

A HISTORY OF THE RAILFANS OF INDIANAPOLIS [1937-1984]

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The Railfans of Indianapolis Club was started in the spring of 1937 by two men, Gordon Harker and Carl Dougherty. Gordon read a story in Railroad Magazine about a group in another city who had started a club of people interested in trains. He and Carl decided to start a club and see how it might go.

There is no known list of charter members. Herschel VanSickle made this list from memory:

Ed Belknap, Carl Dougherty, Gordon Harker, Vane Jones, Jerome Manchester, Dick Nation, Reid Nation, Glen Nicely, Harry Nicely, Cliff Nichols, Edgar Pattison, Gil Reid, Bob Stacy, Marjorie True, Herschel VanSickle and George Witt.

The first president was Gordon Harker and Carl Dougherty was secretary. I do not know if there were any other officers. The second president in 1939 was Reid Nation. The third president in 1940 was Herschel VanSickle.

From 1937 to 1942 the club had a regular meeting room on the third floor of the Indianapolis Union Station. The club was very active until World War II started in 1941. Most members were in some branch of the armed forces. Bob McLeland was exempted and the information I have found indicates he was the one person responsible for holding the club together during those dark years. Bob often told me that in those years if three people could get together for a meeting it was a crowd. I do not know if Bob was given the title "Official Caller Upper" during the war years, but I do know it was before 1950.

Gordon Harker organized the club with his friend Carl Dougherty in the spring of 1937 and was first president. He was in WWII, did little or nothing in the club after the war, and was completely out of it by 1951. At one time he ran the miniature steam engine at Westlake Park on Indianapolis' west side. His address December 1983 was 3033 W. 39th St., Apt. 1013, Indianapolis, IN 46208.

Carl Dougherty was president of Hoosier Veneer Company. He has been dead several years as of February 1984. Dick Baldwin purchased some paper items from his estate and this includes some papers that mention RFI.

Edwin "Ed" P. Belknap is now is now 70 years old and lives at 1215 Delaware St., Anderson, IN 46016. He retired in April 1980 after working for the Indiana RR (bus driver), Portland Power Co., NYC RR, Penn Central RY, Whitewater Valley RR and Conrail.

Vane Jones belonged to RFI for several years in the 1950's, but never attended very many meetings. His son Cory came to meetings with him. Cory was still in high school.

Jerome Manchester lived east of Bridgeport on US 40. He died sometime between the end of WWII and 1950. He may have worked for a bank. Bob McLeland had some traction photos he had hand colored.

Dick Nation and Reid Nation were brothers. Dick was active until the middle 1950's. He took a lot of black and white interurban photos. Reid was the second president of the club in 1939.

Glen and Harry Nicely were both active in the club. Glen is in a nursing home at 910 S. Carol Ave., Michigan City, IN 46360. Harry now lives at 4019 22nd Ave. North, St. Petersburg, FL 33713.

Cliff (Alonso Clifford) Nichols was a very quiet person and soft spoken. He worked for Fidelity Trust Co. He was interested in Pullman cars and the consist of passenger trains. He had many notebooks full of car numbers of various passenger trains over the years. He lived with his sister at 6124 N. Collage Ave., Indianapolis IN. He died of a brain tumor in October 1955 at age 57.

Edgar Young Pattison asked everyone to call him Pat. He came to almost every meeting and made club trips for years. He was very quiet, but if you could get him to talk the knowledge was there. He took many Indianapolis Railways photos and also liked 0-6-0 and 0-8-0 steam engines. The following tribute to Pat is from the October 1974 newsletter. It is not known who wrote it.

“The railfan fraternity has lost one of its best with the death of Edgar Pattison at age 77. Mr. Pattison, who resided at 4331 N. Pennsylvania St., was retired from the Analysis Dept. of Indiana National Bank. A Navy veteran of World War I, Mr. Pattison was a lifelong resident of Indianapolis. A graduate of Williams College, he was a member of First Meridian Heights Presbyterian Church, Mystic Tie Masonic Lodge, Scottish Rite, Murat Shrine, York Rite Masonic bodies, Indiana Pioneers, and the Indiana Historical Society.

A railfan for some 50 years, Mr. Pattison had a good knowledge of rail operations all over the country. He made many long distance rail trips and had considerable knowledge of passenger schedules and equipment. He could intelligently discuss the history and mergers which many railroad companies went through in earlier years.

Mr. Pattison was a charter member of the Railfans of Indianapolis and a passenger on the August 22, 1937 Whitewater trip, the first trip ever operated by RFI. He was present on many excursions after that. He was present at an RFI meeting as recently as April 13, 1974. We shall miss him.”

Gil Reid was originally from Richmond, IN (?). He was probably living in Indianapolis in 1937 when he became a charter member. He later became an artist on the staff of Trains Magazine.

Robert M. Stacy is a transit operations engineer for the Dept. of Public property in Philadelphia, PA. His address is 13440 Stevens Rd., Philadelphia, PA 19116.

Marjorie True was very active in RFI until WWII, but not after the war. She worked at the main Indianapolis Public Library at Meridian St. and St. Clair St.

Herschel VanSickle was an active member for over 46 years, longer than any other member. The last meeting he attended was November 12, 1983 just 5 days before his unexpected death at age 77 on November 17, 1983 from a heart attack. He is buried in Crown Hill Cemetery. Pallbearers representing RFI were Jim Dunkman, Don Hurst, Wayne Thompson, and Leon Walker. His stepson Richard Baldwin wrote the following which appeared in the December 1983 RFI newsletter.

“Herschel first worked for his father who was owner-operator of the Irvington Dairy and then for a short time worked on the freight trains of the Terre Haute, Indianapolis and Eastern Traction Co. from Indianapolis to Richmond. He joined the Railway Mail Service and sorted mail on many passenger trains that passed through Indianapolis. He later worked as a supervisor at the truck and train terminal near Union Station, retiring in 1969. A graduate of Butler University, he served in the Air Force in England during World War II.

Herschel was one of the first members of the Railfans of Indianapolis (1937) and number 104 of the Central Electric Rail Fans Association in Chicago. He studied and rode most of the streetcar systems and interurbans of the United States and Canada and was very knowledgeable about the details of the Indiana systems.

He very much enjoyed attending the railfan meetings, missing very few during the forty-six years he was a member of RFI. I know he will be missed by all of us.”

