

## SCRAP BOOK MEMORIES

AN OLD CLIPPING WITH A CURRENT MESSAGE

By Kevin B. Page

While unpacking some boxes the other day, I sat down to reflect on the memories I had saved during adolescence. One particularly memorable item was the February 17, 1976 clipping (used by permission) from *The Richmond Times-Dispatch*, which reported the February 16 derailment of a Southern Railway motorcar and the untimely death of its passenger as he jumped or was thrown from the car as it bumped along the right-of-way. This clipping conveys the grim reality of safety issues for which we must constantly remain alert.

I vividly remember this accident, for I used to see Mr. Bland and his co-worker weekly as my bus ride to and from school crossed the Richmond-Danville, VA line of the Southern Rwy (Now NS) several times. Although reports could not be confirmed from the shaken operator, it was speculated that Mr. Bland jumped off as the car headed towards an embankment on the north side of the track. His body came to rest with his head against the ball of the south rail. The operator of the motorcar remained on board, and was not injured.

Several lessons may be gained from the 22-year old clipping:

1. Keep a constant lookout for debris on the railhead.
2. Maintain a proper speed to allow for safe, prompt braking.
3. Rail sweeps do not always work well when several pieces of ballast or rock are lying close together on the track. The sweep may dislodge the first rock, then bounce over the next one(s).
4. Children love to place things on the track. This derailment occurred behind a school, on an otherwise secluded one-mile portion of straight track.
5. Rail skids under motorcars don't always keep you bumping between the rails; your motorcar may go flying!

*Many of us have written or spoken of safety concerns. The enclosed photo and caption provide a rare glimpse of dangers our railcar hobby works diligently to address.*

*(Copying The Richland Times-Dispatch photos used by Permission)*



Staff Photo by P.A. Gormus Jr.

### ***Railway Employee Killed***

A Southern Railway Co. Employee, Tom Bland, 65, of Rt. 1, Amelia County, was killed yesterday afternoon when he was thrown from a motorcar which left railway tracks after running over rocks which had been placed on both rails, authorities said. Bland and another

employee, who was not injured, were inspecting tracks when the motorcar derailed about 2:15 p.m. behind Huguenot High School. Chesterfield County police said they were trying to determine who placed rocks on the tracks.

Two scenarios appear inherent in this fatal derailment:

1. If Mr. Bland was thrown from the motorcar while the operator kept a firm grip and thus stayed on board, it conveys a strong message to study the practical application of seat belts for motorcars.
2. If Mr. Bland did choose to jump, his choice was fatal.