

John "Jack" Grasso

John Joseph "Jack" Grasso II, of Union, New Jersey passed away on Dec. 19, 2003 after a long illness. Many of you may recognize Jack's name as the one behind the Zephyrette Project. We first 'met' Jack on November 25, 2000 when he sent an email that contained a question.

"The Western Pacific is one of my four favorite railroads. The others are the CB&Q, New York Central, and Erie. I am a great RDC fan and I loved the Zephyrettes. This is an aspect of WP history that doesn't seem to be covered that much.

One more thing. Does the museum have any plans to acquire an RDC-2 and restore it as a WP Zephyrette?"

After exchanging emails and phone calls Jack adopted this as a project for the FRRS and over the next three years made many contacts and followed up on leads that could possibly get us an RDC.

Although Jack had cancer it had been in remission until earlier this year when he let us know he would have to start chemo therapy. On September 15, 2003 Jack updated us with the following news;

"My chemo is doing well, but it makes me sick from time to time. My last treatment should be in October.

Sorry to say that my lovely wife Louise passed away in July. If it wasn't for my children and grandchildren, I don't know what I would have done. Because of them, I am trying to get back to normal which means working on the Zephyrette Project. I should be going to Danbury in a few weeks to look at the

RDC.

One piece of good news. My book "Operation CUT—The First 30 years" (Cleveland Union Terminal) is coming out in a few weeks. I will be keeping in touch."

The last email we received from Jack was on December 2, 2003.

Jack was the beloved husband of the late Louise Anne, who passed away on July 11, 2003 the devoted father of the twins, Roseanne J. Petocz (Steve) and John J. Grasso III (Jennifer), loving grandfather of Kayla, Lucas, Steven and Alexandra Petocz, dear brother-in-law of Demitri Morabito. He is also survived by grandnieces and nephews. Jack's funeral was held on Monday, Dec. 22, 2003 at The Union Funeral Home. Interment followed at the Gate of Heaven Cemetery.

Our condolences go out to his family and friends.

Santa Trains 2003

By "Dynamite" David Epling

Myself and Spencer Walker arrived at Portola Friday evening. The night got interesting as the pitter patter of rain began falling on the Edenwold's roof, and didn't stop until 8:30 pm Saturday night.

Santa Train was scheduled to get under way at 5 pm but Mother nature intervened and the Museum (and the entire south side of Portola) lost power. We decided to wait until 6 pm and if it was still in blackout conditions, we'd cancel the night. At 4:55 pm the lights came back on and despite the heavy rain, the crowds were plentiful.

8 pm comes around and it's time to put the train to bed, disconnect the 707 and pull'er over the oil pan then shut'er down. It stops raining, thanks Mom. Pizza party in the crew lounge.

Bed down in the Edenwold and light rain returns. I laugh to myself as I think of a Jeff Foxworthy joke.

The next morning I slide open the blind on my compartment. The sun is out and the sky is blue. I'm hoping Mother Nature will be more compliant for next weeks train. I guess it could have been worse, it coulda' snowed.

Well, Santa Train round 2, It was cold and overcast, but the rain held off for us, the result? Multiple trainloads of people, When the morning started out, there was about 2 inches of snow on the ground. By train time, the snow at the shop was gone, but it was still in force around the balloon track so it made for some good effects.

I mentioned trainloads of people, I mean literally. I was assigned Brakeman and parked my tush on the UP 25283 at the head end. Near as I can tell I had about 30 people per trip on my caboose. Later at the end of the evening. While the crew was huddled around the Pizza, It was mentioned by consensus that this had been the largest crowd ever for the Santa Trains.

2003 is over, it was a good year from where I sit after volunteering for my first year. 2004 is only 17 days away and a New Year dawns for the PRM.

A lot of good things are happening at the PRM, if you have not been there in a while, if you keep saying "Ya know, I'm a member and I have been meaning to visit" NOW is the time to do so. Ok well not now, the museum is now closed for the winter. but March is just around the corner. Even if you can't come and help with the projects. Just come and say hello and bring a friend.

MEETING ANNOUNCEMENT

The February Board Meeting for the FRRS will be held in Sacramento, CA. All interested members are invited to attend.

When: February 7, 2004. 1:00 PM - 4:00 PM.

Where: The Stanford Gallery of the California State Railroad Museum, located in the Big 4 Building at 111 "I" St., right next to the Railroad Museum Building building.

Map:

Saturday, February 7, 2004

1:00 PM * Board Meeting

Questions Call
(530) 832-4131

CSRM Turntable

Discovery Museum



CSRM Main
Entrance

Sacramento River

Stanford Gallery

I-5 and Amtrack Station