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LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

Society to Offer Electronic Version of *The Sentinel*

The Society is now producing an electronic version of its quarterly magazine, *The Sentinel*, for members who would rather receive an electronic version instead of a hard copy through the mail.

There will be two resolutions—a high-resolution copy of approximately 35 to 50 megabytes in size most suitable for members who want the finest of picture detail and quality, and a low-resolution copy of approximately 4 to 6 megabytes in size more suitable for those primarily interested in the articles and satisfied with good picture detail. The latter would be especially suitable for members who do not necessarily have adequate download speed for a file of 35 to 50 megabytes in size.

Whatever the choice, e*Sentinel* subscribers will be able to download both resolutions if desired. Unrestricted downloadable sample copies of each size are available through our Society web site at www.borhs.org/sentinel/magazine and each should be evaluated before members make the determination whether to convert to the e*Sentinel* copy. Once made, the decision to convert to an electronic version of *The Sentinel* is not reversible.

Members desiring to shift to the electronic version should send an email to membershipchair@borhs.org indicating their desire and provide a current email address for future notification purposes, their membership number, and their mailing address to ensure that the proper member is identified in our membership database.—George Stant

What We're Up To

A year ago, *Company Store Manager* Craig Close brought a copy of the story reprinted herein about Howard Dillow's adventure in the Patapsco Valley. The managing editor had what, for him, was an incredible moment of lucid thinking—the 40th anniversary of the B&O's *Adventures With Agnes* would occur in the second quarter of 2012.

Planning for using the Dillow piece in this issue started to firm up. Then another thought intruded.

The B&O throughout its existence battled floods on the rivers it followed. Has there ever been a comprehensive look at the B&O and floods?

Well, it seems there hasn't. One good historian tried to tackle the subject and

gave up for lack of collected source material.

So this is a piecemeal effort, collected from frequent *Sentinel* contributors, other Society sources, an old friend, and anyone else whose arm came within twisting range.

It is NOT comprehensive. There must be a lot of other stories about the topic out there. Bring them on. There is no reason that this limited effort is the be-all and end-all on the subject. We'll revisit it when someone sends a tale to tell. Several short pieces may be put together in a longer article, but they'll be put on record. No pictures? No problem. If nothing else, we'll find a map.

So read; enjoy, we hope. And keep the project going if you can.

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One year regular membership is \$35.00, for other categories or to send notification of change of address contact the Secretary by writing to the Society's post office box or via e-mail. Memberships, once accepted, cannot be returned.

ON THE COVERS

FRONT COVER: The B&O has always soldiered on, come hell (the Confederate Army) or high water, in this case the floodwaters of Tropical Storm Agnes in 1972. We take a look back 40 years beginning on page 3. (*John King photograph*)

BACK COVER: MARC train P883 backs into the Brunswick yard after a week's service a little more than a month before WB Tower, in the background, was decommissioned. See page 33. (*Jon Wright photograph*)

The B&O Battles High Water



This picture of the Old Main Line east of Sykesville, Maryland, in July 1972 captures the scope of Tropical Storm Agnes' devastation. Agnes, a dying tropical storm when it caused the most severe flooding in Maryland history, brought heavy rains for an eight-hour period from late June 21 to early morning on June 22. And by far the most of that rain fell in Baltimore, Howard and Carroll counties. Most of it drained, quickly, into the Patapsco River, causing the devastating flood. *(Herbert H. Harwood Jr. photograph)*



A tropical storm by the time it hit central Maryland in June 1972, Agnes still had plenty of water to dump, and a lot of it went into the Patapsco River watershed. As the river flooded, the strength of the current ripped out roadbed on the B&O's Old Main Line, which is seldom more than 20 feet above the river at normal heights. This was the scene at Sykesville, Maryland, after the river receded.