George Witt was a mechanical engineer. For years he worked in Chicago, coming home Friday night on the Monon, returning to Chicago Sunday evening or Monday morning. Once in awhile some of us would go to the 38th St. station Friday night, see George and ride the train to Union Station. In later years George worked from his home at 610 N. Bosart. He would leave Monday morning by auto for whatever city he had a job in, and be gone all or part of the week. Often Bob McLeland or Herschel VanSickle would go with him and return home on the train. I remember at least one time Van rode to St Louis with George, road streetcars half a day and came home on the Spirit of St. Louis.

One day I remember so well was December 26, 1952. I was a junior in High school. George had a one day job at the brewery in South Bend. Mac, Fred Klein, me and some fellow that was in college, who lived down the street from George, all got into George's 1951 Packard and headed north in the very early hours. I had seen the South Shore but had never been to South Bend. We went north on US 31 and the plan was for George to let us out of the car when we crossed the tracks in the street in South Bend. We would walk to the station only a couple of blocks from there.

It was still dark when we arrived in South Bend. We went and went and went, George and Mac commenting about where the tracks were. After awhile I commented we would soon be in Michigan. "Dumb @\$% kid" said George. Then we saw the sign "Entering Michigan." The car came to a screeching halt. George turned around and said "Give me that blank blank map." Back in those days the street was smooth, it was dark and we were talking as we had driven over the tracks and under the wires, missing it completely. Well George mad a big U-turn, cussed all the way back downtown while Fred and I tried to keep a straight face. While George worked the rest of us rode the South Shore to Chicago. I don't remember now what we did all day but I do remember that was one of the times I was the coldest I could remember. We took the South Shore back to South Bend, met George and came home.

Back in those days we met in peoples homes. One warm summer evening George nailed a bed sheet to the side of his house and we sat in the back yard and showed slides. George's mother was a most interesting old lady who had been a teacher and school principal. She always sat in on meetings in their home. She didn't go to other houses much, but once in a while went on a trip with George.

I can't remember the date George died. He was an only child and had no close family. George was a proud man who did not want anyone to see him when he was sick. He had diabetes and had a leg removed. He was in City (General) hospital by then. I went out one Sunday afternoon to see him. He was in a wheel chair. He was always a gruff sort and he was really nasty to me that day. Now that I'm a lot older and have been in the hospital a few times myself I can understand how George felt. At the time I felt kind of hurt and never went back to see him. I do not think there was a funeral. I have no clippings or any memory of a service. George did not attend any church that I knew of. There was a hymn he mentioned lines of now and then. Not too many years ago I mentioned what I could remember to Ron Morris and he found it. Here is part of it:

Under His wings I am safely abiding;
Though the night deepens and tempests are wild,
Still I can trust Him; I know He will keep me;
He has redeemed me, and I am His child.

I have often wondered if under that shell there must have been a George I was never able to know. There have been very few people I have had this kind of feeling about.

I knew George had died and he had no close family. He did however have someone appointed to care for all his legal business while he was incapacitated in the hospital. One of George's neighbors was a man named Richards who was a clerk in the Wisconsin ST. yard office of the Illinois Central. He never joined the club, but came to the meetings held at George's house. One Friday night Richards called me and said George's house was being cleaned out. It seems this legal appointee, who had a drinking problem, was half smashed and in the process of cleaning out the house and burning everything in sight. He said he would be done by Saturday night. I made some phone calls and could find no one who could or would go with me Saturday morning so I went alone.

I found in the middle of the dining room floor a huge pile of photographs, negatives, cancelled checks, letters, tax returns, newspaper clippings – everything a man and his family would accumulate while living in a house a lifetime. A pile this big had already been burned. I was told I could take anything about railroads, but nothing of a personal nature. I got down on my hands and knees and began sorting while papers were being carried out to be burned. I saved about 200 photos and negatives. I almost cried as I watched the beautiful engraved wedding certificate of George's parents go into the fire. I did save a few stamps, but only after each envelope was checked to be sure it was empty. I also took many Trains and Railroad magazines. George had cats and the last few months these cats had been in the house with no one to watch them and many magazines were so soaked in cat pee they had to be thrown away. I took the magazines and insulators to Mac's house and as much of the rest as I thought I could get away with

bringing home to my place.

The first trip operated by RFI was August 29, 1937 over the Whitewater Division of the New York Central. The train went from Indianapolis to Cincinnati, then back to Valley Jct., then up the Whitewater to Connersville, and a return to Indianapolis. The engine was #4860, a 4-6-2. A diner, baggage car and five coaches made up the train. A total of 325 people were on the trip. Dick Baldwin has a flyer of the trip and Van's ticket. I have not located any photographs of the trip. I do have a newspaper clipping. In this article the club is referred to as the Indianapolis Railroad Fans Association. I don't know if this was the actual club name or a reporter's error.

The second trip operated by RFI was November 7, 1937 over the Indiana Railroad interurban system. This was a two car train, cars 60 and 55 from Indianapolis to Muncie and Ft. Wayne and returning by the Peru Line. This trip was arranged by Glen Nicely and Bob Stacy. A group photo was taken at the Ft. Wayne station by an unknown photographer and Dick George has a copy of it although he was not on the trip. Both RFI and CERA operated trips on the Indiana Railroad. Often one group had a trip on one day and the other group had a trip the following day over another IR line.

In 1938 Bob McLeland became a member. I think the following also joined that year: Jim Cook, Bob Frederick, and Dick George.

Robert Moffett McLeland's father was Oliver P. McLeland. Oliver built a double at 3545 N. Illinois St. and another double on the east side of Salem St. in the 3300 or 3400 block. Mac lived at 3545 N. Illinois St. and after his parents died the rent from the other three was to take care of him, but the money ran out. About November 1963 Mac sold the Salem St. double and it was torn down for a doctor's office. Mac was born in 1896 and died November 26, 1970. His funeral was at Christ Church Cathedral and casket bearers were Horance Roberts, Herschel VanSickle, Bob McCord, Kermit Eisenbarth, Steve Davidson and Ron Stuckey.

