

Chapter 16

The last train ride

“Have you ever been on a train ride? No”. “Well, certainly you have seen a train.” What is the most important part on the entire train ? Is it the powerful engine, the passenger cars, dining car, maybe the Pullman sleeper? To me the most important car



in the entire train is the caboose. The most common caboose in [American](#) railroad practice has a small windowed projection on the roof, called the [cupola](#). It means upside down cup. The conductor sat in an elevated seat in the cupola in order to inspect the train from this perch and provided the train crew with a shelter at the rear of the train. The crew could exit the train for switching or to protect the rear of the train when stopped. The brakeman also rode in the caboose. He would apply the brakes from the rear section to slow the train on its decent from a mountain. This kept the train from going

too fast and jumping the track. The conductor also also inspected the train for problems such as shifting loads, broken or dragging equipment, and [hot boxes](#). The conductor kept records and handled business from a table or desk in the caboose. For longer trips the caboose provided minimal living quarters, and was frequently personalized and decorated with pictures and posters. Coal or wood was originally used to fire a cast iron stove for heat and cooking, later giving way to a kerosene heater. Now rare, the old stoves can be identified by several essential features. They were without legs, bolted directly to the floor, and featured a lip on the top surface to keep pans and coffee pots from sliding off. They also had a double-latching door, to prevent accidental discharge of hot coals due to the rocking motion of the train from side to side and inclined angles from climbing steep grades.

The final boarding

The train is parked at the train station. The engineer has fired up the boiler and the steam pressure is rising. He is ready to push the throttle to get the wheels rolling. The conductor puts out the call "all aboard" and helps the passengers climb aboard. He sees that some riders have an entire family with them. Others have a huge following with them, friends, neighbors and fellow workers. Some people are traveling alone. Some young children are traveling without their moms and dads who did not want to go. A woman is traveling without her husband. A husband has left his wife behind to take the ride. An elderly man hobbles up the 3 iron steps. One old man barely makes it up the stairs to the Pullman coach as the door is closed. He got his ticket from a young man that brought him his ticket to a nursing home. Some passengers arrive with several bags and suitcases. The conductor tells them that on this train ride they will not need any baggage. “Just leave your baggage at the station he tells them.” He sees a tall gentleman with a tall stove pipe hat, yes it is President Abraham Lincoln that is taking his last train ride. He sees a plantation owner get on board. He sees a slave and his family climb up in the 2nd car and sits by the window. A bride gets on board still in her wedding gown. The conductor asks where the groom is and is told that he did not want to ride this train. He sees a former Muslim that became a Christian and was the prayer leader at a Phoenix 1st assembly of God church get on board with his wife and children. The last passenger to arrive was a little boy with a conductors hat on. “I want to be a conductor just like you” the little boy says. “Can I ride with you in the caboose to learn how to be just like you?” Sure son come on

and I'll let you into the caboose right now. "What 's your name boy?" "Johnny," he answers. "OK Johnny you can sit on the right hand of me." He goes back to assist the last passenger. After the passengers are safely in the train the conductor is the last one to get on the train, He has checked every car to make sure the doors are locked. Out of the windows with tears in their eyes passengers are waving to loved that are left standing a the old wooden station. The conductor starts at the front of the train gathering tickets and making sure that every one is in the proper seat. He steps out over the open space between the cars as he goes from car to car gathering tickets,. He sees the tracks passing down below. He sees the train is nearly traveling at full speed ahead now.

The caboose is where the conductor spends most of the time after the tickets are gathered from the passengers. He sits at his desk and opens the big record book to see if the tickets he has gathered match the names in his book. If the passengers name is not on the list they will not be allowed to ride. He finds one man without a ticket in car #3 seat #4. He goes up to the car and tells the man



that he will have to get off at the next stop for water and coal. No ! No ! I want to ride the train I wanted to get a ticket but I put it off until the train was leaving and it was too late so I sneaked on while you were not looking. Sorry you will have to get off the train he is told. The conductor returns back to the caboose and climbs up the stairs to take his seat and invites the little boy to sit on his right hand on the other side of the cupola. The cupola is a look out section that sticks up above the rest of the train a few feet. Up in the cupola he can see ahead past the engine. As the train rounds a curve to the right he checks

all the wheels on the right to see if they are rolling. As it rounds a curve to the left he can inspect the wheels on the left side. The conductor can see danger up ahead such as fallen trees, rocks, animals or other items that may be on the tracks. He can signal ahead by pulling on an overhead cord and warn the engineer so that the precious cargo of passengers is kept safe. As the train comes to the entrance to a dark tunnel he shines his coal oil lantern high above his head to see if it is clear of falling rocks. Yes he sees the light at the end of the tunnel and it is safe. The train comes out of the tunnel and starts a steep climb up a mountain. As the train descends down the other side of the mountain the conductor tells the brakeman seated down below the cupola to start applying the brakes on the caboose to slow the decent so the train does not jump the tracks on the cured tracks below. As the train levels out again and starts it final up hill climb he sees the train swaying from side to side but his precious cargo is safe. It is full steam ahead.

Final destination

When the conductor sees the final destination ahead he climbs down out of his perch and puts his arm around the little boy. Are we there yet says the little boy?" "Well son we are almost there, I can see the pearly gates ahead". Johnny says "tell me what kind of train ride is this?" "I saw the letters on the engine are J E S U S what does that mean?" "Wait a minute I know who you are". "You are the guy that came to visit me in my bedroom when I was real sick with pneumonia. You touched me and made me well, you are Jesus." Yes son you are right and this train is headed for heaven." "Where are our parents? Where is the brides husband?" "Why did some people get on alone and some folks had several people with them " he asked. "Only those with a ticket to heaven can ride this train. It is a choice that they all made. Some people had told others the way to get to heaven and they brought them with them. Many folks were left behind., husband, wives, teachers, government leaders and other did not have a ticket and the train they will ride is headed for hell" .

“How did I get my ticket?” the boy asked. Jesus replied “anyone can get a ticket to heaven by believing in me in their heart and saying out loud that they want me to be their heavenly father”. “Oh yah” “I remembered my teacher at kids life class told me about you and I took you as my savior at Lakewood church.” “I also see that some of the kids in that class are not on this train”. “Your mommy is waiting there for you. I'll be there to show you around too” Jesus said.

“On this journey to heaven I was up in the cupola”. I was watching the precious cargo which is the souls of all the people that had a ticket” Jesus told the boy”. These souls had gone through the trials of life, ups and down, dark places and sunny days. I lit their paths. I was there to hold their hands and help them when they asked.

How about you? Do you have your ticket? It is free. You just have to believe in the conductor, the Lord Jesus Christ and trust only in him. How about getting your ticket right now. Just simply say dear lord Jesus I believe you are the son of the living God and the savior of the world. I believe you can give me the miracle of everlasting life. I want a new life with you. I want to be changed to be the kind of person you want me to be. Then you can add any other words or communications you want to say to Jesus. He says if any one comes to me I will in no wise cast him out. Jesus accepts any and everyone. Now you can say thank you Jesus I have my ticket, now lead me to a new life so that I can ride that final train with you. In Jesus name Amen.

All Aboard ?



All aboard!



