowd of all, an estimated 30,000, were present in 1951 to crown Eddie "Cannonball" Baker from Portland, OR. While the '50s saw Ben Benson and Scoopshovel Scotty battle for the throne, the '60s witnessed the Pennsylvania Kid and the Hardrock Kid squaring off for the title. Pennsylvania won four crowns and Hardrock five before the legendary Steamtrain Maury (con't page 5)

INSIDE

* HOBOING IN N.E.

Historic New England is an untapped haven.

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* HOBO/MULLIGAN STEW

There is a difference between them.

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LETTER FROM THE DIRECTOR

I hoboed through historic New England. We found plenty of rusty tracks and very few railriders, but the mountains, rivers, and coastline were extremely impressive (see page 4).

It's that time of year again to catch out for the Nat'l Hobo Convention in Britt, Iowa (Aug. 12-14). We've received numerous letters from members all over the country who will be in attendance. It will be a good opportunity to enlighten the masses on the history, tradition, and positive merits of the Great American Hobo! Hope to see you all there.

Thank for your support and take care.

Happy Rails 2U

Santa Fe Bo

Welcome aboard.
Last month Hop-
along Chet and



(lt-rt) Santa Fe Bo, William Lem-
pia, and Capt. Cook at Hobo Club.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

To Hobo Assn:

It's such a pleasure to read the hobo stories. Please don't let the hobo die. Thank U.

Yours truly,
Joseph Dyson
Brooklyn, NY

Dear N.H.A.,

One day a hobo appeared at our front door. Mother was alone with us and frightened. The hobo looked at her and said, "Don't you know me, Zye?" He turned out to be a childhood friend who had found our address thru the railroad office. Mother invited him in and fed him. He was a very nice man, and I'll never forget him.

Sincerely,
Virginia Kelly
Kirkwood, MO

Dear "Hobo Times",

I started riding freights back in the mid '60s while in college and spent a number of vacations and weekends after graduation aboard various freights in the West and Canada.

Choo-Choo Charlie
Terra Bella, CA

Dear N.H.A.,

I have been on train hopping trips across the country and to Canada, which I think is fairly unique for a single woman in her twenties. It is always exciting and exhilarating, and I have seen parts of the country and scenery that can only be seen by train boxcar!

Sincerely,
Karen Tegtmeyer
Dallas, TX

Dear Hobos,

Back in 1932, it seems like yesterday, I was forced by circumstances to become a hobo...knight of the road. I have traveled off/on many times over the years, but the highlight of my life was riding the Wabash, D&RGW, Northern Pacific, Western Pacific, Union Pacific, Southern Pacific, the Southern, the Burlington, Texas Pacific, Missouri Pacific, Baltimore & Ohio, the Pennsy, and so many smaller lines.

Thanks,
Jersey Red MacNeilly
Chester, PA

Dear N.H.A.,

I've always enjoyed being able to make my way in the no-man's land of the yards, hobo jungles, and on the trains where Uncle Sam and his 'nanny-like' safety standards, his nose cops & intelligence agencies can't be found. For me, it's getting a taste of what it might have been like 80 or 90 years ago when everyday was an adventure & people took pride in their self-reliance. Buying manufactured adventure from some corporation like Marine World, Disney, etc. always seemed shallow and phony to me. It's just not my style!

Good luck & good riding!
"Caboose Ted" Davis
Sausalito, CA

Dear Ed.;

I have 40 hobo pen-pals that supply news from around the country. Wouldn't trade 'em for world!

Odefully yours,
December Lee
Tonopah, NV

HOBO LEGENDS

STEAMTRAIN MAURY. . . . No one has done more to enhance the hobo's image in the past two decades than Steamtrain Maury Graham. Since first elected King of the Hoboes back in 1973, he has been re-elected many times and is now King For Life of East Hoboes. During the past 15 years, he has visited hundreds of hospitals, rest homes, prisons, and other institutions lifting the spirits of those unfortunate folks who are unable to travel freely. In '73-'74, for example, he made over 34,000 bedside visits nationwide!



Steamtrain Maury - King of East Hobos

Steamtrain first hopped freights in 1929 as a teenager and rode till 1937, when he married and settled down. The "itchy" foot never completely subsided and he hit the road again in 1969 at age 52. His knowledge of the railroads, inspiring stories, and positive outlook make him the No. 1 Amabassador of the 'Boes. Long live the King!!