As a very young child Mac had something that caused one leg to be about six inches shorter than the other. He wore a built up shoe. It was hard for him to walk a block, but he could ride a bicycle anywhere. He once rode to Niagara Falls and back. He would often take a 25 mile trip just to be doing it. From 1962 to 1970 Mac was caretaker at Christ Cathedral and was also what they called a "tyler." He would read Scripture at a service as well as open and close the church.

Mac fell at home and broke a hip about the first part of August 1970 and spent some time in Wishard Hospital. He was not going to be able to take care of himself and had no family to help. He ended up in the Americana Nursing Home on N. Capital Ave., about 20th St. Mac did not have much money. I know Paul Moffet does not want this told as Paul often does nice things without anyone knowing it. Paul paid the bill each month Mac was in the nursing home so he could have a phone to talk to people. Without any family all Mac had were his railfan friends. He found out he had prostate cancer and had an operation.

There are several stories involving Mac that I want to tell. First I will have to mention Bob's house. Bob was a good friend, both personal and railfan. I really don't know just how to write this. Most of the people reading this were never in Mac's house. They will say that Stuckey's imagination really got carried away this time. However, there are still a few around who were there. They will say "Why is Stuckey trying to cover it up, why don't he tell it like it really was?"

Mac lived at 3545 N. Illinois, Indianapolis, IN. His father built the double and they lived in the south side, renting the north side. His mother died first and he and his father then lived together. He stayed there after his father's death. Mac wasn't a fancy dresser but he kept himself clean. Everything was sent to the laundry. The last few years of his life he was running out of money and his eyesight had gotten so bad he just didn't realize his clothes were not always first class. He would have been embarrassed had he known.

The house was a different ball game. Living alone in a large house his place became the landing spot any time someone died or had railroad items they no longer needed. Most of Cliff Nichols' collection went to Mac's house. I took as much of George Witt's things as I thought Margaret would let into the house and the rest went to Mac's. There are two examples. Things came from other places also. Add to this the fact Mac never threw anything away.

On the tables, on the chairs, on the floor would be newspapers, magazines, cancelled checks, money, photographs, timetables, receipts, you name it. This was true of every room. There was a coal furnace so add a thick layer of dust to all of this.

It got to the place where a neighbor called the Board of Health. Fred Klein, Dave Englert, Bruce McClary and I went to see what we could do. Margaret said no way could I take the vacuum cleaner from home so we rented an industrial sized one. We picked up so much it had to be emptied after we cleaned each room. Before we could do anything we had to sort out all the mass of paper – here was a timetable that had been stepped on 15 times. Is it rare enough to try to save or common enough to smuggle to the trash burner?

Put the cancelled checks in order – you were doing well to get them all in the same room! There were things that had not been moved since his mother died. “But we’ve GOT to clean this dirt up.” “Don’t throw that away, Bob.” “If we don’t the Board of Health will. Who do you want to deal with, us or them?”

It was a big undertaking and took all of a summer Saturday until past dark and most of Sunday. It was far from a perfect job, but it did get the B of H off his back for a while. About a year later Bob got careless with the kitchen and a bunch of mice got in. The same neighbor (and once upon a time he tried to fix me up with the woman’s granddaughter) again called the B and H. We had cleaned enough out the year before that this time it only took us a day to get him ready for inspection. Fortunately none of the darned mice began to smell until after the inspection.

Mac fell later and broke his hip so all of us never got to go back for a third try. Bruce and I did however after Mac died. All of Mac’s railroad collection went to Van. Bruce had a truck, so he, Van and I carried out the railroad items. The lawyer had to hire somebody to get the house cleaned and painted for selling.

Years before Bob learned I had met a special girl and he wanted to meet her. So one afternoon I took Margaret (who later became my wife) to his house. She almost died on the spot. She liked Bob, but I don’t think in all those years she was ever in the house more than one more time.

Bob liked her also and he wanted to do something for us. The following took place in the summer of 1958. Mac went to the Civic Theater on N. Alabama St. 9 (the Hedback Community Theater today). Mac bought tickets for the three of us to see a play. I have no idea what the name of it was or who was in it. Mac’s legs were long and it was also hard for him to sit still for a long time. Act One ended and the lights came on for intermission. The lady in front of him stood up and all of a sudden this loud voice boomed out “Son of a ----!” It seems Mac had his foot under her seat and when she stood up and folded up the seat it got his toes. Poor Margaret took off down the aisle to the lobby pretending she didn’t know either of us. It took Mac about two years to get back on her good side. He invited her to the theater several times, but she never accepted.

Most of you are too young to remember the Esquire Theater that was at 30th and Illinois. It was a small building known for foreign or unusual movies. By the standards of 30 years ago dirty stuff. Today first graders see it on TV – and understand it! So anyway in 1958 this movie called “The Moon is Blue” was playing and some of us young fellows decided to go see it. There were 5 or 6 of us – myself, Fred Klein, Dave Englert and some others I don’t remember. Mac found out we were going and since this was right down the street from him asked if he might meet us. Since it was an unofficial club outing, why not? A few days later one of the more religious members found out this dirty old man had taken us young boys to see this film of sin and really chewed poor Mac out. Well, after all these years the truth is out. It was us goody two shoes boys that led the old man down the street to the show of sin. This movie by the way played to a full house for over a year.

This is Bruce McClary’s story. Bruce was still in high school when this took place. Bruce and Mac were in Chicago and had been riding the North Shore and CA&E all night. They stopped for breakfast and Mac ordered a root beer float. Bruce told me that, after four years in the air force and working on Metroliners all those years, lots of interesting things have happened to him, but a root beer float for breakfast still leaves him speechless!

It was reported in the Indianapolis News 1/1/65 that Bob McLeland, part time employee of Christ Church Cathedral, said he thinks it’s a good thing Christmas postal stamps do not picture a nativity scene or

anything of a religious nature. He is quoted as saying "I'd hate to see the Lord cancelled out."

Bob never married. Someone once made the comment Bob was married to the Illinois Terminal Railroad. From then on we all teased him about the IT being his wife, and every so often we said it was time to go to Danville (IL) and have a ride on Bob's wife. Bob said he didn't care as long as we paid full fare! Bob would often hitchhike to Danville, and later Champaign, spending 2 or 3 days on the IT, and then hitchhike home. The last few years he did this we were all pretty concerned about the old man being off by himself like that. Much as I hated to see passenger service end on the IT, it was a relief not to have to worry about Mac.

