



THE TRAIN SHEET

News from the Feather River Rail Society



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I remember the WP

- Jack Palmer

I often recall the earlier days of our activities at the Portola R.R. Museum and how I became involved with another great WP Engineer named George Oels.



On one of my trips to Portola, I was pleasantly surprised to see the WP921-D and our SN Caboose 1632 in operation and later as it made several trips around the balloon and return.

At one point, the officials decided to make a few changes with the crew and that I would be the fireman on the next trip. I couldn't believe my ears! Me? Fireman? (I had no idea of what I was



EMD F7 WP 921D at Portola

- photo by Mike Mucklin

supposed to do.)

When I entered the cab of the 921-D, George Oels, WP Engineer (retired) was waiting for me. After introductions, he told me to sit over there in the Fireman's seat.

I began looking at everything, but there was nothing to see on my side of the engine, so I thought this would be boring with nothing to do. WRONG!

A few minutes later George asked me if I had fired before, I replied "No".

He very firmly said O.K. this is what we will be doing together for safety, because you will be my eyes on your side.

Before we move, you look to see that all is clear on your side and tell me "All Clear" and I will repeat it back to you. Then the same thing as we go around, you look ahead at the next switch and tell me "Switch Lined" if it's O.K. to proceed. If not say "Bad Iron". If you can't see the switch, you tell me "Can't see the Switch".

Now I had other thoughts - I do have an important job to do, and I was happy to follow his instructions. When we finished he said I did O.K. and I thanked him for the opportunity to meet and work with him.

I didn't realize at that moment just how much I owed to George for the proper training he had given me and that I would occasionally use over the next twenty years.

On my trips to Portola after that he would come to visit me at the museum. When he was no longer able to come to the museum, I would visit him at his home.

Although George is no longer with us, I have fond memories of WP and WP Engineers like him.

WP Lives!



SN 1632 - a Single-sheathed cupola caboose, rebuilt from boxcar 15303 in 1938 by WP

- photo by Brian McCamish