



Morning Assignment

by JOE AARON

Old 'Dummy' Steamer Had To Be Seen . . .

Let us dip back in time, if you will, to the 1920s, to the days of the old E.S. & N., to the era of Barnett's Grove and Sunday picnics and band concerts in the park.

Remember? Remember any of it at all?

Then listen a moment as Homer E. Durham of Peck Road tell how it was then — when, in retrospect at least, life was more relaxed than it has since become. Says Durham:

"Some of my early recollections revolve around this most interesting train (the Evansville, Suburban & Newburgh steam line) and I can remember quite well when my father and I had spent the afternoon and evening hunting doves on the old Schreiber place, just back of Barnett's Grove . . .

"It was growing dark and Dad was consulting his watch from time to time. He suggested that we had better get on down to the track, for it was about time for the 'Dummy' to arrive.

"**THERE WAS** a little shelter just across the track, large enough for eight or 10 people to crowd into in foul weather, and we waited there and listened for the first sounds of the approaching train.

"At last we could see the flashes of the headlight, and just as the locomotive rounded the bend with a full beam focused on us, Dad stepped out on the track and lighted a bunched-up newspaper, waving it back and forth for a stop signal.

"Immediately we could hear the whistle blast, indicating that they had seen us.

"Surely not before nor since has anything like that locomotive known as the 'Dummy' been created. It looked like a street car, all glass-enclosed, but upon closer examination you could look through the windows and see the boiler, with a little short funnel emerging from the center of the top.

"**IN THE FRONT** and rear, cowcatchers were attached, and the running gear . . . was all in plain view underneath the carriage.

"It could be operated from either end like a streetcar, and when they reached the end of the line, they would uncouple the locomotive and tender, switch her back to the rear of the train, the engineer and fireman would trade places and they were in business for the return trip to Evansville.

"It has a most peculiar

three-toned whistle that once heard could never be forgotten, and in town it could be heard from time to time at all hours of the day and night.

"The Evansville terminal was located next to where the Majestic Theatre is now and the route proceeded south on Fifth Street to Canal, then east through the city and in the direction of Newburgh. . .

"**I ALWAYS** thought the best part of the trip was when we entered Stockwell's Woods. The cool, dark shade seemed to engulf us like a tunnel, the big trees went flashing by and the sounds of the train were magnified . . .

"We would nearly always go to Newburgh because that was Dad's territory and the trips were of a business nature.

"I always made it a point to get near the window when we approached Newburgh. The train passed over a long trestle just before entering the town and I liked to look down into the depths and imagine we were flying.

"**THE LINE** was always well patronized. Barnett's Grove was a popular recreation area and catered to church picnics and other festive affairs. I seem to remember that the cars were always full whenever we traveled, and in the summertime they switched over to open cars . . . with running boards along the sides and the seats arranged at right angles to the tracks.

"Along about 1912 the steam line was abandoned and electric traction cars used. I think all the glamor left it when that happened.

"The little custom-made engines . . . continued to be used as switch engines . . . and I have often wondered if any of them are still in existence. What museum pieces they would make!

"Just one more recollection in closing: Once when my cousin and I were at Barnett's Grove, the Dummy, hauling a load of freight, stopped there and we engaged in conversation with one of the crew.

"He very kindly offered us a free ride to town and we rode the caboose! Boy, what a thrill.

"Well, after all, did YOU ever ride in a caboose?"