

Harold Ledbetter: Owner & Editor

# LEDBETTER'S LEDGER

ISSUE FIFTEEN



FALL 2011

## Who said I wasn't going to come back?

(continued from Issue Fourteen)

By Harold Ledbetter

While I was asleep, I dreamed that I was a young buck once again and back workin' for the railroad. The funny thing was that I wasn't back on the B&O [Ed. note: For additional information, see Ledbetter's Ledger: Issue One and also look at the MGB website: Locomotive Roster, C&O #3547], instead I was working for the MGB! I guess it's because of all the time I've spent there since "settlin' down" with Brenna Faith in our home in Foggy Bottom. The really funny thing was that although I knew everybody on and around the railroad, nobody else knew who I was. Did you ever see that episode of "The Andy Griffith Show" where the stranger came to town and he knew everyone, but no one had a clue who he was? Well, that was the way I felt. I know this is all pretty dang strange, but hey, after all, it was a dream.

After a little while, I decided it would be best if I just pretended not to know anyone. Instead, I pretended that I was a new hire, which worked very well. None of the railroad officials knew that I wasn't really an employee. The reason for that was that the MGB had been hiring people "left and right" because business was booming. When someone asked me how long I had been an employee, I just shot back a made-up date at them. I told them that I'd worked at such and such a railroad for some length of time as a brakeman. They seemed to "buy into" that story.

My first assignment was to go and work over in Muleshoe. Since I had a little time to kill before starting to work that morning, I first dropped in at Big Mamma's Bakery. They offered me a tour of the place and I got to see how they made their various baked goods. They wouldn't let me leave until I'd eaten several of their delicious yeast rolls with some home-made jam (brought in by a friend of Brenna Faith's). With my stomach full, I was ready to go to work in Muleshoe. I was to work with the local switch engine there. My job was to throw the switches (and there are quite a few), pull

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coupler levers and basically do whatever I could to help the engineer get the freight cars moved from where they were to where they were supposed to be in the least amount of time. The only problem was, it seems that a lot of folks that had been sent to work on this part of the MGB, had “just up and quit.” There are quite a few industries in Muleshoe and the tracks run all over the place (see photo on page 3). Yep, Muleshoe is a “tough nut to crack” for many engineers and some of them would go to swearing when switching up in there. One day a rookie engineer named Jay got himself so confused while trying to set out and pick cars there that he was just about ready to call the dispatcher for help. He went to cussin’ and even used the name “Muleshoe” itself as if it was a cuss word. To be honest, I sorta’ felt sorry for him. I didn’t want to let on that I was very familiar with the whole railroad, so I’d just casually suggest that he “try this” or that he “might want to do that”. I also told him something I’d learned from an experienced engineer – there was nothing wrong with having cars coupled to both ends of your loco at the same time. Heck, it might look a little funny, but if helped get the job done faster, so what! Jay thanked me and said he really appreciated the help. I like to think that I may have saved the MGB from losing yet another employee in Muleshoe that day.

[story to be continued in Issue #16]



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We at MGB have a passion for trains, both models and the real thing. We believe that sharing this hobby with all age groups is essential. This hobby offers a range of fun and excitement by allowing you to work with your hands, mind and imagination. Areas include carpentry, electronics, painting, model building, historical research,

publishing newsletters, train safety and many others. Kids of all ages enjoy trains because of the movement, and once they get hooked, it usually becomes a family activity.

Thank you for supporting this group and its endeavors to provide our community an interesting hobby that offers so much more enjoyment than video games can and is something that can even bring families together and keep them together.

For more information, please contact any club member or email us at [info@mgbrr.org](mailto:info@mgbrr.org).

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Passenger trains were once a frequent sight along the route between Jericho and Bardstown. Back then, a person didn't have to wait long before catching a glimpse of a Louisville & Nashville train as it sped along the tracks at the foot of Mt. Pilot. Those lucky enough to have witnessed those sights often share their memories with others today.

**Above**, in this undated photo from the MGB archives, one L&N passenger train, with E6A number 750 "on the point", prepares to depart Foggy Bottom station while another - with the observation car, "John Marshall" on the rear - passes at speed heading towards Bardstown. **Below**, GM&O switcher number 661 (an Alco S1) is seen hard at work in Muleshoe. The Birdsong Produce warehouse looms in the background. Both photos by Gary W. Moore



**MGB: BEHIND THE SCENES**

Third in a series of articles by Harold Ledbetter



Well, I know what you really want to know is about the industries at Beaver Creek. Currently I am only slightly familiar with a couple of them myself. Rest assured that as I investigate those, I'll pass along my findings right here in the Ledger.

