

BIG PICTURE

# All aboard!

Full steam ahead with Rotary's railroading fellowship

FOR YEARS, members of the International Fellowship of Railroading Rotarians (IFRR) have gathered in the House of Friendship during the Rotary International Convention and have ridden the rails together before, during, and after conventions. In New Orleans in 2011, they rode the famous St. Charles Streetcar. During the 2017 Atlanta convention, they arranged a private tour of the operations center of the Norfolk Southern Railway. After the 2013 Lisbon convention, they went on an eight-day tour of Germany, visiting some garden railroads, scale models with cars 6 to 8 inches high that wind through fairy-tale cities.

In 2020, COVID-19 derailed such activities, but Robert Bracegirdle, IFRR's president and a member of the Rotary Club of Macclesfield Castle, England, says the pandemic has given the group a chance to expand its focus. "We can't keep relying on the convention, because it's only once a year," he says. "We need to become more relevant to Rotary's avenues of service, and we need to recruit more women."

The group plans to combine Rotary and railroading with other causes, drawing inspiration from a World Polio Day event that has been held in Australia and New Zealand, when Rotarians and Rotaractors wearing red End Polio Now T-shirts boarded trains and struck up conversations with commuters.

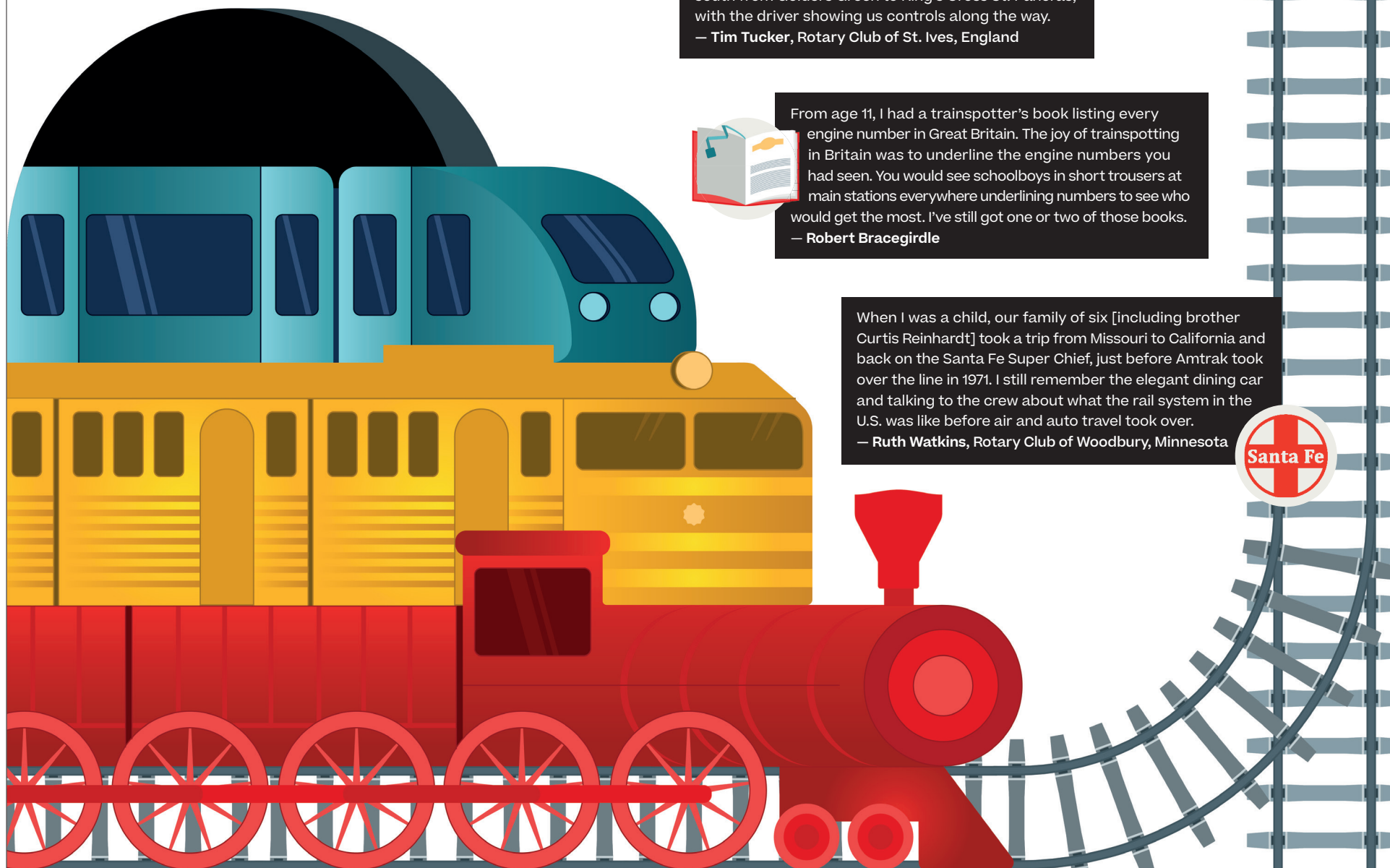
Says fellowship Vice President Curtis Reinhardt, of the Rotary Club of Central Coast-Passport, D5240, California: "Let's find railroading enthusiasts and get them interested in the fellowship, which can bring them into the world of Rotary."