(Bruce Elliott photograph)

Agnes Was No Lady

B&O's Old Main Line Was Out More Than a Year

This brief look at Tropical Storm Agnes' effect on the B&O in June 1972 is excerpted from a report by John Hankey first published in B&O Railroader for November-December of that year. It has been truncated and edited to reflect those changes, with material about rebuilding the line culled from later B&O Railroaders.

By John Hankey

Agnes was a dying tropical storm when she caused the most severe flooding in Maryland history. Heavy rains from moisture-laden clouds fell on ground already saturated by a wet spring, and most of the rainfall occurred in an

eight-hour period from late June 21 to early morning on June 22. And by far the most of that rain fell in Baltimore, Howard and Carroll counties.

On Wednesday afternoon the weather service issued hurricane warnings, and by that evening the B&O was having some trouble with its track circuits. Bush Street in Baltimore went under water late Wednesday night. Paint Branch north of Washington rose and cut the Washington Branch. Trains were run into yards and no new trains were dispatched after a train of empty coal hoppers departed Baltimore via the Old Main Line (*see page 7*).

By early Thursday the Patapsco had covered the Old Main Line, water was rising steadily on the Potomac, Patuxent and smaller streams, and overflow of the Schuylkill prevented interchange in Philadelphia. In Baltimore, ties were afloat in the Howard Street Tunnel. Gwynns Falls had put six feet of water in Carroll Tower; the third trick operator was rescued by boat.

Several small washouts occurred about this time, including both tracks of the Metropolitan Branch at Terra Cotta, west of Washington.

The greatest concern was the Old Main Line and some bridges in the area.



At “the doughnut factory” in Ellicott City, Maryland, the Patapsco dumped piles of debris on the bridge from the Old Main Line across the river to the plant. The trackage from the Old Main Line down across the bridge was known in a very old Form 6 as “the Patapsco Branch.” The business and the bridge are still there; the factory is now owned by Wilkins-Rogers, originally a Georgetown company that marketed coffee. *(Pete Elliott photograph; Bruce Elliott collection)*

Carloads of rail were run out on the Laurel Bridge over the Patuxent River. Loaded hopper cars were put on the bridges over the Potomac at Harpers Ferry.

The railroad evacuated Brunswick. Yard engines were put on the hump at the east end of the yard; road engines were run west to higher ground; a clutch of commuter RDCs would spend the weekend in Martinsburg. At its crest the Potomac would put two feet of water in the Brunswick roundhouse, nearly fill Catoctin and Point of Rocks tunnels and reach almost to the second story of Point of Rocks station. But the Potomac caused no serious washouts.

With Thursday morning’s flood crests came debris that damaged three bridges—at Westport in South Baltimore, Davis on the Old Main Line, and the trestle on the Georgetown Branch.

On the Old Main Line, the railroad

closely follows the Patapsco and is rarely more than 20 feet above the current. The river twists back and forth, and at every turn, water smashing into embankments damaged the railroad. Most often the water undercut the roadbed, leaving rails and ties in place, frequently just hanging in the air, 30 to 50 feet at a time.

The washouts were particularly bad at Sykesville and Marriottsville, with the river scouring the banks down to bare rocks. And east of Marriottsville, the river tore out a 300-foot section of roadbed 50 feet wide. East of that, another section 25 feet deep and 30 yards across was gone. As Friday dawned and the waters receded, the Maryland Division, especially the Old Main Line, was in shambles.

Recovery work began immediately. Service between Baltimore and Philadelphia was resumed by the evening of


June 23. A wreck train left Baltimore for Laurel, where the crew repaired a small washout, reopening the Washington line. A work train repaired the washouts at Terra Cotta, and the line to Brunswick went back into full service Friday night.

Enough freight had backed up at Baltimore and Cumberland to make it feasible to run trains of one classification—yard to yard, for example. And most trains were running by name again on Monday, June 26. Passenger service, annulled Thursday morning, resumed Monday morning. By the Friday following the flood, the B&O was back to normal—except for the Old Main Line.

