

Sept. 27, 2008 Planes, Trains and Automobiles

Because of the widespread area of project locations that I have to service here in West Virginia, I decided to rent a car for the 2 weeks that I will be working in the state. That will also will give me the opportunity to do some more distant sightseeing travels. On Saturday, I made the drive to catch a steam locomotive for a 2 hour round trip through the Monongahela National Forest. I have had a fascination for steam engined trains since I traveled on one during my first year of high school. Back in 1953 my small town of 2,500 in northern NJ had no high school, and sent us 3 towns away by commuter train. After that first year diesel engines replaced the old steam locomotives, but I will always remember those early days of "riding the rails" behind a chugging, steam belching behemoth. It would be good reliving those times again on the ["Durbin Rocket"](#).

A day prior to the train ride I took the Highlander for a flight of 50 miles just south of Elkins to the small community of Durbin, WV. I found the train OK, but never did see its steam locomotive. I discovered, later, that they keep it in an enclosed shed when not out on its runs. It is one of only 3 Climax steam engines that are still in use today. It was constructed in 1910, and was used, until the late '60's by Moore-Keppel & Co., a local Elkins area saw mill operation. My good high school friend from Memphis, Peter Smith, has made it a hobby to study and research everything about steam locomotives and it seems that many of them got their start hauling logs at saw mills. No doubt he will tell me all that I need to know about **Old #3**.

The train ride was along the west fork of the Greenbrier River and took us into the scenic West Virginia mountains. When we reached the point for our return, the train dropped off the last two cabooses, which serve as romantic overnight accommodations. There is no cell phone service, no TV reception (although the TV on board will play VHS tapes) and nothing to do but enjoy each other's company. The couples staying in those beautifully appointed cars would be picked up on a future excursion, and returned to civilization.

On **my** return to the Durbin Station, I my hair and face were covered in soot, my clothes were dirty and smelled of the characteristic sickly-sweet odor of the steam and coal dust that I still remember from High School. **I loved it!! It was absolutely WONDERFUL!!**



This is the scenery that I was treated to on today' train ride.



The Durbin, WV train yard with the cars that we would use on our trip, sans the locomotive



Here I am in front of Old #3, a 55 ton Climax locomotive & the 5 car train that it will pull



The last two cabooses will be left behind to act as a weekend escape for 2 lucky couples



Everything you need is provided for on these quaint and romantic sleepovers, except food