



James R. “Jim” Jones Continues Love Affair with Local History



DENVER
AND
NEW ORLEANS RAILROAD.

THE ENGAGING STORIES of life along the Denver & New Orleans Railroad and its successors are more than 140 years in the making. My thirty-three-year passion for this subject delivered a 376-page hardbound from Sundance Publications of Denver in 1997, its updated sequel *Colorado & Southern Railway’s D&NO Route*, and a pair of full-length documentary films—*Denver & New Orleans Railroad: In the Shadow of the Rockies*, and *C&S Railway: Here Comes the Flood, There Goes the Train!* The people I have known on this wonderful journey continue to grow in warmth and number.



By May 1986, I was itching to leave Vermont in the rear-view mirror. My two-door, 1978 Chevy Nova’s stereo offered a choice of cassette tapes or big market radio broadcasts as its six cylinders whisked me past Albany, Buffalo, Cleveland, Toledo, Chicago, the Quad Cities, and Omaha to my dream. Childhood memories of family trips planted the seeds of this unshakeable urge to combine a Denver radio career with railroad exploration.

PAM KING PHOTO, GALACTIC RADIO

THE PIECES OF MY BIG MARKET RADIO CAREER CAME TOGETHER QUICKLY as December of 1987 brought an on-air and programming position with a state-of-the-art satellite network heard in 23 countries via Galaxy 3, Transponder 11. I was also moonlighting as

an evening and overnight air personality on Kruzin’ 1150. Not too bad for a 26-year-old Vermont boy! It was a mixed blessing when KRZN’s October, 1990 swansong freed my calendar for sleuthing phantom railroads.

I first learned of the D&NO and Elbert County’s phantom rails in 1988 when a co-worker friend, Tom Goodson, casually mentioned living in “an old railroad building out in Elizabeth” and invited me to check it out. Northwestern Elbert County was in the early stages of development then, and Tom’s neighbors thought nothing of his backyard campfires—even in the downtown district! A starlit sky, roaring fire, Colorado “cool-aid” and casual conversation inevitably turned to the railroad bed directly behind us. One thing led to another and we were soon grabbing flashlights and stepping into the past. There was something very appealing about tracking the ghosts of this marvelous mystery, and I was hooked from the start.

COURTESY ELLA BURNSIDE MUSICK

ELLA MUSICK AND LILA TYLER GREW UP TOGETHER AT ELBERT and shared a special 90th birthday event held in their honor on April 21, 1992. These wonderfully warm and vibrant souls were among dozens of wonderful Douglas, Elbert, El Paso and Pueblo County old-timers who welcomed me into their homes, and became extended family during the 1990s as my local history book took shape. It is an honor to introduce them to another generation in an all-new publication.



Dell A. McCoy, of Denver-based Sundance Publications, was a highly-regarded publisher of Colorado chronicles. He'd broken from his traditional Western subjects to produce and market eight northern New England train books for my father, author Robert C. Jones, during the 1980s. Thanks to Dell's excellent reputation, contributions trickled in from the region's most respected collectors. The combination of photographs and memories from my new friends on the prairie—with material from scattered private collections and historical groups—was a match made in heaven. My gregariousness was rewarded with an ever-widening circle of established authors, photographers and archivists on the look-out for material. Hol Wagner, the dean of C&S standard gauge, found a kindred spirit and regular lunch buddy. Our friendship and collaboration continue four decades later.



COURTESY MONTY GADDY, THE RANGLAND NEWS
MY MULTI-IMAGE PRESENTATION with pre-recorded narration, sound effects and period music toured the senior citizen circuit during the 1990s. I'm adjusting the equipment, Robert Denney, Jr. is front and center, and my "Colorado grandmother" Ella Musick is seated behind him to the right. The sum total of recollections and warmth from these folks was incalculable.

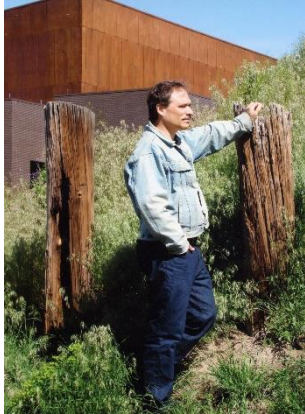
The last quarter of 1997 meant daily visits to Sundance Publications' 250 Broadway, downtown Denver headquarters. Dell, Rose, Theo and Russ's hurried timeline did not always jive with my work schedule, personal life, and efforts to maintain summa cum laude status at Metropolitan State College. Every once in a while, their primitive paste and print process contained errors requiring an erratum page in the back of the book. The final step required trucking 376 pages of printed and collated material per book to a Salt Lake City, Utah bindery. As fate would have it, *Denver & New Orleans: In the Shadow of the Rockies* was its very first machine-bound book! Thanks to this newly automated procedure—roughly one in ten of 2,750 rolled off the assembly line as "seconds" to be sold at bargain prices, sans the traditional plastic dust cover. Looking back, I regret selling the one-of-a-kind, upside-down specimen to a broadcasting buddy!

