

WP - A FAMILY AFFAIR

- Tom Carter, Director

When I made plans to go up to the museum one weekend last fall to work on Western Pacific FP7 805-A, I knew there was a track work weekend and a steam weekend planned. However, with the end of the season and all, I didn't expect a whole lot of folks to be there: it was getting colder, the days getting shorter, and I knew we were all a little tired from a pretty impressive 2009 season.

I was VERY surprised and impressed with the flurry of activity when I rolled in on Friday afternoon, October 23rd, and saw the work going on. In fact, I was amazed all weekend at the spirit of the workforce and the sheer number of volunteers all weekend. On Saturday, I was working on the 805 right outside the door to the Ops office and Steve Habeck poked his head out and smiled and said "sounds like a railroad shop doesn't it?!" I paused for a minute and took in the sounds and sights and, man, did I feel like I was back at Stockton yard during my childhood. It gave me goose bumps. To say I was proud of our little museum would be an understatement. Sunday, I saw the crew getting the track ready for the Mini-Zephyr run the following weekend, the return of our flagship train for the first time in a long time, and an ARMY of folks getting the Belle of the Ball, the 805-A, ready in the shop. I went home pretty tired, but ecstatic over the thoughts of the CZ coming up and reuniting with its locomotive. She looked and sounded GREAT. Moreso, I was proud of the spirit of the "Willing People" of the WP employees and their successors at the museum. THIS is the WP. There is no ATSF museum, no SP museum; the WP WAS their employees.

My youngest sister is an Amtrak Conductor, and had remarked on numerous occasions that she didn't understand the attraction for trains to anyone. To quote her "a train is just a train, they all look alike to me. I mean, IT'S JUST A TRAIN!" She rang me a little perplexed and curious when she got called by the crew dispatcher to take a crew taxi to an "undisclosed location" to board an "undisclosed train" to run to an "undisclosed location" and lay over an extra day before returning. To say I was excited and tickled at the irony was an understatement. That is when I explained to her what the "undisclosed train" was and the significance of it. She got a little excited at the prospect of not having the usual

"Amtrak equipment" and a different route than she was used to. I called Eugene Vicknair and Rod McClure and gave them the heads up that she was the Conductor, then sat back and enjoyed the irony that the train to commemorate the 100 year anniversary of the WP, the 60th of the CZ and the 25th of the FRRS was being handled by the daughter of a WP employee, the little girl of a WP family, and the sister and aunt of 3 FRRS volunteers. I was tickled pink.

Excitement built when she reported to the Sacramento crew base and got her orders. She called me up and said "Wow, I guess this is a big deal!" When she got to Portola and called me again, she was like a little kid on Christmas. She then told me "Now I get it. NOW I see why some trains are pretty special. I rode in luxury on this trip and am having FUN".

When she got in after the return trip, I was over at Mom and Dad's getting ready to go off on two more client jobs, and we all went out to dinner together. She was just on Cloud 9. She was tired, but VERY excited and just raved about the royal treatment she received from all she met at the museum and on the train. Car owners Burt Hermey and Roy Wullich, and the staff of the cars, treated her and her engineer to a 5 star experience and she felt like royalty. Eugene made her feel welcome and she enjoyed laughing with him. When she got to the museum, Rod and the rest of the WP crew made her most welcome and she felt at home. She was amazed at the museum and its hospitality and now has made plans to return with her daughters: the middle one has now declared at 9 years old that she plans to follow in her mother's, father's, uncles', grandmother's, and grandfather's footsteps and wants to be a locomotive engineer. Kinda cool (and proud moment) for a little girl that is very much into Disney Princesses and girly stuff. The 3rd Generation of Railroading Carters is now firmly planted there.

I would like to take this opportunity on behalf of the entire Carter family to thank ALL of you for all of the hospitality shown to my little sister and the hard work of keeping the Western Pacific alive in Portola these past two weeks. To say I am proud of our organization and our railroad would be a huge understatement.

Happy Birthday Western Pacific!