Among other things, inspectors estimated that 2,000 to 2,500 carloads of gravel would be needed to put the OML back in service. The cost of rebuilding damaged automatic signals, which the railroad wanted to get rid of anyway, was

cited in *B&O Railroader* as near \$20,000.

By June 1973 the railroad had decided to rebuild. Full freight service between Halethorpe and Point of Rocks, a distance of 59 miles, resumed on April 2, 1974. The cost of work on the track and roadbed was variously cited as \$500,000 to \$700,000, with an estimated \$500,000 still needed for signal repair and additional restoration. Company officials were quoted as expecting traffic to build to 10-14 trains on the line daily.

The line remains in service 40 years later. 



In Brunswick, the Potomac River overflowed its banks enough to put two feet of water into the roundhouse. That would put water into the first floor of WB Tower (at the right) but not the YMCA (in the background). John King recorded some of the cleanup activities.

The Brunswick Volunteer Fire Department was called on to help with cleanup; the pumper was driven out onto the turntable bridge to provide the best access for workers pumping floodwaters out of the pit. (Bruce Elliott photograph)



Waters from a branch of Rock Creek tore out the trestle on the B&O's Georgetown Branch about a mile from the main line at Silver Spring, Maryland. A GP-9 and about 20 freight cars were stranded on the Georgetown waterfront in Washington; the locomotive was up to its hood in Potomac floodwaters.

(Harold Buckley photograph; Sentinel files)

Buckley reported on damage to the B&O's Georgetown Branch, profiled by Duane Carrell in the first quarter 2003 Sentinel.


By H.L. Buckley

The B&O's terminal and yards in Georgetown were inundated by the overflow of the Potomac River. GP-9 Number 6476 and about 20 freight cars were submerged. Number 6476 was in water up to her hood.

About 200 feet of track along the C&O Canal were washed away. About a mile east of the main line at Silver Spring the high wooden trestle spanning a branch of Rock Creek was destroyed.

Still, service was restored September 30 over the rebuilt trestle with the train operating as far as Bethesda. The washout along the canal was repaired in the week of October 2-6.

On Sunday, October 8, B&O GP-9 Number 5921 (ex-C&O) and a caboose went to Georgetown and pulled out Number 6476, caboose C-2221 and the stranded cars.

Full service using Number 5921 resumed October 9. In all, the branch was out of service 108 days. 



Twisting through its channel, the Patapsco River undercut Old Main Line roadbed at every turn. As in so many other places, this segment of track east of Sykesville was left dangling and twisting when the flood receded. East of Marriottsville, a 300-foot segment of roadbed 50 feet wide was lost. East of that a section 25 feet deep and 90 feet across disappeared. (John King photograph)

Water Rising Up a Caboose; Water, Snakes Everywhere

By Ernest F. Imhoff

This article first appeared in The Liberty Log, the magazine of the still-operating World War II Liberty Ship SS John W. Brown of Baltimore, and, slightly edited, is reprinted with permission

Howard Dillow, a fireman on a Navy destroyer escort in World War II, rode out the destructive Pacific typhoon of September 1944, but his best sea story comes from one night on the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad in Maryland.

The papers called it "A NIGHT OF FEAR".

For Dillow, it was an adventure of dangerous snakes in trees, water rushing up and alongside his caboose, two

men hanging on for dear life, the man in charge trembling in fear and Navy war veteran Dillow having seen better days himself. As Howard sees it, it was Calamity, Old Testament Style.

Dillow is now a fireman-water tender on the Brown. But let him describe The Night on the Caboose:

I was seventeen when I joined the Navy in June 1944. For 15 months, we went all over the Pacific with troop ships and LSTs.

I left the Navy in 1949. For a while I drove a concrete truck in Anne Arundel County, got laid off and went to the Bal-

timore and Ohio in 1950. Stayed there for 37 years. I loved the railroad.

My trains went from the Howard Street Tunnel in Baltimore past Camden Yards to Brunswick, Maryland, to Virginia, and from Philadelphia to Cumberland, Maryland.