The last quarter of 1997 meant daily visits to Sundance Publications' 250 Broadway, downtown Denver headquarters. Dell, Rose, Theo and Russ's hurried

The book's warm reception resulted in Sundance's offer to research and write the text for *Sterling, Colorado: Crossroads on the Prairie*. Next, my comfortable world of high plains trains was body-slammed to the tarp for a professional wrestling paperback collaboration with former AWA and pioneer ESPN sports personality Larry Nelson during 2000. His colorful stories appear within the riveting, jaw-dropping pages of *Stranglehold: An Intriguing Behind the Scenes Glimpse into the Private World of Professional Wrestling*. Both "Sterling" and "Stranglehold" were skillfully edited and proofed for grammar by my fiancée, Marilee. Our long-distance love story and frequent flyer miles were finally grounded upon my return to Vermont in November, 2000.

The years came and went, and my writing was limited to assisting with dad's Evergreen Press publications. Thanks to digital technology, I'd joined the ranks of filmmakers—with forty Tell-Tale Productions DVDs and downloads that solidified my reputation as a sort of Ken Burns for rail enthusiasts. My Colorado return, for the 80th anniversary of the May 30, 1935 flood, led to the creation of companion documentary DVDs for the long sold-out book of the same name.

Perhaps dad was guiding me from the great beyond, as I sifted through his stacks of books. I noticed how one of his titles, a Maine narrow gauge book, enjoyed three revised versions during the quarter century since its first edition. Maybe, just maybe I should rekindle the D&NO fire for a new generation. Phone calls and e-mails to original contributors Allan C. Lewis, Mel McFarland, Hol Wagner, Judy von Ahlefeldt and others were met with enthusiasm and additional material.



MARILEE C. JONES PHOTO

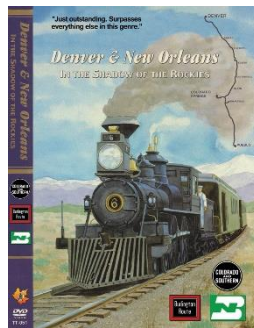
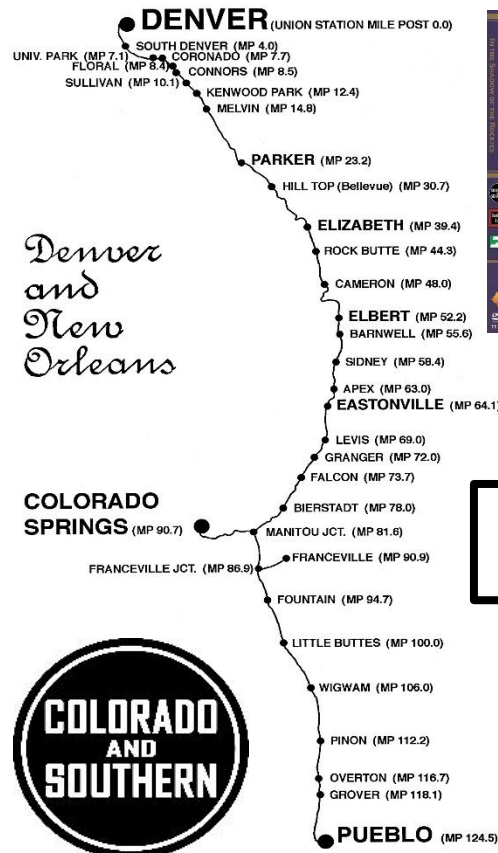


JANET J. JONES PHOTO

You shouldn't be surprised I was "railroaded" at birth. The proverbial apple didn't fall far from the tree as everyone in my immediate family—mom included—was in train service. My father, Robert C. Jones, created 24 railroad chronicles between 1979 and 2014. Dad's January 13th, 2021 passing was a wake-up call that time waits for none of us, and the importance of seizing the moment. This got me to considering a personal bucket list.

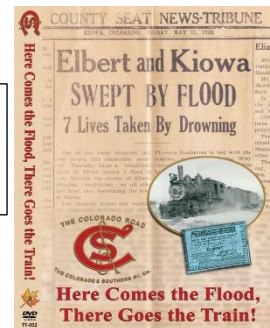
While I now believe Dell's assertion "there is no such thing as a book without boo-boos," modern digital desktop layout, design and publication have minimized gremlins with this 21st century version. I cherish the luxury of massaging each page multiple times before and after Marilee waves her magical editing wand.

I will always be grateful to Sundance Publications, and truly appreciate the financial risk Dell McCoy took on making my dream a reality. Twenty-five years later, the tables have turned and all peril rests on my shoulders. I embrace the opportunity to write, design and market publications with a desktop PC, flat-bed scanner and internet connection. *Colorado & Southern Railway's D&NO Route* offers a fresh presentation with many new images, a linear flow and streamlined look akin to my film documentaries. Rather than gathering dust on a bookshelf, this user-friendly chronicle was crafted with your coffee table in mind. My heartfelt thanks to you, dear reader, for your friendship and accompanying me on this ride of a lifetime.



Companion DVDs or downloadable VIDEO documentaries—

Denver & New Orleans:
In The Shadow of the Rockies



Here Comes The Flood,
There Goes The Train!

ALL NEW BOOK!
Colorado & Southern Railway's
D&NO Route

James R. "Jim" Jones
author/historian/filmmaker
[rutrs3@msn.com](mailto:rutr33@msn.com)
www.coloradorailvideos.com

