



THE PLS GAZETTE

**PUBLISHED BY
THE PENNSYLVANIA LIVE STEAMERS, INC.**

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Mercer Bridge

This year marks some important anniversaries! The 250th of our country, The 80th for PLS and one other milestone we can take a moment to appreciate.

The 40th anniversary of Mercer Bridge! As I look at this picture I am reminded of the many dedicated people who built a foundation of work that we continue to enjoy and appreciate.

For me, Mercer Bridge is the highlight of our 1' and 1.5" loop and embodies the spirit of teamwork and determination. It is something of which we are proud of.

Please consider how you can continue the legacy of dedication, craftsmanship and hard work to keep PLS proud!



From left to right.
Dan Crabtree, Jim Sullivan, Walt Mensch, George Cooper, John Tepper,
Tom Armstrong, Al Mercer, Jim Salmons, Ron Shuppard.

John Forsythe
President PLS, Inc.

Once in a Lifetime



I was in Bridgeport to watch the Big Boy heading towards South Philly. It truly was a once in a lifetime experience. The picture shown is actually part of the video I was taking of the event.

2026 PLS Upcoming Events

- Sat, Aug 22 **Membership Meeting - 9:30 AM**
Run Day Members & Guest AM
(Rain Date Aug 23)
- Fri, Sept 4 **FALL MEET – Members & Guest**
-Sat, Sept 5 **Breakfast & Lunch, Pot Luck Dinner**
-Sun, Sept 6 **Breakfast & Lunch**
- Sat, Sept 19 **BOD Meeting 9:30 AM**
Membership Meeting 12:30 PM
- Sun, Sept 27 **Run Day Members & Guest**
(Rain Date Oct 4)
- Sat, Oct 10 **Membership Meeting - 9:30 AM**
Run Day Members & Guest AM
(Rain Date Oct 11)
- Sat Oct 17 **Fall Clean Up in AM**
- Fri, Oct 23 **Blow Down Meet – Members & Guest**
-Sat, Oct 24 **Blow Down Meet – Members & Guest**
-Sun, Oct 25 **Blow Down Meet – Members & Guest**
- Wed Nov 11 **Veterans Day Run – 10:00 AM**
- Fri Nov 27 **Turkey Trot Run – Gauge 1 only**

Membership Gauge

As of August 12, PLS has:

- 92** Regular Members
- 11** Probationary
- 129** Associate Members
- 2** Honorary Members.



Club Membership News

PLS welcomes new Associate members Daniel Mertz, Theodore Montgomery, and Peter Wilson. Yvonne Bennett has applied for membership.

Donation Acknowledgements

PLS wishes to thank the following for their donations: Lawrence Colletta, Barry Shapin, Tim McMullan, the Delaware Valley Triumph Classic Car Club, and the Jerusalem Lutheran Day Care School.

Pennsylvania Live Steamers, Inc.

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Workdays at PLS



The beginning of the R&R Plastic Ties Project on the last 45' of 7.25" Main on the Station Exit track. This will complete replacement of most of the worst water damaged Ties from the Station to the Tunnel. This area is the lowest where we have Tracks and is prone to flooding.



Paul Rice starts by removing a small section and then starts inserting the new Ties. He will be working from where the new Ties ended behind him going South to meet up with the completed sections.



The MOW Work Carts not only help deliver the supplies but are then used as a mobile seat. This helps save the Knees as you can sit on the Cart as you install the new Ties.

Tales From a Retired Engineer: “The Lazy Brakeman”

Author: Mark Cahill

There is little need to emphasize the importance of brakes on a train. Stopping a train is much more of a challenge than accelerating it. To this end, the RR industry has paid and continues to pay a lot of attention to brakes.

The Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) requires a number of brake tests to be performed regularly. The Class 1 Brake Test must be performed at least once daily. This is a most thorough test (but not the only test) and is usually performed overnight by maintenance personnel.

The train is secured with handbrakes and the air brake system is allowed to fully charge. While the system is charging, the brakes on each car in the train are released.