Tropical Storm Agnes hit Maryland in June 1972. It became one of the biggest natural disasters in Howard County history.

It had rained for a week. All the rivers were rising. The trains kept running, but we wondered how long.

On the night of June 21 and 22, we were taking an empty 135-car coal hopper train



GP-30 Number 6960, separated from its train, sits waiting for a chance to move a few days after the flood. It had been blocked from moving west by a mudslide, and couldn't back up, so the engineer and brakeman took the opportunity to get away and seek help. The two crewmen on the rear weren't as fortunate. (*John King photograph*)

from Curtis Bay to Brunswick. The train was going back to the coal mines in West Virginia. I was the flagman. They don't have that job anymore; it's all computers and electronics and machines now.

We left Curtis Bay at 11 o'clock at night. I'd been on this run hundreds of times. It's all uphill to Mt. Airy. We were going 15 miles an hour or slower. At that pace it's about eight hours to Brunswick.

The conductor, Karl Grosche, had overall responsibility for the train. The engineer was Howard Winter. He and the brakeman, whose name I don't recall, were up front. The conductor and I were in the caboose.

It's been raining all day, and now it's pouring all night. The ground is saturated, wet where it usually isn't wet.

We came through Halethorpe, just west of Baltimore city. We get a radio message to stop up ahead at the Daniels siding in Marriottsville. We do that. We're right parallel to the Patapsco River; it becomes



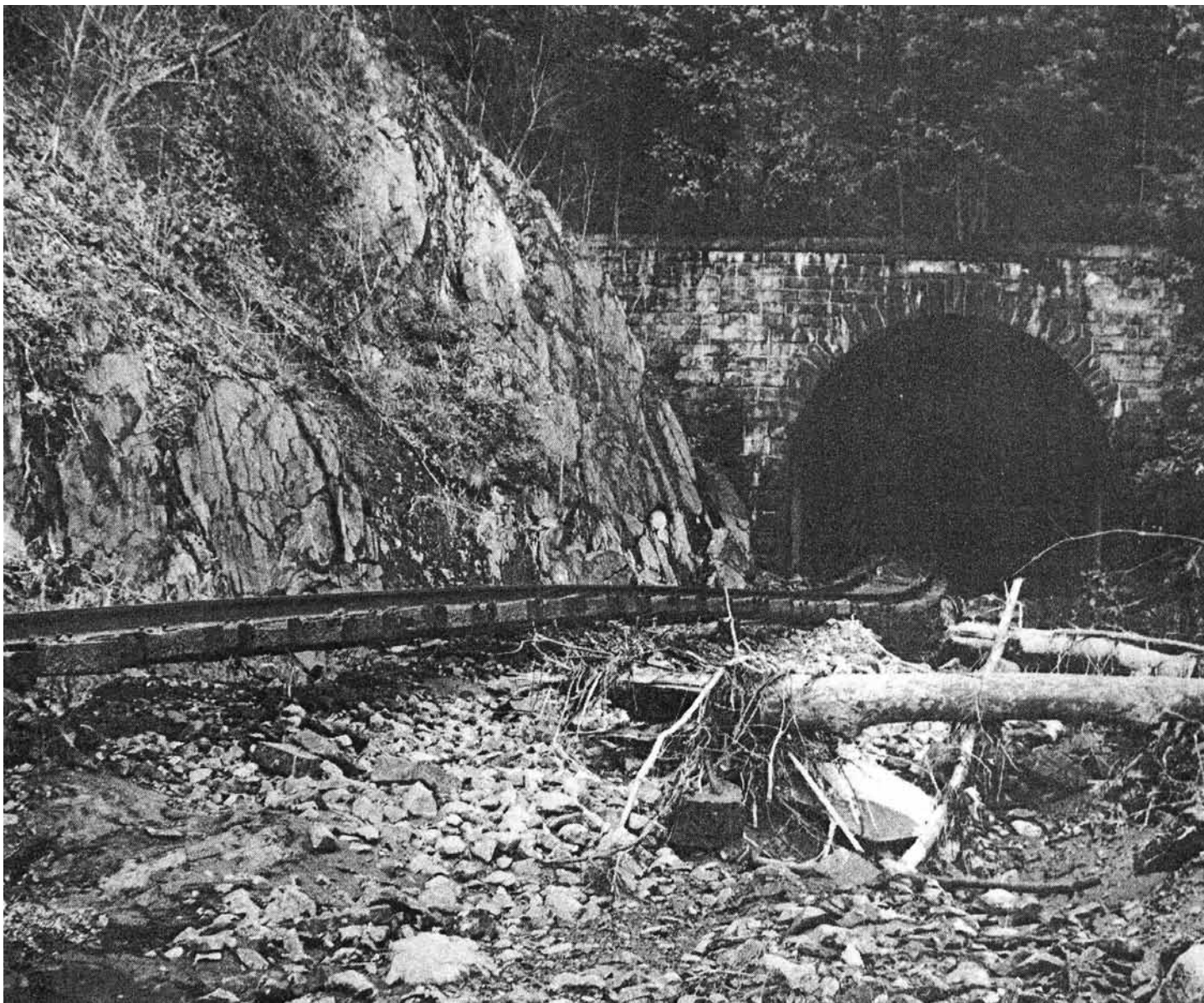
Howard Dillow checks the valves and pipes in the *Brown's* engine room. (*Photograph courtesy Ernie Imhoff*)