HOBO TRADING POST

- UPDATE:** Paul Norton, who rides the rails 6-7 months every year, has written us from Philly, Oakland, and Kalispell, Montana. He is headed for Churchill, Manitoba on the Canadian National RR. As of 6-20-88 he had logged 7,231 freight miles this year.
- MISSING PEOPLE:** El Paso Kid is trying to locate STEVE SEELY or a list of his Hobo Pen Pal Club. Anyone with info please contact us.
- PEN PAL:** Anyone interested in corresponding via stamps please write:
- 1.) Rod "Sunshine" Taylor (47 yrs.) C62009
Box 600 D.V.I. #H141
Tracy, CA 95376
 - 2.) "Toad" (26 yrs.)
c/o The Fletcher Gang
2334 Wyandotte
Oroville, CA 95966
- WORK:** Anyone wanting to learn how to grow vegetables and flowers on an organic farm in return for salary and home write: J.H.Crittenden (ex-hobo) 3421 Conway Gardens Rd., Orlando, FL 32806. Include references please.
- BOOK:** "Railways Revisited" A Guide to little-known railways of Austria/Germany by Bernard Winn.
- FUN:** HOBO RAILROAD in Lincoln, New Hampshire offers scenic rail tours for all ages. Trips through the White Mountains include a "bindle lunch". Also, visit the Hobo Jct. for souvenirs.



Ride the "cushions" in Lincoln, NH.

HOBOING IN NEW ENGLAND



Portsmouth Harbor rail bridge,

Once hundreds of steam locomotives and shiny rails linked the six New England states. . . Now there remains an occasional diesel and miles of rusty tracks. While it is still possible to enjoy the Green, White, and Berkshire Mountains and the Connecticut, Merrimack, and Saco Rivers, the Northeast is becoming endangered territory for hoboes. There just isn't the demand for a large network of freight trains and many smaller lines are continuously closing. Even those spurs that are open are seldomly used (one or two trains per week makes it inconvenient for the 'bo who likes to keep moving!).

The Boston & Maine RR has undergone a change of ownership and is now called Guilford, but is still known as the B&M. Below are the major lines (also, see page 7).



VT. RR thru N. Bennington, VT.



The end of another New England hobo trail.



MAJOR FREIGHTS STILL OPERATING

- 1.) The Boston & Maine RR (B&M) between Boston, MA and Portland, ME. Due to union strikes, this RR has had scheduling problems. This 120 mile trek passes through Lawrence and Old Orchard Beach.
- 2.) Conrail (CR) between Boston, MA and Albany, NY. Probably the busiest line in N.E., this 200 mile journey passes through Worcester and Springfield, then over the Berkshire Mountains.
- 3.) The Central Vermont (CV) between New London, CT and St. Albans, VT. These most scenic 300 miles have a crew change in Palmer, MA, then run along the graceful Connecticut River to Canada.

RAIL TALES

This true story is from Joseph W. Wright of Davis, CA. He grew up hearing hobo stories from his father and actually witnessed this one.

Code Of The Rails

I am a barber by trade, and I was working in my father's shop one day when an old hobo walked in. You could tell by looking at him that he'd been on the road a long time, and it had been a spell since his last good meal. Well anyway, this old 'bo walked up to my father, who was working on a customer, and asked if he was C.L. Wright. My father said he was and inquired what he could do for the oldtimer. The 'bo said his name was Bony Clark, and he came to collect a debt my father owed him from over thirty years before when they were riding the rods together. My father never blinked an eye or stopped working on his customer. He just said he remembered Bony and the debt and asked how he could repay it. Bony said he wanted a haircut, shave, something to eat, and enough money to get on down the line. Well, my father treated Bony like visiting Royalty---cut his hair, shaved him, took him out to the best restaurant in town, and made sure he had enough shakels to get him a long way down the road with a new suit of clothes.

Bony would also leave town knowing the code of the rails had not eroded over the years. My father was proud to be a man of his word and was assured his name would be in good standing with the 'boes because he didn't forget his friends. And I got a first hand glimpse of a code of honor from those long gone days that would still be carried with pride today. Even now sometimes, when the wind is blowing and the lonesome sound of an outbound freight cuts through the night like a knife, I get those rambling feelings in my bones and have a hard time staying in the house---knowing there are friends on board. . .

(con't from page 1)

was elected in 1973 and ruled through most of the '70s. Although no King dominated the '80s, there have been some memorable run-offs and worthy monarchs: Hobo Bill, Frypan Jack, Mountain Dew, Frisco Jack, and Ramblin' Rudy.

Not to be overshadowed are the "Queen of the Hoboes". Polly Ellen Pep was the first woman to ascend the throne in 1946 and held the title a number of times in the ensuing years. Other Queens over the years include, Boxcar Myrtle, Sylvia Davis, Boxcar Betty, Long Looker Mick, Adventurer Jan (Mick's daughter), Hobo Liz Lump (first black Queen), Slo-Freight Ben, and Minneapolis Jewel. Will '87 King Alabama Hobo and Queen Liz Lump repeat?



