

Museum News: Bow Tie Boggan - Brakeman

By C. W. (Bill) Smith

Sanderson is famous for the nicknames given to its citizens in the old days, especially the railroaders. Sometimes they called to mind a physical characteristic, such as "Red" Toman, a young fireman on the railroad, a ginger-haired man; "Fatty" Young, roundhouse foreman for years, for the obvious; or "Mud Creek" Hall, a flagman for the railroad. But, one of the better nicknames was "Bow Tie" Boggan, a trainman who lived in Sanderson for a time and worked out of the division point for years.

Woodrow Wilson Boggan was born on November 29, 1913 in Easterly, Texas, to Robert and Anna Boggan. His father was a railroad man, working as section foreman and a fireman on a locomotive for the Missouri Pacific Railroad. Although he was raised in a railroad family, times were hard and he took what work he could get during the depression.

Woody Boggan and Mary Katherine Nash married on October 19, 1934, in Marlin, Texas, and their marriage produced one child, Robert. At that time the family was living in Calvert, Texas, where Woody worked for the utility company as a laborer.

In 1935 Boggan moved to Sanderson where he worked for the Woodward and Smith Cattle Company as a truck driver. He hauled feed and cattle during a very hard drought. The job didn't last long, and he left the area for awhile.

In January of 1937, Woody was hired by the T&NO Railroad as a brakeman and he and the family moved to Sanderson. They began living at Mom and Pop Climer's rooming house and soon made friends. They made many happy memories in Sanderson and fit in well with the community. He worked out of Sanderson for quite some time until about 1940 when he was transferred and they moved to El Paso.

In all those years he still came into Sanderson regularly and continued to make many friends in the community. It was during his time in Sanderson that he acquired the nickname "Bow Tie" because he always wore a bow tie to work. A hallmark of workers in the early part of the 20th century was reporting to work in a suit and tie, even if they changed into work clothes after getting there. Fifty- and sixty-year employees at a factory where I worked in Illinois came in suit and tie, sometimes wearing those clothes for the day as a work uniform.

After many years working for the T&NO/Southern Pacific in El Paso, Bow Tie transferred to Winslow, Arizona, where they lived until retirement. Mary passed away in Winslow in 1990 and Bow Tie passed in 1998. They are buried in the Liberty Community Cemetery at Milano, Milam County, Texas.

In 1976 Bow Tie submitted his remembrances to the Sanderson Times, which were so lengthy they had to be divided into several articles published over a few editions. In it he remembered the men he had worked with on the railroad. The engineers he remembered the most were Bill Nunn, a good engineer who could get a train moving quickly, Sandy Robey, an old-timer and expert with the Westinghouse air brake system, and the well-known Smokey Daniels, one of the best engineers of the time. He remembered that some men were afraid to operate the big engines because of their power and ticklish controls, but Daniels took all of them in stride, a real professional. In one incident retold by Boggan, Daniels was at the controls of a big engine near Toronto west of Alpine, pulling his train into a siding to let the Sunset Limited passenger train pass by. Just as Daniels was pulling into the siding, the Sunset Limited came flying down the track, going too fast to stop. The Limited engineer had blown through two



T&NO brakemen Gaushon, Bow Tie Boggan and Charlie Murray, standing in front of the Beanery with Beanery Queen Anita Fisher. ca 1939.

block signals, failing to stop. The engines collided...the Sunset Limited engine and first cars remained upright on the track, but Daniels' freight engine was broadsided and flipped over onto its side. The crews of both engines jumped for their lives before the crash, but Daniels was the last to leave his engine, jumping just as the collision occurred. First reports stated that Daniels had not been located and it was feared that he had been crushed under his engine. The close-knit railroad community was shocked. But, when the dust and steam cleared, Daniels was found in a small arroyo, scratched and bruised and both heels shattered from landing on his feet and rolling into the creek to escape. He was such a beloved character that railroad men and their families up and down the line sent their well-wishes and expressions of gratitude for his safety, and their prayers for complete and quick recovery. In those days, and still today, railroaders were family. Even with cut-throat corporations running the business, the men and women who work for the railroad trust each other with their lives in a very dangerous business.

In his remembrances Bowtie Boggan mentions many people who worked for the railroad and lived in the close-knit community of Sanderson. Even forty years after the fact, he looked with love and affection on this little community. Though he lived far away and only spent a few years here, he always considered it home. But, that is the Sanderson way...its citizens are like family, even today.