News from the Kettle

Kettle Valley Railway Society- Summer 2019

Brakeman Anna Lock and Engineer Shaun McNutt, producers and writers of Murder on The Rails: The Case of the Mondello Crime Family. A third show has been added August 23.

The Kettle Valley Steam Railway & Summerland Singers and Players present Murder on the Rails: The Case of the Mondello Crime Family
Written and Produced by Shaun McNutt and Anna Lock
Directed by Dawn Bassett

July 20 and August 17, Aug. 23, 5pm

Due to the show’s success, a third running has been added Friday August 23, 5pm

All shows include a dinner buffet at the train station at the conclusion.

After the success of the Murder on the Rails last year, Shaun McNutt and Anna Lock, co producers and writers of the play, started planning for the next murder mystery. The pair decided to write the script themselves.

“We had too many ideas to let it go to someone else, McNutt said, “We are both on the train and we know how the story would fit. We can plan for it. So, we started from scratch, last November, mostly writing after hours. We mapped out the plot and wrote from the unique style of the performance. We talked about the plot before we wrote any lines.

The actors move from car to car, performing the same scenes, so everyone knows what’s going on. The extras keep the ambiance of the era alive, and keep the show moving during the 90-minute run along scenic Prairie Valley to the Trout Creek bridge at Canyonview. The play begins at the station, then on the train, at Canyonview, continues on the train, ending back at the station. Both railway workers, McNutt an Engineer and Lock a Brakeman, enjoy a shared railway experience that helps them to understand the problems of writing a play to suit a train full of people in five different cars. Both had no difficulties working together. “It’s easy, McNutt said, “we have good dynamics, we’re a good team” We get an idea and it just gets bigger and bigger, like a house fire.”

“It just snowballs, Lock added, it’s fun, and we both get into it. It was easy, it just flowed.”

The team picked the 1930’s setting because it went well with the train. It was the height of the depression. There was a lot to draw on. There were a lot of gangsters around then. “We worked with the Summerland Singers and players, and director Dawn Bassett. There’s a unique problem of communicating between cars, we filled in the space between the players and the railway.” Shaun said.

“We’re a good team, Lock added.

Tickets: $59 at the KVSR website www.kettlevalleyrail.org by telephone at 1-877-494-8424 or at the train station at 18404 Bathville Road.

Murder on the Rails

BLACKMAIL! BETRAYAL! HYSTERIA!

Someone is to blame, and we need your help to solve this heinous crime! Immerse yourself in a theatrical production of a murder most foul and enjoy a buffet meal at its conclusion. Presented in cooperation with the Summerland Singers and Players.

Note: The murder mystery may contain some mature content. Murder on the Rails has three shows: July 20 and on Aug. 17 and Aug. 23, with 5 p.m. starts.

What’s inside-

Neil after 20 years.

Joe Smuin remembered.

Canada Day

Twenty years of Brakeman Neil on the KVSR.

Neil Andrews first contact with the old Kettle Valley Railway began as a teenager in Summerland in the late 60’s. The High
School student’s family home on Simpson Rd. overlooked the West Summerland Station. “Six days a week I saw a freight train heading either east or west,” he said. “I arrived in Summerland two years too late for the passenger Budd Car Service. Still, I was hooked by the lure of the KVR. After high school graduation and throughout a 23-year career with Environment Canada, I maintained family and friend connections to Summerland,” he added.

Then, to complete his biography of the early years, Neil the poet wrote a poem. We include his first effort in years for your reading pleasure.

And so the Historical Schpeil of Brakeman Neil begins.

It all started 20 years ago, under the guidance of Darron and Brakeman Joe. Fireman Barb said “Come out of retirement, you can pass the requirement, as a Brakeman, you'll do.”

From Weatherman to Brakeman was a steep learning curve: I wasn't sure if I had the nerve.

But Brad gave me a constructive prod, which allowed me to get the nod, as Head Brakeman at the KVSR.

Try as they might, Conductors Keith and Ron gave up the fight, to inspire me to crew at their level.

Conducting the Scenic Journey along our rail, remains in the hands of those who can tell our historical tale.

That was back in the day, when we were running the Shay.

The station was new, Deb Kinvig was there too.

The Trout Creek Bridge was a no go, but projects at the KVSR were anything but slow.

There was a dream of running bigger steam.

Next thing you know, with a louder whistle to blow, 3716 arrived on the scene.

803 was a sight to see, “GB” by nickname, it’s belching smoke was hard to tame.

Long time KVSR crew and fans have passed, but the memories will last.