All roads lead to Britt, Iowa.

Accommodations in Britt would please any "road" person. Many folks sleep in tents and campers, but there are still those who prefer the hobo jungle at the edge of town. A bedroll is really all you need.

As for food, there's plenty, especially the umpteen gallons of mulligan stew simmering in the jungle. Beside stew, there's lots of chili, dogs, burgers, pie, etc.

The jungle is where the King and his court reign. A peaceful camp where railriders exchange stories and info.

There is truly something for every man, woman, and child at the Annual National Hobo Convention.

THE YUPPY HOBO™

Beamer Ben

A yuppy hobo and his oldtimer 'bo buddy were fishing up on the Columbia River and caught far more fish than they could eat.

The yuppy suggested, "We can't eat all these---why don't we smoke some?"

The old 'bo replied, "Roll a couple up. I'll smoke anything!"

"Phoenix Is Fine"

Linda Lee Curtis

I spend my life riding all over the globe.

The further I travel, the slower I go.

My life is all stretched out along a rail line.

Nashville's a sweet love
But Phoenix is fine.

L.A. has big stars.

Frisco has wine.

Austin's a mighty good place to unwind.

Kansas has memories I really don't mind.

Chicago is windy

But Phoenix is fine.

Denver has smog that can make your nose bleed.

Tampa has lemons and oranges on trees.

New York has subways, but no one has time.

Jersey has gardens

But Phoenix is fine.

Dallas has cowboys.

Pittsburg has steel.

Phoenix has desert and sun you can feel.

It's hard to pick favorites, but I know I have mine.

It's a place with no winter.

Yeah! Phoenix is fine!



Linda Lee in Phoenix.

VAGABOND VERSES

"Come August In Britt"

Rick Sikes

(His original song; hopefully Rick won't mind this transformation.)

One hot summer day

An old fellow was hitchhiking my way.

Giving him a ride,

I asked if he was a bum or tramp.

Setting me straight he said then right away,

You'll find none of those in a hobo camp.

I'm just an old 'bo

Waiting on a train to heaven for a bit

And next best place is the get-together,

Come August in Britt.

He said the trains don't run the same anymore,

Just ain't like it was before.

Ol' rails ain't in good 'a shape as they used to be,

But then neither are we.

Along the way we've lost some good uns,
Some of the best.

And one by one the Lord will call the rest.

But long as we got the git-up-an-git,

You'll find most of us

Come August in Britt.

In a little ol' Iowa town

Hoboes have gathered 'round for more'n eighty years

To share their laughter and sometimes tears.

Plenty of stew, music, dancing, and wit.

Every year the oldtimers number less,

Faithfully they gather as long as they're able,

They will never quit.

And somehow they find a way to get there,

Come August in Britt.

Hobo Puzzles

(Last issue answers)

Can you figure this out?

YYURYYUBYYICUR4ME.

Too wise you are, too wise
you be, too wise I see you
are for me.

Fill in the missing letter(s).

OTTFSSSEN ?

One, Two, Three, Four, Five, Six,
Seven, Eight, Nine, Ten.

-----JASOND?

Jan., Feb., Mar., Apr., May, Jun.,
Jul., Aug., Sep., Oct., Nov., Dec.

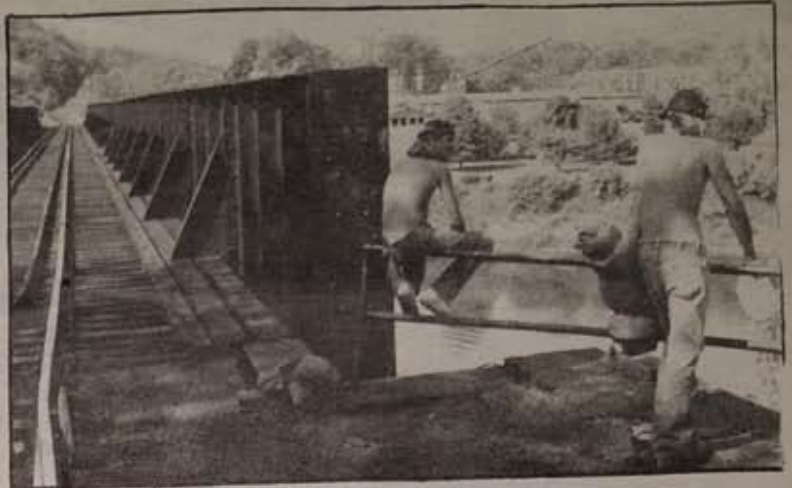
HOBO JUNGLE PROFILES

White River Jct., VT. . . . Tranquility describes Vermont and this hidden jungle beneath the railroad bridge that crosses the sweeping Connecticut River. The B&M (Boston & Maine, currently changing ownership) and the CV (Central Vermont) run main lines through here to/from Canada, so there is always at least a couple of freights daily. It's worth a walk into town for a glimpse of old New England.