Baltimore Inner Harbor not far away.

The river is flooding pretty good, water moving fast. I look down. A side stream feeding into the Patapsco is rising in a culvert underneath our train. The

diesel engine has come to a stop near the Marriottsville Road crossing. Our caboose is at the other ending of the siding. We're on tracks forming a big D.

We get orders to unhook the engine



Al Grimes of the Baltimore Real Estate Department sent *Chessie News* this photo of Union Dam Tunnel near Ellicott City, not far from where Howard Dillow's train of empty hoppers was stranded. By one estimate, the tunnel was filled with 12 to 15 feet of water. And as in so many other places, the roadbed vanished and the track hung in space.

from the 135 cars and leave them in the siding, return the engine by the connecting tracks to the caboose, hook up the caboose and get back to Baltimore. Anyway, those are the orders.

It's too late. In minutes, the mud and water trap us all. The engine is higher than the caboose, but it can't go forward because of a mud slide up ahead of it. The conductor and I are still in the caboose. It's ten tons, but we're getting nervous.

The river had come up in our rear. Water is slapping the caboose so fast it's sending spray over the top. Water's coming under our door. I open it and just like that, we're in three feet of water. We gotta get out. But we can't walk away.

Too late again. We climb up on the running board on top of the roof. It's 15 feet above the rails, but the water's starting to cover the caboose and the spray is splashing us. The river is all around us going two different ways; it's rising slowly and going downhill fast. We each have our grip with us—complete set of clothes in a plastic bag.

It's 1 a.m. now and raining real hard. We see trees and branches go by fast. And then come the snakes.

The snakes are hanging all over the roots and branches. They're swimming in the water everywhere. You know, tree roots in the ground make spaces where the snakes like to go. Water flushes them

out. Snakes are everywhere mixed in with the branches. We're scared. The snakes just kept coming with the water.

We're up there for hours. Rain never stops. Water came 12 feet up the side of the caboose. Two feet from the top where we were, closer, closer. Later they said the Patapsco got 44 feet over normal. I've ridden storms out but nothing like that. God, I was scared. We knew the engineer knew where we were and was getting help.

"We're gonna die," the conductor kept saying. "We're gonna die." He said the same thing over and over. "We're gonna die."

I was scared, but I said to him, "Shut up. If you don't shut up, I'm gonna throw you off and then you ARE gonna die."