The IT had a big part in our lives. We never ran a club trip on it, but rode trips sponsored by other clubs plus regular rides. The drivers were usually Van of Charley Preston. Van had a 1951 Chevy 2-door hardtop and Charley had a 1949 Plymouth Suburban station wagon. The Chevy had soft seats, but no leg room. The Plymouth was a cheap model, lots of leg room, but no padding in the seats. I liked to go with Van as he was the best story teller. If you got Van and Mac in the same car you'd have such a good time you didn't care if you got there or not. As soon as one finished a story the other would start a new one.

James F. Cook lives at 1616 Euclid Dr., Anderson, IN 46011. He is 70 years old and retired from the US Post Office. Richard H. George lives at 203 Thornberry Circle, Pittsburgh, PA 15234.

A club trip was taken on August 21, 1938 on the Indiana Railroad from Indianapolis to Louisville and return. This ride was on a 2-car train using car #458 and trailer #302. [margin notes: 3rd trip, left Indy 7:30am, cost \$1.95] The trip was arranged by Glen Nicely and Bob Stacy. Known to be on the trip were George Krambles, Ralph Perkins, Jack Yeabower, Dick George, and Ed Belknap. It should be noted that on August 20 the CERA ran an Indiana RR trip from Indianapolis to Muncie and Kokomo. This trip had about 20 people including John Bowman, George Krambles, Jim Shoeman, Bob Millenback, Bob Stacy, Glen Nicely, Harry Zilner, Bill Jamson and Barney Stone.

The fourth trip operated by RFI was on the Ferdinand Railroad on October 22, 1938. They went as a group from Indianapolis by bus. I think there were between 30 and 40 people on the train. One person on the trip was a photographer for the Indianapolis Star. Photos of the trip were in the brown tone Rotogravure section of the October 23, 1938 Sunday Star. Van had saved this clipping and I made a set of slides from it. I later found this page in the Indiana State Library and made a copy of the entire page. Names in the clipping are: Clifford Nichols, Jerome Manchester, Mrs. Shirley Horton, Maurice Horton, Gordon Harker, Harry B. Nicely, Ed Belknap, and Bill Kirch. Gordon Harker is supposed to have photos from this trip. I have never seen any known photos.

February 1939 – exact date not known and no known photos. Chartered New York Central parlor car #52 from Indianapolis to St. Louis and return. Westbound on train #427 leaving at 2:45am and returned on train #38 at 10:50pm.

RFI took a trip April 30, 1939 over the Indiana Railroad former TH&E line from Indianapolis to Terre Haute using cars #66, #56 and #59 [margin notes: left 7:30am, \$1.45]. This trip had 120 people including Ed Belknap and Dick George. It was arranged by Bob Stacy and Glen Nicely. This trip is the cover shot of CERA Bulletin #91. However, the RFI sign in the center window of the lead car has been retouched out of the cover photo. Several photos in Bulletin #91 were taken on this trip.

On May 14, 1939 a group from Detroit came to Indianapolis and RFI joined with them. RFI may have even arranged some of it. Part of the group took Indiana RR #59 to Anderson and return, plus the FT. Harrison loop. The operator was Tanio and at one stretch ran 87 MPH. The rest of the group took a bus tour of railroads in Indianapolis.

Sometime in 1939 a trip was taken on the Louisville, New Albany & Corydon RR. The Indiana RR was ridden to Louisville and a bus taken to Corydon. Photos indicate a small number of people and that it was a warm day. Locomotive #9, a 4-4-0, and one combine coach were used. Herschel VanSickle and George Witt are known to have been on this trip.

On September 2, 1939 a CERA trip arranged by Glen Nicely and Bob Stacy was taken on RR car #375 from

Indianapolis to Terre haute and return. On the following day, Labor Day September 3, 1939, the same two men arranged a RFI trip on Indiana RR #55 to Louisville and Return. Ed Belknap is known to have been on this trip. Dick George was on both trips. Some have said that the 9/2 trip was RFI and 9/3 was CERA.

Sometime in 1939, no date or photos known, a trip by New York Central train #415 was taken to Lafayette. After a tour through the Monon shops, the return home was on NYC train #406. Also in 1939 a trip on chartered New York Central parlor car #53 was taken. This trip left Indianapolis on train #436 for Cincinnati and returned home on train #443.

A May 19, 1940 trip on the Indiana RR was planned, organized and attended by Dick George. This was a three car train consisting of #65, #57 and #59. The train went from Indianapolis to Muncie, New Castle, Ft. Wayne and returned. On one 3-car trip, this one or possibly a CERA trip, the 3rd car was damaged in the middle of the trip and only 2 cars finished. Known to be on this trip were Herschel VanSickle, Bob McLeland and George Witt.

On June 16, 1940 the RFI took a bus from Indianapolis to ride the Ferdinand RR. I think this was the time not very many went so the bus driver went back and got a smaller bus, a Beech Gove Transit city bus. A group photo taken by George Witt shows 19 people which I think includes the train crew.

A trip was taken on January 1, 1941. Some say this was a RFI trip, others say it was by invitation only. A group of about 10 including Herschel VanSickle, Bob Stacy, Barney Stone, and George Krambles left Indianapolis on Indiana RR freight box motor #716 for Anderson. Car #1150 (perhaps a tool car by then) was then taken to New Castle, maybe to Muncie, and then back to Anderson. The group returned from Anderson to Indianapolis by motor #716.

No club trips were taken from 1942 through 1947.

Joining soon after the end of World War II were Harold Ekstram, Charles B. Preston, Gordon Tongue and Barney Ziegler. About 1948 Dave W. Duthie, Kermit Eisenbarth and Frank Summers joined RFI. Those joining about 1949 were Steve Davidson and Dave Peat. Fred Klein and Ron Stuckey became a part of RFI in the fall of 1951. Dick Baldwin joined in late 1952 or 1953.

Charley Preston now lives at 184 Southern Plaza Dr., Indianapolis, IN 46227. His main interest has always been traction. He was one of our drivers when we would go to the Illinois Terminal. On one trip he missed the interurban leaving Springfield. Mac stayed in Champaign with Charley's car. The rest of us piled into Van's car and came home. Charley found a bus and reached Champaign not too long after us.