The likes of Little Jackie, Claude Hummell and Mo, Conductor Les and of course, historian Joe.

And even better than a pie, was singing “Ghost Riders in the Sky” with Felix, banjo picker extrdinaire.

The days have flown by. Seems like only one year. Time to celebrate and quaff a fake beer.

The characters in the poem-


Joe’s Book “KVR Mileboards” is available through Edward Muckle’s Image Emporium, Princeton, $35.

email grower@nethop.net Ph (250)-295-7567.
Neil and Felix playing Ghost Riders, saved for special occasions involving audience participation. Teri Leardo photo.

**Lucky for the railway, Neil Andrews lived on the right side of the tracks.**

When the Andrews family moved to Summerland in the mid 60’s, they settled on Simpson Road, overlooking West Summerland Station. The Kettle Valley Railway still ran freight and passengers past his home six days a week. After a 23-year career with Environment Canada, Neil’s interest in the new Kettle Valley Steam Railway was fired up again, after returning to the Okanagan.

Ron Belisle, an early volunteer and now senior Conductor with the railway remembers Neil starting at the railway.

"Back in early 2000 this new 'weather' guy came to work on the KVR. I would give him some training, but as he became accustomed to the work, he would then take on the project himself, doing what the conductor did. Neil was a quick learner on the job at the railway and has helped me out considerably over the years when I was running out of time or needing an extra hand. One funny thing that I do recall, is that when Neil would sit down with us to eat his lunch, he would carry many mangled grocery bags holding his food. One day, I took up a collection from the staff, a dollar each, and together we enough to buy Neil a new lunch bag for his mega lunches. Sharon Unrau, President of the KVSR, often brings her famous Butter Tarts to share at the station and humbly shares this anecdote.

"**Now his lunch at the station is always interesting** – with a small suitcase for a lunch bucket it will contain innumerable things including his large cottage cheese container of fresh veggies. Any treats brought to the station from kind contributors, including plum
cakes, cookies or Butter Tarts, (Yes, these butter tarts), are well received and nothing will ever be wasted when he is around.” she said.

Andrews enjoyed the comradery with staff and volunteers. Singing with Felix was always a lot of fun and a highlight for many passengers. Felix dubbed him the Singing Brakeman. “Ghost riders was one of our favourites and saved for when we would get audience participation.” he said. The pair also finished the ride singing Happy Trails.

When Neil is not working on the train, he is often off exploring the KVR railbed, scouring thrift stores for collectibles, visiting friends and hosting eastern relatives for the E-Fair. (or something like that)

Sharon Unrau continues, “Firstly, I would say Neil is always a friend you can count on, to help and to tell a story. He is a wonderful source of “information” but never vindictive. His stories always include things about his Mother and you can see how much he cares for her, and to the “family visitors” that come to see her.”

“No week at the Thrift Store would be complete without numerous visits from Neil. Add to that his and Mr. Studebaker’s trips to check out Thrift and other second hand stores in other areas often many miles away.

“Now his collections- from name brand boots, to gloves of every type and pole climbing gear – always adding to the supply. The boots do not necessarily have to fit just be interesting.”

Fireman Gerry Conrad concurs, “Neil is the most thoroughly professional and meticulously careful operator on the railway, training under him as a Brakeman/Conductor was excellent. He does what he does very well. In addition, he is an excellent ambassador for our railway in his interactions with our passengers on the train.”

One of Brakeman Neil’s training techniques involves, a cough, a hummm, and then staring at something that hasn’t been done properly. “I stare at it and the
trainee has to figure out what I’m staring at and why, and figure it out,” he said. And Conrad has a story to relate.

“I do remember one story that may be worth including. As much as he is serious and meticulous about procedures he isn't above a bit of mischief if it can be arranged carefully when the opportunity presents itself. So, it came to pass during my training that a now departed General Manager took it upon himself to explain to all of us (Neil and myself included) how it would be so much better to open a coupler with the handle on the other side of the car from that which we customarily used. Neil listened expressionlessly and quietly as the positive benefits of this approach were explained in pedantic detail and waited until after the gentleman in question had pulled the release lever a couple of times and realized it was in fact non-functional on that particular end of that car before he allowed himself a healthy guffaw about the episode, having known all along of course why we do it the way we do it... He will suffer fools if he has to but will enjoy any appropriate opportunity to see them get their "comeuppance". And enjoy the telling and retelling of the story of these episodes afterward, always proceeded of course by a quick "shoulder check" to make sure the audience is appropriate...”

When the train is being put to bed after the last run of the day, Neil’s humour, passion, and respect shines through. The End of Day Dedication to signify someone’s birthday, special guest or even cookies.