No discussion of the B&O and floods is complete without at least one look from the Hilltop House at the confluence of the Potomac and Shenandoah rivers at Harpers Ferry, West Virginia. The waters of Tropical Storm Agnes are falling rapidly by now. Service between Washington and Brunswick resumed on Friday evening, March 23. (*John King photograph*)

I could swim, I was Navy, but you couldn't have swum in that stuff. Deep, fast water, very fast.

We were frozen, wearing raingear, but we were as wet inside as out. We just waited and waited. Hour after hour. Up there all night. Wondering, when's help coming?

Finally, after 6 a.m., some firefighters came near us. Friendship Volunteer Fire Department. They hollered to us, "We're gonna throw you a line." They were too far away. One firefighter tied a rope around his waist and swam 50 feet but couldn't make it. They pulled him back to safety. We waited some more.

Water is almost over the top now. Finally, we heard a helicopter. I light a flare and wave.

The engineer had run for help. Pounded on doors, found someone who took him to a state trooper. Pilots had many calls that night. This pilot came in and negotiated under and around

branches of trees still standing. I thought he'd crash.

He hovers right over us. 'Course I'm soaking wet. I throw my grip in and grab his handrail. WOW! Shock. Ball of fire. Felt like I was grabbing ten sparkplugs.


Helicopter backs away and comes back. This time, I lunge toward something else and they grab me from the helicopter and pull me in. Then they get the conductor inside.

We're off the train. Thank God. They take us to the National Guard Armory in Ellicott City. Sergeant came out and said, "How about a cup of coffee?" I could have hugged him, but I didn't; I wanted that coffee fast and it was good. I took a shower, changed clothes and kept my wet shoes on. They gave us a big breakfast.

Guys kidded me afterward and said I was the state's only helicopter flagman. The engineer said, "I thought you guys were goners."

I never saw anything like that in the entire Pacific Ocean and never want to see another flood. The worst thing was not knowing if we were gonna get off the roof. A little bit longer, and it would have been too late.

Seven people died in the Patapsco River that day and night; some had tried swimming from where they were trapped. Papers called it "The Night of Fear." Seven hundred people in Howard County were homeless. Everything went out, power and phones. It wasn't the deadliest flood there; they say 39 died in a Patapsco flood in 1868. My storm was enough for me.

That B&O train sat up there in the Daniels siding a whole year. Tracks and railroad ties all over had washed out. I worked another 16 years and retired in 1987. It was a good job. I loved railroad work. Now I love the Brown. 



Somewhere behind that screen of trees, a CSX locomotive is making its way toward Baltimore. The stone abutment is Bridge Number 22 over the euphemistically named Davis River, probably the side stream Howard Dillow refers to as rising underneath his caboose. Floodwaters reached the roof of a caboose sitting where the locomotive is in this 2012 photograph by John Teichmoeller.

Sea Story With a Few Leaks

By John Teichmoeller

Howard Dillow's story was gripping; however, there were a few details of his account that confused me, especially since I know just enough about that section of the Old Main Line to be dangerous.

Howard indicates his train got a radio message to stop at the Daniels siding in Marriottsville. Perhaps; the mill at Daniels was served by a single-ended industrial siding. But this was not a doubled-ended passing siding. There may have been a passing siding at Daniels long ago but not in the employee timetable of 1967, not in 1972 and there is not one today. There is also no siding in Marriottsville, and Daniels is more than six