From 1923 to 1926 Charley worked for the Indianapolis News. He made one trip per day on the THI&E to Brazil delivering the newspapers. The news was active and several farmers along the right of way took the paper and he would throw it off. In towns he threw off the bundles of papers. He left Indianapolis at 3:30pm and returned at 6:35pm. He made \$5 a week. A few people took the Times but the News was the more popular newspaper. He quit this job to go to college.

His first job after college was with the Conservation Dept. of the State of Indiana and he was stationed in Washington, IN. He would often get to see the interurban from Evansville to Patoka but never had the money to ride or buy a camera. He did buy a camera about 1950 and took photos until the mid 1970's. Most of his color slides, books and a complete set of CERA bulletins were given to the Indiana Historical Society. As of 2/84 he still has all his black and white negatives and a few books and slides.

He obtained aerial views taken by the State highway Dept. of the region where the Terre Haute line of the THI&E and the Louisville line of the IRR ran. In some photos is possible to see an operating interurban car. In the early 1960's he drove both lines taking black and white photos of anything he could find.

I did not know Barney Ziegler very well. He was an "O" scale traction modeler. His traction line operated from live overhead wire. Barney last worked at the Children's Museum. He worked there at the time the Reuben Wells came to Indianapolis. He arranged for the club to meet two or three times in the original building the Reuben Wells was placed in. It was a metal structure with a pit in the floor. His actual name was Bernard. He lived at 3070 N. Delaware and was 60 when he died in November 1971.

RFI was mentioned in the Wayne Guthrie column in the Indianapolis News on February 9, 1948. It was stated the club had less than 20 members and no officers. Bob McLeland was said to be the official caller upper.

Several trips were made on the Ferdinand RR. The first trip on June 16, 1940 has already been mentioned. The second trip was October 9, 1949. This was the first trip that used ex-Indiana RR car #305. Another trip was taken a year later on October 8, 1950. My first trip on the Ferdinand was October 28, 1951 when about 20 people again visited the railroad. They had a LNA&C engine which had not yet been repainted, having only been purchased the week before.

Another trip on the Ferdinand was July 27, 1952. A total of 63 people showed up. The LNA&C engine had been repainted black with no lettering. This steam engine was not as good as expected and the Ferdinand sued the LNA&C. Never did find out how it came out. There was an empty CB&Q boxcar in the yards which was coupled between the tender and the coach for a mixed train. I rode one way in the boxcar which was enough! I returned in the coach.

Streetcars were important to RFI. The closest cities with streetcars were Chicago and St. Louis. The trips were advertised in Trains and Railroad magazines and usually brought a full car. I do not remember the exact price. It was about \$20 or \$25 to charter the streetcar for approximately 6 hours. The cars would seat 47 so it was easy for the club to make \$20 on a trip. That does not sound like much in 1984, but at the time that was big money. The streetcars were built by the John G. Brill Co. in Philadelphia. Indianapolis and Calgary, Alberta Canada were the only two cities that had this model streetcar.

The first streetcar trip was October 24, 1948 with one car. I do not know the number. The second trip was October 12, 1949 and also used one car, possibly #167. The third trip was May 21, 1950 and used one car, possibly #155. My first RFI trip was June 10, 1951 when Fred Klein and I went together. Two streetcars were used, #132 and #150.

On August 24, 1952 the Southern Ohio Div. of the CERA and the Southern Ohio Chapter of the NRHS sponsored a joint train trip from Dayton, OH to Indianapolis. Some of their group went to Beech Grove Shops and the rest rode streetcars #183 and #170. RFI had nothing to do with the planning or operation of the trip, but several of us including me rode it.

The final streetcar trip was held December 28, 1952. Car #148 was used and the motorman was Pete Miller, the oldest streetcar motorman in age and service. When the streetcars quit, he quit (retired).

January 9, 1953 was the last day of operation for the streetcars. Car #148 was the car used for the last run and decorated. We railfans were on the next to the last car #178. The last trip finished somewhere around 1:00am and all our fair city's great leaders who rode the last car were drunk by the time they arrived at the W. Washington St. car barns. "Take anything you want" they said. W. Marshall Dale himself reached up and ripped the rear view mirror off #148 and gave it to me. The streetcars required a key to operate (they were all keyed alike). Someone had taken the key from #148 and the shop men wanted to move it a few feet. Being a good railfan I had my own streetcar key (which Joe Miller had swiped for me) in my pocket and I loaned it for moving of the car.

I had many of the signs from the car plus various miscellaneous parts from several of the 100 series cars. Some years ago I gave all this to the Indiana Transportation Museum at Noblesville. This was after car number (someplace I have that car number) was moved to the museum from Bedford, IN.

I don't remember who discovered the Algiers, Winslow and Western. At that time it was owned by the Enos coal Co. of Indianapolis. We finally got Mac to call them up. "Why ride our railroad? It doesn't go anywhere" they said. Mac called several times. Finally they said we'd have to ride in a caboose and they wanted \$150. We said OK. The tickets were \$3.00 and the photo on the ticket was taken by Dick Nation. I can't remember if he or Dave Peat made the tickets. Once the AWW approved it I don't think we had much time to advertise the trip. Anyway, only 42 people came, giving the club an income of only \$126, so we went \$24 in the red. The trip was held October 12, 1952 and used a steam engine and four cabooses.

As a club, RFI has never been a part of any museum. The closest we ever came was in 1952 when

Ron Stuckey and Fred Klein asked for a vote on how many were in favor of putting an Indianapolis city streetcar in Bob McLeland's back yard. Many members have belonged to and been active in various museum groups. The club policy has been not to become involved.

While on the subject of museums, I offer this just so it will be recorded. The Indiana Transportation Museum first had a CA&E car in near downtown Indianapolis. Then the equipment was moved to a factory on the south side of Noblesville. There was some kind of disagreement and the group split. One bunch went to Forest park in north Noblesville and one bunch to the ex-Milwaukee tracks in Westport, IN. When the NYC abandoned their track the group moved to Greensburg, IN. After a few years the equipment was moved to French Lick, IN where the operation is known as the Indiana Railroad Museum.

Herschel VanSickle was a good storyteller and this one is about French Lick. There was this Frenchman who came to Indiana. He said Indiana was a confusing place. South Bend was north, North Vernon was south, and French Lick was not what the name implied it to be.

