



Best seat in the house, watching rearward from the theater seating of Chessie's RI-1. (C&OHS Collection, COHS 41168)

Vanceburg... South Portsmouth... Greenup... Russell – the *FFV* continued on, the RI-1 in tow, steaming east across this – “The Racetrack of the C&O” – fastest division on the railroad.

At the Ashland, Ky. stop, 14 minutes was allotted as No. 6 was switched, and the locomotive watered and serviced. Another Pullman sleeping car was added to the train here, operating through to New York City, along with a streamlined coach from Louisville. A steam switcher carefully locked knuckles with the open rear platform of the RI-1, pulling it backwards to add to the train. Attached to on the rear again, they high-balled east, right on time at 3:08 p.m.

After six long hours of inspecting, at 3:42 that afternoon No. 6 arrived at Huntington. The car was cut off and moved to the shops. It was turned on the wye to face west (its rear platform to the east), and then tucked away on the Coach Yard lead for that evening and most of the night. With the car here in Huntington where the Engineering Department was located, everybody went home for the night.

Huntington to Ashland on No. 5

Of course, this fall inspection encompassed more than just a single trip aboard a single train. The Engineering Department was charged with inspecting thousands of miles of main and branch line twice each year, and this was just the beginning of the tour. The next morning (Oct. 18, 1950) they inspected from Ashland down the Lexington Subdivision, coupled on the rear of train No. 23 as far as Lexington, Ky. But for that trip to begin at Ashland, the car would first deadhead from Huntington

on the rear of train No. 5. At 2 a.m. the RI-1 was pulled from the Huntington Shops and taken a mile west to the depot, to be added to the rear of the *Sportsman*. It would be an early 2:45 a.m. departure for that 15-mile deadhead trip back to Ashland.

No. 5's nocturnal stop at Huntington was mainly for unloading mail and express, with a handful of sleepy Engineering Department men gathered at the east end of the platform waiting to board their car, flop down in a seat, then try to doze.

With their arrival in Ashland, beginning at 4:30 a.m. the car waited at the depot, while during the next six hours its occupants arose, breakfasted in the station, then prepared for the coming day's round trip: Ashland/ Lexington/ Ashland.

Ashland to Lexington on No. 23

Departing at 10:50 a.m., the 124-mile trip down the Lexington line was a “working trip” (for inspection), with all of the appropriate local division “guests” aboard, the test equipment in operation and the five men out of Huntington working their assigned posts. Chessie's *George Washington* wound past Morehead and Mt. Sterling, plunged through Ashland, Princess, Williams Creek, and Aden Tunnels. It paused for passengers at Hitchins, Olive Hill, Morehead, Mt. Sterling, and Winchester (where they crossed the L&N). Then it picked up speed to 65 m.p.h. for the final 15 miles into Lexington. Rear track lights illuminated the tunnel interiors at speed, as well as lighting the engine smoke and steam swirling along behind the train through the tunnels. This gave even the local section foreman a rearward view he rarely encountered. Owing to their special drainage problems and standing water, tunnels often presented more than their share of maintenance-related headaches.

At Lexington Union Station the RI-1 was cut from the rear of the train, to await the return of this same C&O consist back to Ashland later that evening as train No. 24. There was no reason to inspect somebody else's trackage – L&N rails – and there would have been payments involved to the L&N had the car continued on, traveling the extra 94 miles to Louisville, turning and coming back. As it was, they spent from 2:20 to 8:30 that evening parked in Lexington after turning on the

L&N wye track there. They were then switched into No. 24's consist for the car's deadhead move back to Ashland, and then later on to Huntington. Dinner was taken in Lexington at some local beanery near the depot.

Lexington to Ashland on No. 24

Deadheading back to Ashland with no duties to perform, it was just the skeletal crew aboard the car, and on a pleasant evening like this out of Lexington, any of these men might choose to ride the rear platform. Chairs were moved out into the darkness on the rear platform, coffee and cigarettes would come out, a nice breeze, stack talk up ahead from the J-1, 4-8-2, and the cadence of the rail joints made this the best seat on the train to enjoy the twisting, inundating Lexington Subdivision. At Morehead or Rush sidings, they might pass a waiting westbound freight. In the darkness the car's track lights illuminated the view to the rear, and finally the men could completely relax, discussing baseball, home life, or the passing scenery. As the night wore on and the time grew late, back inside the car someone might have a book to read or a deck of cards. After so many hours on the road, for the most part these late night deadhead trips were a tiring bore, looking out through the black glass of a window into the night – in this case, killing time while waiting to reach Ashland.

Ashland to Huntington on No. 4

Arrival of No. 24 at Ashland was scheduled for a minute past midnight, followed by a two-hour layover, awaiting the arrival of No. 4. Four was the eastbound *Sportsman* heading for Washington, D.C. For RI-1, this next train just meant the late night, 40-minute deadhead move back to Huntington. The hope was, for these men, that most of this evening could be spent sleeping.

Following the 3:00 a.m. arrival at Huntington, they had another four hours to kill before the car's next departure: the 7:15 a.m. train down the Guyan Valley to Logan, W. Va. Rather than driving home for a couple of hours in the middle of the night, they had likely continue their fitful sleep aboard the car, now tucked away on the Carolina Track just west of the Huntington Depot.

Finally, at sunup a yard job pulled an old Pacific 4-6-2 with today's short consist for Logan up to the station: A single postal-baggage-express car and a