

"That Was Beautiful!"

Excerpts from a letter by Frisco Folk Jim Quarles

Monday, June 20, 1994

I think I just experienced one of the most enjoyable weekends I can remember! My wife's sister lives near Fordland in a beautiful rural area. We had made arrangements to spend the afternoon there. We learned that 1522 was a couple of hours late out of Rolla, so we cooked some hot dogs outside and watched the 6:00 news. I was amazed at the coverage of 1522 and the museum. Steve Grant and KY-3 did a really fine job. They even reported that there was quite a crowd at the museum, and that slowed me down about trying to come in to see what was going on. Then we got word that the train was running better than we expected. A call to the museum office confirmed our news! Forget the dogs... we had a train to see! We all jumped in a van and took off to Northview. We had intentions of getting down near the grade out of the river bottom but when we got to Northview we saw all the people lined up. We went west along the tracks about 200 yards and got on the outside of the curve and made ourselves comfortable.

In less than five minutes we first heard the whistle. Then we could hear the beautiful exhaust cadence of the engine working up the grade. It was so quiet you could hear nearly every bird singing in Northview, mixed with the panting of the engine approaching. We then heard the low moan of the whistle greeting some fans. It got nearer and suddenly the train appeared as it whistled for the only crossing in Northview. With a rush and blast it was by us, on its way towards the sun, Strafford, and Springfield. I got the shakes so bad I couldn't talk and then tears filled my eyes. Talk about something having an effect on you! During this time I was looking off in the opposite direction from the rest of the group and one of them said, "I'm all covered with goose bumps. *That was beautiful!*" That pretty well summed up everyone's feeling. Some of the others admitted to it causing them to clear their throat, have goose bumps, etc. I can not for the life of me see why we were all affected so powerfully, but whatever it was it was quite an experience!

We immediately jumped in the van and took off towards Interstate 44 with good intentions of catching the 1522 and its train. Surprise, Surprise, everyone in Southwest Missouri had the same idea. We did get to see a bit of smoke wafting down the tracks along with 10,000 cars on the outer road and I-44. My brother-in-law is a little prone to being interested in his own things to the exclusion of others. I really hesitated to impose on him to ask him to go see the train with us, but he became as excited as the rest of us. On the way back, we all were quite animated as we chattered about the train, like a bunch of magpies. This was a good place for me to mention 1522 was going to come through the area on the way to Memphis the next morning. Immediately the group started making plans for sleeping arrangements, when to get up, etc.

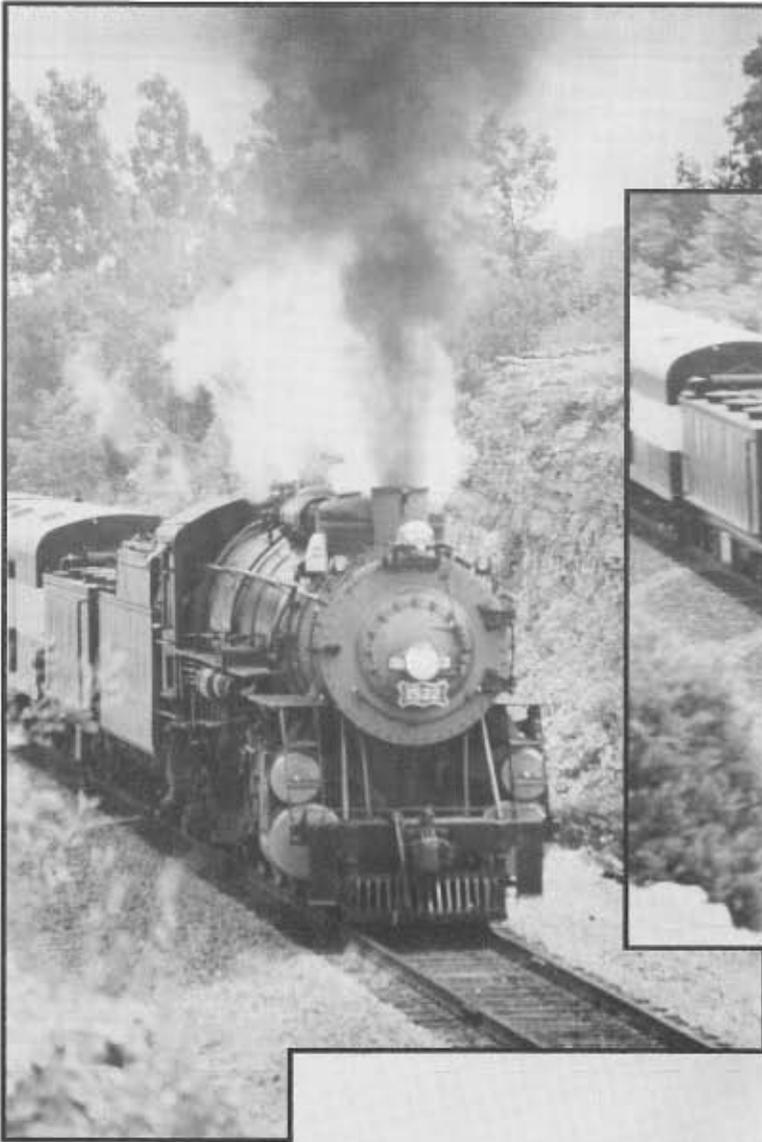
"Crew call" the next morning was six a.m. We ate breakfast, loaded up to check out the viewing spots in Rogersville, found one, and settled in. A railroad security guy came by and hassled everyone about being on private property, etc., but he was only puffing up his own ego because if he tried to have everyone hauled in that was on "private property" in Rogersville, the Springfield jail wouldn't have held us all! Where do they dig up those thugs for that job? They sure could use a class in human relations! At any rate we learned the train was late leaving, as I had thought it might be, then we heard a CBER report that the train was crossing 125 highway. Someone else said that's about four or five miles away. We heard the whistle very faintly in the distance. Soon there was the faint puffing cadence off down the line, next a smudge on the horizon, and then the 'eye' came into view. We climbed up on a gravel pile (off the "private property") near the tracks and put the camera in gear to get it all. I had let my son have the 35mm with a short telephoto lens. Meanwhile, I was trying to coach him when to shoot while I was composing the picture, wishing that darned airplane flying low overhead would turn off his loud engine because it was going to ruin my sound track of locomotive, zooming, etc. It was quite a hectic pass. Everybody waved. Everybody grinned. Everybody just loved it.

I have no idea what it is that causes people to love those old iron dinosaurs so, but I'm certain there aren't many things that will get that kind of crowd out. It was as if the whole of the hills of Webster County and most of Springfield were strung up and down the tracks Sunday morning. The best part was they were all grinning and happy even though the train was about an hour late. The darnedest thing is that it only lasts a few seconds before it is gone! Can you beat that! There had been some discussion as to how many cars were on the train. We hadn't counted them on the tape, so I asked my Brother-in-law if he counted them. His answer was, "NO, I was too busy absorbing it all to count!"

Peach Blossom Special

June 18, 1994

A Photo Essay by
Ray Wells



Stanton, MO

East of St. Clair, MO



Rolla, MO



West of Crocker, MO



Near Swedeborg, MO



Crossing old Highway 66 at Phillipsburg, MO. The figure standing in the cab doorway is museum President Alan Schmitt, who experienced his first ride on the Frisco in the cab of 1522.



Northview, MO



1522 & train, awaiting departure on June 19, 1994, at The Frisco Railroad Museum Inc., Springfield, MO.