After the system reaches full charge, a full-service application of the brakes is made (for passenger equipment typically operating at 110psi brake pipe pressure, reduce brake pipe pressure by 32psi).

Maintenance personnel then “walk” both sides of the entire train visually confirming that the brakes on each car are applied (i.e. brake shoes are touching the wheels).

Upon completing the walk-around, the brakes are released then personnel “walk” both sides of the train AGAIN visually confirming that the brakes on each car are released (i.e. brake shoes are away from the wheels).

The Class II Brake Test is performed each and every time the brake system is “cut in” after it has been “cut out”. The purpose of this test is to insure brake pipe continuity from one end of the train to the other. The test is typically performed by the engineer and the brakeman. The brakeman positions him(her)self at the hind end of the train. He(she) signals the engineer to apply the brakes. He(she) then observes the brake pipe and brake cylinder air gauges insuring that the brake pipe pressure reduced from 110psi and that the brake cylinder pressure rose from 0psi to some non-zero number. He(she) then signals the engineer to release the brakes and again observes the gauges insuring that the brake pipe pressure rises back to 110psi and that the brake cylinder pressure goes to 0psi.

I had a serious incident once involving a Class II Brake Test. We had just completed a trip from NY Penn Station to Matawan, NJ on the North Jersey Coast Line. Our train was a 10-car MU set (Arrow III's).

Upon arrival at Matawan, I cut out the brakes and began walking through the train to the other end for our return trip to NY.

Now at NJ Transit, trainsets on the Newark Division were typically 8,9,10 or 12 cars long and they stayed in these configurations all day long.

During non-rush hours, we did not need to use every car in the train. In the case of the 10-car Matawan train, we only needed to use the head 6 cars, not all 10.

Tales From a Retired Engineer: “The Lazy Brakeman”

So, as I am walking to the other end of the train, I pass the brakeman who is at the 6th car (i.e. the last car that will be used to carry passengers) and who is setting the handbrake on the car in preparation for the Class II Brake Test.

Eventually I reach the head end of the train. I first observe that a handbrake is applied (there is a blue indicator lamp lit on my control panel) and then I cut in the brakes. After the brakes are fully charged, I receive the buzzer signal from the brakeman to apply the brakes. I do so. A few seconds pass and I receive a 2nd signal to release the brakes. I do so. A few more seconds pass and I receive the “brake test complete” signal.

I no sooner hear this test complete signal, and I see the handbrake indicator lamp extinguish. This immediately tells me that the brakeman was NOT at the hind end (10th car) of the train but at the 6th car where I had previously seen him setting the hand brake. If he had been where he should have been at the 10th car performing the test, there’s no way he could have walked up 4 cars to release the handbrake he had set in the 6th car in just a few seconds.

When I saw him in NY, I read him the riot act. “You know you’re supposed to perform the brake test from the hind end of the train, right?” to which he replied “yes”. I then said “then why did you perform the test from the 6th car and not the 10th car?.....because you’re too lazy to walk back another 4 cars”.

I continued, “Let me explain something to you. By doing the test from the 6th car, we have no idea if the brakes are working on the last 4 cars. And if they do not work, guess who the first person is who will find out, ME that’s who, because if we collide with anything, I’ll be the first to know. So don’t ever do that again”. To my knowledge, he never did.

PLS Welcomes Preschool Vistors



"As a community service, PLS again hosted the children from the Jerusalem Lutheran Preschool in nearby Schwenksville for a special train ride. The children loved it!

Paul Miller and Mark Cahill engineered the event. The school's teachers thanked PLS with a donation."

PLS Welcomes the Delaware Valley Triumph Car Club



Ken Chermak reviews Live Steam operation with members of Del. Val. Triumph Car Club.

Photos by Associate member Robert DeLucia



This year's visit was during the Club Picnic and with a little luck we had good weather that day.



The PLS GAZETTE

P.O. Box 26202
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FIRST CLASS



Paver Project off to a good start. Shown is the ongoing installation of the base layer.
Photo by Steve Cortéal