The Louisville NRHS Chapter was very active from about 1952 (maybe sooner and I don't know it) until 1960. Some of us from Indianapolis went on several of their trips. This is when we first met Dr. Howard Blackburn. One trip was on the L&N out of Louisville on June 15, 1952. Another was on the Illinois Terminal.

Several of us including me joined the Louisville chapter. We didn't go to every meeting but did attend several. Some of us young whippersnappers decided we should have a NRHS chapter in Indianapolis. I went so far as to say I thought RFI and the Noblesville Museum should join forces and together form the Indianapolis Chapter of NRHS. Today I still think it was a good idea, but few others did or do. It was put to a vote, drop the name RFI and become the Indianapolis Chapter of the NRHS. The old men outnumbered the young fellows and the club stayed RFI. This was the only time I was mad at Mac and Van, but I got over it.

Here's something I haven't gotten over yet. Some 10 or 12 years later I got a letter in the mail. A NRHS chapter had been formed in Indianapolis and it was too late for me to be a charter member, but if I sent money in I could be a member. I said "shove it" and never have joined them.

All the years Van was interested in trains, he never owned a camera. When I graduated from high school in 1953 I took all the money I was given and purchased a camera. I had a cheap fixed focus Ansco I had purchased second hand that was really not much of a camera. After buying my new one, I put the old one aside. Some time in the summer of 1953, Van and three or four others were making a trip to Iowa which had four interurban lines operating. I got the old Ansco out, bought 2 rolls of black and white film, gave the camera to Van and asked him to get me some Iowa interurban photos. Van became so interested he bought a third roll of film while in Iowa and brought three rolls back.

He used my camera a couple more times on shorter trips. Then he bought his own 35mm camera and began taking slides. I can't remember if Dick helped him pick out a camera or if he did it on his own. Anyway, Van never took any slides until 1954 or 1955. As we all know, he became a good photographer and was active taking photos to the end. I think this was his only camera. He had no special lens so everything was taken with the standard 50mm lens.

I have forgotten what Van's first car was. His second was a 1937 Plymouth coupe. The one I remember best was a 1951 Chevy two door hardtop that was yellow with a black top. Van put a doorbell on the car. We would stop at a traffic light in a small town and a pretty girl would cross the street. Van would ring the doorbell. She would look around and there we all sat. We didn't know nothin' about nothin'! She would shake her head and then go on. About the time she reached the curb, Van would ring the doorbell again!

Van's father, Pierre, bought a new 1949 or 1950 Nash four door. Pierre died soon after this so Van's brother, whose name was Paul Senour VanSickle, acquired the Nash. For the 1951 Ferdinand trip, Van arranged to trade cars with Paul as it would be easier to take several people in the Nash. However, Paul failed to mention the fact that the gas gauge was not working properly. We stopped in French Lick, where I tasted the water, and Van laughed, and I've never tasted it since.

We left French Lick and started up this big hill. The car quit. Van coasted to the side of the road, looked

under the hood and decided everything indicated the car was out of gas. He put the Nash in neutral, released the brake, and began coasting backwards down the hill, maneuvering onto the proper side of the road for going north! We rolled backwards probably ¼ mile to a gas station. We had to get out and push the car some three or four feet to the gas hose because some car got in our way and we had to stop. If it wasn't for that we could have rolled all the way to the pump!

Van was married June 12, 1956.

Bruce McClary joined in 1956. His father worked for the New York Central in Albany, NY. The Albany shops were closed and they moved to Beech Grove, IN in 1955.

In August 1958 RFI chartered Monon business car #1. Those who went drove to Louisville. Car #1 was put on the rear of train #6 and they went to Lafayette, had a tour of the Monon Shops, and returned to Louisville on the rear of train #5. Dick Baldwin was in on the planning of this trip. RFI had contacted the Louisville club and they indicated several would go. At the last minute very few or no one from Louisville went. Dick thinks maybe a total of twelve went. I was not on the trip. Among those who went were Herschel Van Sickle, Charley Preston, Dick Baldwin and Dick's cousin Ronald Morgan. Forget what it cost. The club lost money on this trip.

A 1959 issue of Trains magazine had a list of clubs including RFI.

Verley V. Slater lived at 2702 Shelby St. not far from Van. The best I can remember he was a member from about 1960 to 1968. He had been a motorman for the Indiana Railroad and Van met him at the employee's picnic one year. He didn't car much for diesels, but did belong to the club for several years. I went to at least two meetings at his house. He was in a nursing home when he died in August 1970 at age 89.

In 1965: President – Paul Moffett , Secretary-Treasurer – Bob McCord.

No dues were collected in 1965. The early beginnings of our newsletter started while Paul was President. He was sending out meeting notices and began to use a piece of 8½ x 11 inch paper, printed on both sides with bits of information as well as notice of the next meeting. Paul continued this until January 1968 when Tom Knowles became President and took over mailing the meeting notice out.

In 1966 and 1967: President – Paul Moffett, Vice President – Glen Nicely, Secretary-Treasurer – Bob McCord. There were 16 members in 1967.

In 1968: President – Tom Knowles, Vice President – Bob McCord, Secretary-Treasurer Ron Stuckey.

In 1969: President – Bob Jones, Vice President – Bob McCord, Secretary-Treasurer Ron Stuckey. A new position was formed in 1969 called Newsletter Editor. The first editor was John Fuller and Volume I, No. 1 was dated February 1969. The February 14, 1969 meeting was at the Children's Museum in the building where the Reuben Wells was on display.

In 1970: President – Bob Jones, Vice President – Tom Knowles, Secretary-Treasurer – Ron Stuckey.

One of the best club trips was March 14, 1970. We drove to Lafayette, rode the westbound Wabash Cannonball to Danville, Illinois, stayed at the station and then returned on the eastbound Cannonball. Those on the trip were Van, Mac, Tom Knowles, Ron Stuckey, Susan Stuckey, John Fuller and probably ten others.

On April 18, 1970 some group was having a dance at Union Station and wanted the club to put on a railroad display. Tom Knowles and Bob Jones worked on this project and I loaned some timetables and photos.

I never knew Tom Billings very well and I'm not sure anyone did. He came quite regularly from 1969 to 1971. He worked for Indiana Bell Telephone Co. and was active at the Children's Museum. He was responsible for bringing the Reuben Wells to the museum.