—JOSEPH DERR

**Do the locomotion**

The IFRR, whose 221 members hail mainly from the U.S., United Kingdom, Australia, and Canada, welcomes members from anywhere in the world who like trains. Bracegirdle says the group's informality is one of its benefits. And, he notes, "there are no dues, so our treasurer's got the easiest job in the world." Learn more at [ifrr.info](http://ifrr.info).

**TRACK STARS**



We were off to the Rotary Club of Loughborough Beacon's charter anniversary celebrations. On the invitation of London Underground staff, we rode in the front cab of a Tube train on the Northern line traveling south from Golders Green to King's Cross St. Pancras, with the driver showing us controls along the way.  
— Tim Tucker, Rotary Club of St. Ives, England



From age 11, I had a trainspotter's book listing every engine number in Great Britain. The joy of trainspotting in Britain was to underline the engine numbers you had seen. You would see schoolboys in short trousers at main stations everywhere underlining numbers to see who would get the most. I've still got one or two of those books.  
— Robert Bracegirdle



When I was a child, our family of six [including brother Curtis Reinhardt] took a trip from Missouri to California and back on the Santa Fe Super Chief, just before Amtrak took over the line in 1971. I still remember the elegant dining car and talking to the crew about what the rail system in the U.S. was like before air and auto travel took over.  
— Ruth Watkins, Rotary Club of Woodbury, Minnesota



**AMAZING STATIONS**

- **Berlin's Hauptbahnhof**, which we saw during our rail tour of Germany after the Lisbon convention, has multiple levels, for the local subway as well as the bullet and regional trains.  
— Curtis Reinhardt
- **Grand Central station** in the center of Manhattan, for the dinner and cocktails in

the Oyster Bar downstairs. I love the main concourse's star-studded ceiling.  
— David Harrison Griggs

► **Venezia Santa Lucia**, the terminus station for the city of Venice, is stunning because of its location on the Grand Canal and the magical experience of emerging from the noisy, bustling station concourse onto the steps that lead you directly

to the canalside. Immediately you become immersed in the excitement and energy of La Serenissima.  
— Tony Allchurch

► **Antwerpen-Centraal** in Belgium is a magnificent building with an incredible station café. You can't believe you're in a railway station; it looks like a lord and lady's country house.  
— Robert Bracegirdle

"On the Canadian from Toronto to Vancouver, the food was exquisite, with menus paired with the province through which we were traveling. The views from the observation car were spectacular."  
— David Harrison Griggs, Rotary E-Club of Lake Atitlán-Panajachel, Guatemala

**SCENIC ROUTES**

- **The Durango and Silverton** Narrow Gauge Railroad historic steam train in Colorado is an excursion into the old days of railroads. Stick your head out the window and you see the steam engine making its way around the bend. Then look straight down over the edge of a cliff and see the rushing river 400 feet below where someone is fly-fishing.  
— Curtis Reinhardt
- **Visiting the Scottish Highlands**, we traveled on the Jacobite, a steam-hauled journey along one of the most magnificent rail routes in the world, to the terminus at Mallaig and the ferry to the beautiful Isle of Skye. Many of the young passengers travel in costumes from Harry Potter films, since the Hogwarts Express was filmed along this route as it traversed the spectacular Glenfinnan Viaduct.  
— Tony Allchurch, Rotary Club of Jersey, in the Channel Islands

► **My most memorable train trip** was a 2½-day adventure from Singapore to Bangkok, Thailand. The Eastern & Oriental Express is a wonderfully reconstructed set of narrow-gauge cars, complete with a dining car, an observation car, and a bar/nightclub. Exquisite gourmet meals and live entertainment in the evenings. A great start to a week of Rotary fellowship at the 2012 convention.  
— Don Bell, Rotary Club of Toronto

► **Riding the Purple Line** elevated train from downtown Chicago to Evanston to visit Rotary headquarters was very impressive! — Bruce McNaught, Rotary Club of Brisbane, Australia