He begins with “This successful #3 is dedicated to .... and finishes the dedication for the day, sometimes followed by the crews hooting and hollering, clapping, laughing and a toot of the whistle.

Finally, there are a few Neilisms that seem to have found their way into the train’s vocabulary. The prissy white Mazda, LM’s, The i-pouch, The google machine, the problematics, and of course, “That’s Riiight”
The Prodan & Draghici family from Edmonton enjoy Canada Day on the KVSRR.

Joe Smuin Remembered
A KVR historian, author and friend to the KVSR, Joe Smuin died recently after a brief battle with lung cancer. Joe was born and raised in Penticton, and began his railway career in Penticton’s Canadian Pacific Railway’s roundhouse. He spent some time in the CPR yard in Kamloops before taking his Carman apprenticeship with BC Rail in Squamish, from 1976 to 1980. Joe married in December of 1980. Upon completion of his apprenticeship, Joe spent his remaining railway career in the BC Rail yard in North Vancouver. In August of 1987, Joe welcomed his daughter into the world, and the family settled in the Coquitlam area. In 2004, Joe retired and moved to Chilliwack in 2010 with his wife. They finally returned home to the Okanagan in the summer of 2017 to be near to their daughter and grandchildren.

Despite being widely known as a Kettle Valley Railway historian and author, Joe was always, first and foremost, a family man and will always be lovingly remembered by his family as the passionate man who loved deeply, laughed freely, joked often, went above and beyond for everyone, and who was always there for others, no matter what.

Joe is also remembered for his presentation at the 2018 KVSR AGM, and by his donation of photographs to the KVSR on display at the station. Head Brakeman Neil Andrews eulogized Joe at his memorial, and refers to Joe’s book “Mileboards”. Keith Bennett, KVSR volunteer Section Man, remembers Joe from the Brookmere Reunions.


“I’m Neil Andrews, Head Brakeman for the KVSR in Summerland. I refer to Joe’s book “KVR Mileboards as the ‘KVR Bible’. I have used his book countless times over the years to identify the locations of long since abandoned stations and sections houses on the KVR. Joe’s book has steered me the right direction to find those remains. Frequently, all that is left in the bush is a rotted collapsed roof or a concrete foundation of a building. Without Joe’s attention to detail on rail line mileages, my search would not be successful.

Whenever I’m training a new brakeman or conductor, I make a point of acting as Tour Guide on a KVR road trip, showing that person how our current operation at
the KVSR is historically linked to the halcyon days of the KVR when it was a full-fledged passenger and freight hauling line. The KVR Mileboards book, on these trips is always at my side and opened to the applicable page. I will read you an excerpt from the “Authors Preface” of the Mileboards book to demonstrate the detail that Joe has provided: “The reviewer of the text for this book said that it reads like a route march” and that he absolutely insisted the book be titled “A Forensic Study of the KVR. He’s probably right about the first and I can only wish the second was true”. Thanks Joe.

Two of Joe’s humourous anecdotes: “That R3D Decapod locomotive didn’t have enough power to pull the skin off rice pudding”. When trying to make up for lost time on a long stretch of tangent track at Manning, between Otter Lake and Thalia, the Budd cars would be going fast enough to suck gophers out of their holes.

Keith Bennett, a volunteer Section Man with the KVSR, remembers Joe from CPR reunions. “Old CPR engineers began the reunion in Brookmere about 1961, Bennett said,” Later it included KVR rail fans as well. Brookmere was a major centre of the KVR, and a refueling and re-watering point for the railway. At one time it had a roundhouse, maintenance shops, a huge fuel tank and a famous water tower. Some of the buildings and foundations still remain. Joe and Barry Sanford, author of McCulloch's Wonder: The Story of the Kettle Valley Railway would sit and swap stories for hours, Bennett said. “One day Joe asked if I’d like to see his collection of pictures of Brookmere. We sat and saw a new picture every 5-10 seconds. It showed Brookmere as a functioning community. As well as the railway, it had a school and a hotel and lots of houses. It took about half an hour to see what Joe had.” Joe’s impressive and extensive collection has been donated to the Penticton Museum.

His light and presence was as large as it was treasured, and he will be dearly, dearly missed by all.

Joe was preceded by his parents Lorenzo Smuin & Dorothy Smuin (Sorge), and brothers Ren Lynn and Gerald. He is survived by his wife Sonia, daughter Robyn (David) and six grandchildren, his sister Maureen, brother Ron (Barb), brother Lyle (Sharon), as well as a large extended family.