After Bob "Mac" McLeland died, Tom Knowles wanted to do something for the club so he designed and paid for the High Iron Trophy. This was done anonymously and I didn't know for a long time who the person was. Tom moved to Florida and I think he is dead now so I see no reason to keep this secret.

In 1971 and 1972: President -- Tom Knowles, Vice President -- Bob McCord, Secretary-Treasurer -- Ron Stuckey. No election was held in 1972 and all officers carried over with Tom mailing out the newsletter/meeting notice both years.

In 1973: President -- Joe Trauty, Vice President -- Bob McCord, Secretary-Treasurer Ron Stuckey. Joe took over the newsletter in 1973 and this is when it took on its present form 8 1/2 x 11 with photos on the cover. For the most part I liked Joe Trauty. RFI is a loose knit unstructured organization. Joe was elected president in 1973, tried to run RFI like the military and it just didn't work. I don't think any of us hold any grudge against Joe and would not object to him again being with us. Joe believed RFI should be put before God and most of us don't.

I was Secretary-Treasurer the year Joe was President. I really upset Joe because I put doing the things with my kids ahead of RFI. Well the girls were only young once. After they were grown up I put more time back into RFI. Now I'm working on the grandchildren. If it comes to the place where I have to pick between RFI or my grandchildren the kids will win. I can't speak for everybody, but do know several feel this way. RFI is great and we'll come as often as we can, but the wife and family have priority.

In 1974: President -- Wayne Thompson, Vice President Marianna Trauty (Joe's wife), Secretary-Treasurer Ron Stuckey. Dennis Dunkman became editor of the newsletter in January 1974. Tom Carroll was editor for one year sometime in the 1970's and then Dennis became editor again until January 1983.

The following eight paragraphs were written in February 1974 by Herschel VanSickle. They contain some very interesting personal and club history. His title for this is "The R.F.I. Story."

"Being the senior member of Railfans of Indianapolis, I am frequently asked about the history of the club. Since no written record of its activities has been kept, in trying to provide an answer to these questions it will be necessary to depend on memory and to some extent to interweave my own personal related activities into this story.

It may be surprising to some to learn that there has not always been organized railfan activity. Neither has there always been television, air-conditioning, radio, talking motion pictures, airplanes, diesel locos, motor busses, motor trucks, automobiles, elevated railroad tracks in the downtown area, paved country roads or even a highway commission collecting gasoline taxes to build them. I am a member of the class of 1906, and personally saw in my lifetime the beginning and growth of every one of these developments.

I lived the first 6 years of my life on a farm at 9500 Brookville Road. The farm was also located on the Rushville lines of the Cincinnati, Hamilton & Dayton Railroad and the Indianapolis & Cincinnati Traction Co., which provided us with our own private local stop, No. 5 1/2. The interurban cars were the first vehicles on wheels that I ever rode on, except probably the family buggy, and I have recollections as far back as about 1910 of walking with my mother to our stop, watching for the approach of the local car from the east, flagging it so the motorman would know we wanted to ride, having the car stop and pick us up, and then riding grandly downtown. These cars employed bow style current collectors rather than the usual trolley pole, and were altogether very impressive. Sometimes a CH&D steam train would pass while we were in the area, and these are the factors which first stirred my interest in rail transport, and before I had my first ride in an automobile.

Well, as time passed, I came to realize there were other steam and electric railroad lines. I had my first California rail trip in 1915, west by Santa Fe and return via Feather river & Royal Gorge, with rides on the Pacific Electric and Key System trains in between. In 1921 we made a combined traction and lake steamer trip to Niagara Falls, a very enjoyable excursion. In 1923 I got to visit Chicago, and discovered the elevated railways and the North Shore Line.

Over the years I watched railroading at trackside and road whenever I could, but in the period up

to 1934 I never had any idea there was such a person as another enthusiast. That year I began to read articles about special train-fan trips being run out of Chicago and New York carrying hundreds of passengers on "off the beaten path" excursions. I, of course, hoped that something similar might occur at Indianapolis, and finally in the spring of 1937 read in the News of the formation of a railfan club. On August 29 they sponsored a NYC excursion to Cincinnati with a side trip on the Whitewater branch on the return trip. I was on board this train, and have been a part of the club ever since.

The Whitewater trip was the best as well as the first trip of the RFI, drawing 320 passengers, and was also the only occasion when a main line steam train was chartered. There were, however, some 20 other fan trips operated on a lesser scale over the next 20 years, including one, two and three car excursions on the Indiana Railroad interurban system while it lasted, chartered car trips on the Indianapolis Railways car lines while they lasted, and charters on the Corydon, Ferdinand and the AW&W as long as they employed steam power. In addition, there were several movements in chartered cars attached to scheduled steam trains – destinations being Cincinnati, St. Louis, Chicago and Milwaukee. Our final chartered car trip was operated for us by the Monon from Louisville to Lafayette and return in 1958. This is the only RFI excursion of which I can show slides, since all the others took place before I owned a camera.

Since this 1958 adventure, which cost our treasury some \$75 because of insufficient patronage, RFI has become pretty much the group of armchair railroaders which you know today. We of course regret the loss of our interurban network, the city streetcar lines, and most of our passenger trains which used to provide the basis for our activities. We still make occasional trips to distant cities to observe their railroad activities and to ride those excursion trains which are still being run. And we take pride in the accomplishments of our fellow rail organizations, the Indiana Museum of Transport and the Indiana Railway Museum in developing their own operating properties because many of their organizers had earlier been members of RFI.

In concluding the RFI story, I might observe that being a rail enthusiast is an interest which may sometimes turn out to be advantageous, since some of the members are gainfully employed in the industry. One alumnus of RFI, Robert Stacy, went to help build Baldwin and later FM diesel locos, and for 10 years has been assistant and now Chief transit Engineer of the City of Philadelphia. Another, Dick George, has always had rail employment and has recently become vice-president of the D&H RR. Two of Stacy's associates in railfan activities (before RFI), George Krambles and Bill Jantzen, are now Chief of Planning of Chicago Transit Authority and Chief mechanical Officer of the South Shore Line. I mention the progress these former railfans on the local scene made because it might give some encouragement to some young person who might be considering work in the railroad field to try his luck. I should add that Stacy, Krambles and Jantzen were graduates of the University of Illinois course in Electric Railroad Engineering and no doubt having some special skill would be helpful to any prospective employee."