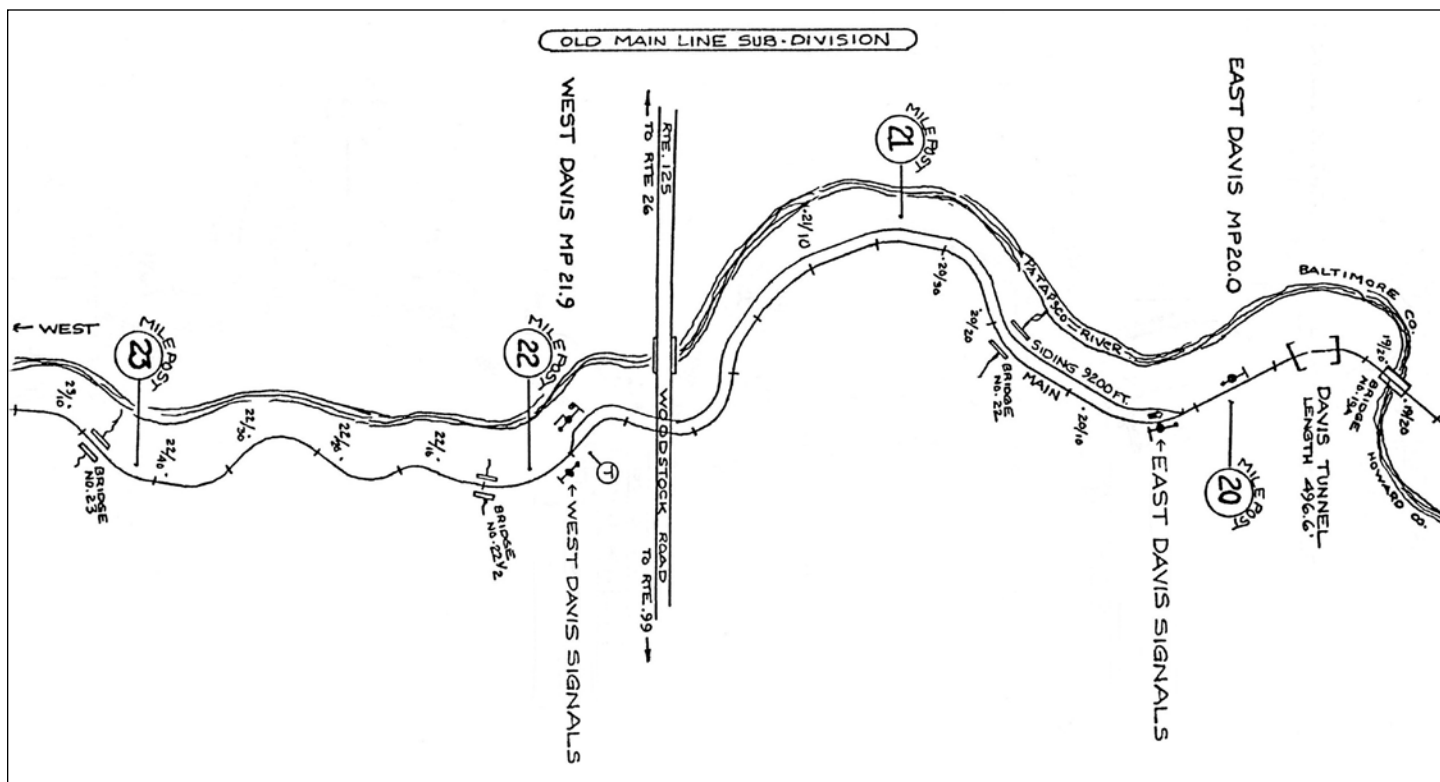
miles east of Marriottsville. Therefore, I think the radio message was to stop at the Davis siding, which with the main line creates the "D" shape Howard describes. The west end of Davis siding is actually just a little west of the Woodstock Road grade crossing.

(There used to be a handsome E. Francis Baldwin brick station at Woodstock—a pocket version of Sykesville—and there is even a copy of the drawing of it from the Smithsonian in our Archives—but about all there is in Woodstock now are a couple of houses up the hill and the Woodstock Inn by the tracks.)

The Chessie System track chart shows

West Davis at Milepost 21.9 and East Davis at 20.0 (Corresponding milepost numbers in a copy of Employee Timetable No. 95, April 30, 1967 give figures of 19.1 and 17.2 respectively—there must have been a redesignation between 1967 and 1988). Near the east end of the siding the track chart shows the line crossing over Bridge Number 22, which is probably the "side stream" and culvert Howard mentions.

