

Tweetsie Day

"I Remember Tweetsie Day" brought a lot of people to the station at Roundhouse Mountain . . . Many of them had journeyed from Boone to Johnson City and return in a time when it was the only way to get out — in winter's raging storms or in summer's rains, when the dirt roads were muddy and rutty.

It was good to talk to some of the railroaders of the early days . . . Like C. C. (Brownie) Allison, who was a young locomotive engineer when the rails reached Boone in 1919 . . . He retired in 1969 after his long tenure with ET & WNC . . . For several years he had hauled the freight between Johnson City and Bemberg . . . It takes a full-time rail crew to service the giant rayon mills.

Brownie tells us that the number 12 engine, built by Baldwin in 1917 and which is still tootin' around the mountain, was shipped into Elizabethton over the Virginia and Southwestern . . . He christened her on the ten-mile run into Johnson City and never entered her cab again . . . Big John Lewis, as we understand it, handled the steam on the 12 and she wasn't often in Boone . . . Brownie's pride and joy in the boom days on the "ET" was the 11, which made the last run to Elk Park and Cranberry, returning and dropping her fires at the engine house in Elizabethton . . . She was scrapped.

During the twenties another engine was needed and the 14 was built . . . She pulled the mail and express car, two coaches and a new, posh parlor car for several years . . . She wound up her career in a roundhouse fire in Alaska.