Currently there is a produce storage facility in Beaver Creek. Apparently, this is being used as offsite storage for Birdsong Produce located in Muleshoe. Birdsong Produce is well known and the favorite produce retailer of everyone around these parts, so as you might imagine, they do a booming business. The offsite storage in Beaver Creek is constantly moving boxcars and reefers full of vegetables, fruits, and nuts in and out.

The other item that I've already mentioned is Staunton Coal. To hear Jeff Sprint tell it, they are selling coal as quickly as they get it in. Beaver Creek has some storage tracks to hold extra loaded cars so Staunton Coal can order more and has a place to put it 'till needed.

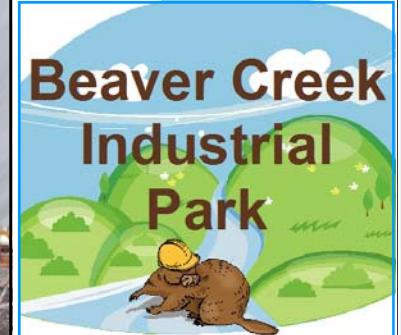
The little community of Cory Corners was not even large enough to be mentioned on a highway map. For that matter a pin stuck in the map at Cory Corners would have made the community disappear. That was true until the Whitten Auto Company noticed that land in the area was vast, cheap, and could be serviced by a railroad company that had connections to two Class I Railroads. Whitten bought up 250 acres along the MGB mainline between Foggy Bottom and Conner. This is where they are building their assembly plant. Business for Whitten is so good, they have started rolling out autos, and the plant isn't even finished yet. Mind you, it isn't the projected amount of autos that are rolling out, but what they are rolling out has the MGB running special auto-rack unit trains now. In addition to the auto-racks, MGB is bringing in their coil cars (carrying rolls of steel), box cars full of parts, and some lube tankers. Some of the folks that work at Whitten rave about their jobs and that they love what they're doing. The only downside is that their time is split between assembling cars, and building their facilities to get the assembly plant up to full production. I may not be able to report any more about Whitten until they have finished their construction and get ramped up to full production. I am sure I can arrange to tour the facilities and the vast rail traffic that is needed to supply the auto assembly plant. When I do, I will fill you in on all the details.

Two more places you may hear mentioned around the MGB railroad are Mountain Creek and Sunflower Valley. These two communities share their own shortline railroad, the S&W Railroad. At one time some years back, the MGB considered buying up the little shortline railroad. However, that was when the economy wasn't doing so well and MGB didn't have enough funds to maintain their own tracks, much less trying to purchase a shortline railroad. So the little S&W continues to operate shuffling cars between Mountain Creek and Sunflower Valley, with some subsidies from each of the town's budgets. Each town feels like they have to support the little railroad or the industries that are there would leave taking jobs and money with them. Occasionally MGB will take a string of cars to either town where they each have a single track siding. This allows them to interchange with the S&W and take in some needed supplies and goods. At the same time, they usually bring back a string of cars

[Continued—see **BEHIND THE SCENES** on page 5]

[BEHIND THE SCENES—continued from page 4]

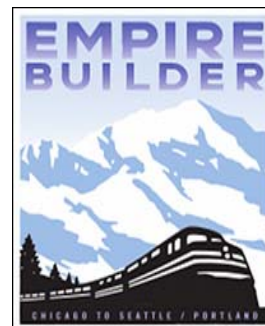
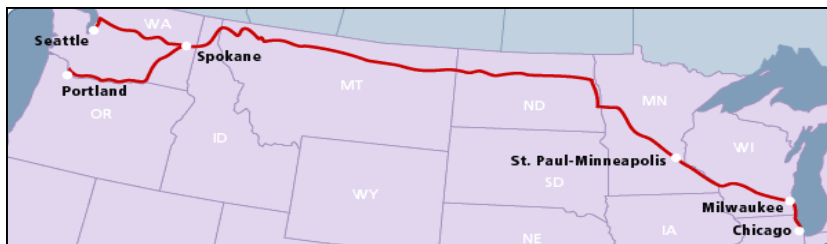
with goods going to places that MGB serves or to the bigger Class I railroads at either end of MGB RR. When going or coming from Sunflower Valley, the MGB has a turnout about half way between Cox's Gap and Turkey Trott. MGB has another turnout very near Turkey Trott that takes a different route straight to Mountain Creek. If the shortline continues to do well, maybe MGB will revisit the idea of purchasing the little shortline. Until then, J. W. "Spike" Bentley tells me, "We are happy to interchange with the S&W and to help those smaller communities when we can." Some interesting facts about the S&W; the S&W got its name from its founding partners, Smith and Wesson. Not the Smith and Wesson firearms company people mind you, but the same as the fruit cocktail company. Some even think the two owners are a little fruity themselves.