He says the diesel (of this westbound train) came to a stop near the Marriottsville Road crossing. But I think he must have meant Woodstock Road, as there is an absolute signal at West Davis, and



This track chart, by Bernie Beavers and in John Teichmoeller's collection, notes the major points of Howard Dillow's adventure.

westbound trains today stop for that signal just east of the crossing so as not to block road traffic. Marriottsville Road is the next grade crossing west, but it is two miles on down the line, and there is no siding there.

I did not know Karl but knew of him. He was the conductor on our Budd car run from Camden Station to Washington and back on October 11, 1985 for the first B&ORRHS convention I attended.

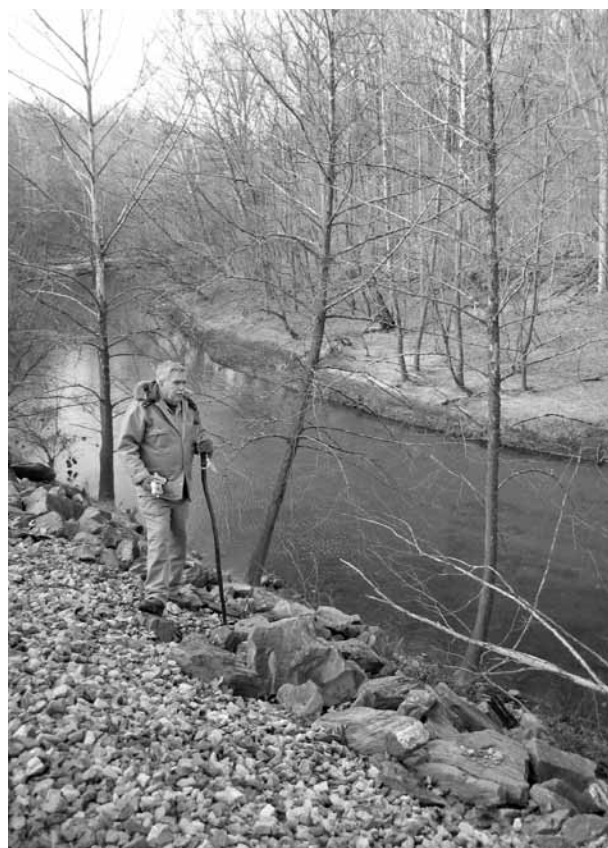
Karl was a railfan and was well liked by his daily MARC passengers. He attended several of the Society's Founders Day dinners. He started with the railroad in 1939, became a freight conductor in 1953 and moved to passenger service in September of 1955. By 1972 cutbacks in passenger service had obviously forced him back into freight service.

Karl retired from the Chessie System shortly after our convention, on November 1, 1985, at the age of 69 with 46 years of service.

As an incidental factoid, the fire department that rescued Howard and Karl was the West Friendship Volunteer Fire Department. I know because they are the folks who answer the 911 calls when we have cardiac arrests, broken

ankles, etc. around our household. "Friendship" is the area around what is now called the Thurgood Marshall Baltimore Washington International Airport. I always thought Friendship Airport was such a great name.

I thought I had seen a photograph of this marooned train, so I visited the Howard County Historical Society Archives on the second floor of the new Miller Library on Frederick Road. As you would expect, they have at least three files filled with clippings about Agnes. I hit pay dirt, as one held an aerial photo (not suitable for *Sentinel* reproduction) showing the last eight empty hoppers and the caboose. This photograph was taken seven or eight days after the flood crested so the track was no longer under water, but, of course, the train was isolated due to washouts. The caboose appears to be one of the wagontop subclasses.



Fred Werth is standing on the railroad embankment above the river at Davis. He's about five feet below rail level, and of average height; the flood at this point would probably have been nearly 20 feet over his head. (John Teichmoeller photograph)