Lawrence, MA. . . . Situated at the fork in the B&M tracks (to the northwest is Manchester, N.H./to the northeast is Portland, ME.), this private, sandy jungle is only a stone's throw from the rushing Merrimack River, where fish are abundant. Lawrence is a busy rail yard and all trains to/from Maine stop here. There aren't many hoboes passing through so the rails are generally very friendly and informative.

Manchester, NH. . . . In the center of the yard is an old B&M boxcar on the side of the tracks. It has become a 'botel' for traveling folks. The B&M terminates in Concord (15 miles north) so there isn't much activity here. The Merrimack River flows nearby and is ideal for cleaning, fishing, cooking, and bathing. There is a shelter close by for the hungry and homeless, but the curfew rules are strict.

Portland, ME. . . . Rows of eroded tracks and tall weeds inhabit this deserted rail yard alongside the Atlantic Ocean. Camp beside the picturesque bay, smell the fresh salt air, listen to the cawing seagulls, and watch the hearty lobstermen haul their traps. The salt water fishing provides a meal fit for a king for the price of a hook. Restored Portland is a short walk north along the coast and warrants a visit.



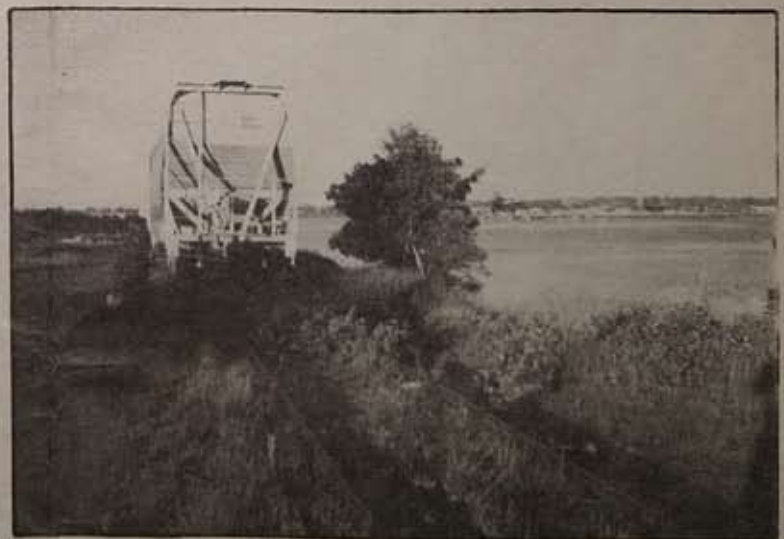
Waiting for a train in White River Jct.



Lawrence "jungle".



'Boes in Manchester.



Camp on the Atlantic Ocean in Portland.

DID YOU KNOW?

There is a definite difference between mulligan stew and hobo stew. Most of the cooks who fed the railroad workers when they were building West after the Civil War were Irish and Mulligan was a common name. Eventually all cooks, whether Irish or not, became known as 'Mulligan' ("Hey, Mulligan, bring some stew!"). These mulligan stews would vary in recipes depending on the season and availability of ingredients, but most contained chunks of buffalo meat, potatoes, and carrots. Now hobo stew was made in the hobo jungles by hoboes and also varied in components. The main difference being hobo stew must be small, bite-size cuts---for two reasons. First, it assured each hobo would receive an equal portion as opposed to one or two 'boes getting all the big chunks of meat while the others got only veggies. Secondly, small cuts would cook a lot faster than a mulligan that would simmer all day. Another ingredient often added to hobo stew was granite stones. They would help keep the stew from sticking to the bottom of the pot and provide extra minerals for nourishment. This procedure was adopted from the indians. (Contributed by Steamtrain Maury.)

Remember "Hobo Times"
wants to hear from YOU!

The W.H.A. wants to hear your adventures and see your photos of life on America's railroads. If selected for publication in "Hobo Times", we'll send you a free copy of the official hobo video, "THE GREAT AMERICAN HOBO"---a thirty minute color film featuring on location interviews with all kinds of hobos.

The W.H.A. wants to hear your adventures and see your photos of life on America's

- NEXT ISSUE:
1. Hoboing in the Midwest.
 2. Nat'l Hobo Convention Highlights.
 3. 12 Road Uses For Stones.



"Jungle Jack" Bennett and Dixie in 1954.

Hobo Times

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