Above and right - Union Pacific switcher #1036 shuffles cars in Beaver Creek. There are more than half a dozen businesses located in the Beaver Creek Industrial Park including I.C. Sparks Welding Supplies, Creek Cabinet Company, Trenton's Trikes and Plumber Supply Company.

Both photos by Gary W. Moore





### Riding Amtrak from Chicago to Seattle by Brett Scott

This summer my wife and I went to visit our daughter and grandson in Seattle. The trip started with a car ride to the Birmingham airport. Then we took a short plane trip to Chicago, and a commuter train from O'Hare Airport to downtown Chicago. After sightseeing a bit, we climbed aboard Amtrak train number 7, The Empire Builder at Union Station. (On a side note, this was the first time this train had run in over a month due to flooding in the mid-west.)

We had a roomette for the trip and found it to be a cozy, little (romantic at times) room for the trip. However, when the room was converted for sleeping, it was really too small. When pulling out of the station, I was as giddy as a kid on Christmas morning. The first thing I noticed was that the ride was very smooth, due to the ribbon rail. So, you know how long it has been since my last Amtrak trip.

As we were leaving Chicago for Milwaukee the next thing I noticed was taggers must have gotten bored with just tagging rail cars. They also tagged buildings that faced the tracks. I must admit I did enjoy some of the more artistic tagging. I really like the talent involved in doing that. I don't care much for just names, years, who loves who, or the vulgar tags. To me those have no imagination or skill.

Shortly after pulling away from the Milwaukee station, I noticed a well worn path along side the track we were on. As I followed the path, it lead directly to a well-used and organized hobo campsite. There was a hobo there waving at the train and had his laundry up on the tree limbs to dry. Smoke rose from the campfire with his coffee pot right in the middle. I recall saying, "Jeanne! Check that out! It's just like the one on the layout." We continued to pick up speed and I noticed the worn path continued past the camp for what seemed like a mile.

Our dining car experience was our first ever on Amtrak. I was pleasantly surprised to find the food was actually pretty good. We sat with a couple who had ridden Amtrak many times. They told us the food is always pretty good, but the desserts are even better. One of the dessert choices was bread pudding, so of course I had to try that. It was good, but not the best I ever had. The remainder of our meals, were usually with some very interesting folks. This was a good time to break up the day and talk with someone other than to each other.

The scenery and landscape for the next couple of days, was gorgeous, beautiful and almost ever changing. Upon reaching the interior of North Dakota, we saw the effects of heavy snow and rainfall. Water was just inches from the track. We slowed to 5 mph as we rode these rails. This was all very flat land, so the water wasn't very deep, but at times, water was all we could see as far as we could see. I describe it as an inland sea, where a sea shouldn't be.

*[to be continued in Issue #16]*

### TRAIN-WATCHING “FLASHBACK”

Unfortunately, it’s been too hot for MGB members to do any train-watching lately, but they can’t wait for cooler temperatures so they can return to “trackside”. Here are a couple of photos from past train-watching outings. Many more photos are available on our website - [www.mgbrr.org](http://www.mgbrr.org)



It’s just before 8 a.m. on Tuesday, September 14, 2010, and CSX #6013 (GP 40-2) idles alongside the Ala. Dept. of Transportation’s neatly-mown property on Traffic Operations Drive in Montgomery, AL. Behind the Geep are four ordinary covered hoppers. But wait, what is that behind the last hopper? Could it be? It is—it’s a real-live caboose! O.K., we know, CSX calls it a “shoving platform” or something like that. But be that as it may, our pulse still quickens when we see one of these rare “birds”, even if it is a little scruffy-looking.

Both photos by Gary W. Moore

## MGB MEMBER SPOTLIGHT: WINDLE (SKIPPER) JAYROE

I remember my first train set. It was Christmas morning 1969. A Lionel set with an oval track, a loco, a box car, tank car and gondola with a caboose. That was the year I discovered trains. Let me back up a little to the summer of 69'. I was six and my father took me to work with him at Rocky Creek Logging Company. We spent the day driving around looking at different pulp wood camps, stands of timber and logging equipment. During our lunch break my dad took me to a spot outside Greenville, Alabama where an old locomotive was on display. We spent our lunch hour climbing on the engine and looking it over. Then we did some train watching. We watched some pulpwood cars being switched at Rocky Creek’s pulpwood yard. I remember my dad would always stop if we saw a train and we’d watch till it passed.



Every year after that summer at Christmas I’d get something from him that had to do with railroads. When I was a teen he helped me build my first layout. When I built my first big layout as an adult he came and watched the trains run and talked about that day we spent on the locomotive when I was six. I’d say my love for the hobby and the prototype comes from my father. Thanks, Dad.

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