In 1975: President – Glen King, Vice President – Dennis Dunkman, Secretary-Treasurer Ron Stuckey.

This history would not be complete without some mention of the trips taken by Bob McCord and Ron Stuckey. When I started going on trips with Bob he already had a good reputation. His trips would start at 6am and end about 4am the next day.

From February 1975 to February 1976 Ron was among the unemployed. Ron and Bob shared common interests in stations, freight cars and just seeing the countryside. They could travel all day, never see a train move and still come home happy. I am really not sure if these should be called trips or a test to see how much punishment the human body could endure. In later years, Bob had Crohn's disease and Ron had cancer but nothing from a trip can be blamed for either.

Bob has seen more railroads by moonlight than any six others combined. Here's what really put an end to the long trips. One night Ron remembered driving around the 31 bypass at Kokomo, IN where Bob took the wheel. Ron's next memory was waking up at home in bed sometime late in the morning. Ron's wife, Margaret, decided they had better quit before they killed themselves or someone else. At one point in time Ron and Bob were having a contest to see who could be in the hospital the most. Ron was in more times, but Bob's total number of days was larger!

A club trip was made to Louisville, KY on July 19, 1975. Went through the L&N shops and saw the Auto Train and K&T facilities. A south shore trip was made August 17, 1975.

In 1976: President – Leon Walker, Vice President – Milton Evans, Secretary-Treasurer Ron Stuckey. A club trip to Joliet, IL Union Station was made June 12, 1976.

In 1977: President – Wayne Thompson, Vice President – Paul Vos, Secretary-Treasurer -- Dennis Dunkman. RFI had 26 members in 1977. A South Shore trip was made March 27, 1977.

In 1978: President – Jim Dunkman, Vice President – Mike Hartwick, Secretary-Treasurer Dennis Dunkman. On October 22, 1978 RFI chartered a trackless trolley in Dayton, OH. The trip to Dayton was made by car and not many went. Those on the trip were Ron Stuckey, Herschel VanSickle, Dennis Dunkman, Jim Dunkman, Richard Vonnegut and Wayne Thompson. Were Paul and Andy Vos on this trip? We rode a Marmon-Herrington trackless trolley around Dayton for three hours, then went someplace & watched trains until dark. It was a real fun trip. Just wish more people had gone. The club treasury made up part of the cost of the trip.

In 1979: President – Mike Hartwick, Vice president – Mark Bennett, Secretary-Treasurer Dennis Dunkman.

In 1980: President – Mark Bennett, Vice President – Mark Baker, Secretary-Treasurer Dennis Dunkman.

Ron Stuckey wrote the following history of the High iron Trophy. This is how it appeared in the January 1980 issue of the RFI newsletter the Railfan Rambles (with the names of the recipients in recent years added):

THE HISTORY OF THE HIGH IRON TROPHY by Ron Stuckey

“Many times I have said I was going to write the story of the High Iron Trophy. Tonight, November 26, 1979, some strange force urged me to search through my files for some newspaper clippings to aid my memory. Chills go down my back as I remember that nine years ago this very day the trumpet of the Lord sounded and a very good friend crossed the River Jordan. Often he said ‘Jesus, lover of my soul’ half the time swearing, half the time because he believed.

Jesus, lover of my soul,
Let me to Thy bosom fly,
While the nearer waters roll,
While the tempest still is high:
Hide me, O my Savior hide,
Till the storm of life is past;
Safe into the haven guide;
O receive my soul at last!

We sang all four verses at his funeral in Christ Church Cathedral, with tears in my eyes and a lump in my throat. No tears tonight, but the lump came back.

Robert Moffat McLeland, 1896-1970. We called him lots of things, but he was best known in the club as the “Official Caller Upper.” All kinds of stories come to mind. Some can be printed and some can’t. At each Annual Meeting, Mac had to read the constitution of the club (bet you didn’t know we had one). Mac was a great person, but he had little formal education. To hear him try to read that constitution out loud was an experience you should all give thanks for missing.

I am supposed to write about the trophy, so perhaps some other time I’ll write about Bob. Yet the two go together.

The trophy was donated to the club by a man who was a member at that time, in honor and memory to Bob. A member who had done something for the club would receive the trophy for a year. His name would go on a plaque. When the trophy arrived Tom Knowles was President.

At that time our meetings were held in members' homes. Tom decided the person who was hosting the meeting would take the trophy home for a month, then the next host would take it. So that first year the trophy travelled all over the city and no name was put on a plaque.

The anonymous donor is no longer a club member. I didn't know who he was for several years. I will respect his wish and not print his name. I do feel his name should go into the club archives in some way. Perhaps someone can suggest a way to do this.

Recipients of the Robert McLeland Memorial Trophy (The High Iron):

1971 – Tom Knowles;
1972 – Herschel Van Sickle
1973 – Milton Evans
1974 – Edgar Y. Pattison(posthumously)
1975 – Dennis Dunkman
1976 – Glen King; 1977 – Ron Stuckey
1978 – Leon Walker
1979 – Herschel VanSickle
1980 – Paul and Andy Vos
1981 – Robert Jones
1982 – Jim Dunkman
1983 – Wayne Thompson.

Addendum from the newsletter editor (Dennis Dunkman): The High Iron is presented at each Annual Meeting to a member who has made an outstanding contribution to the club. Originally, the outgoing President made the decision as to who would receive the award. Beginning in 1978, however, a committee comprising the last three recipients of the award has made the decision.”

RFI had a family outing on the Whitewater Valley RR on May 5, 1980. On June 18, 1980, member Bob Elliot, employed at the Amtrak Beech Grove shops, conducted a tour for eighteen people able to attend.

In 1981: President – Leon Walker, Vice President – Paul Vos, Secretary-Treasurer – Larry Zimmerman.

In 1982: President – Paul Vos, Vice President – Wayne Maple, Secretary-Treasurer – Larry Zimmerman.

In 1983: President – Dennis Dunkman, Vice President – Tom Robinson, Secretary-Treasurer – Larry Zimmerman.

Ron Stuckey became Editor of the newsletter in January 1983.

In 1984: President – Tom Robinson, Vice President – Jeff Gast, Secretary-Treasurer Larry Zimmerman.

Since ? Leon Walker has taken care of printing the covers.