

Director's Report

Steve Habeck, Vice-President/Director

The historic WP Greenville depot burned to the ground on the late afternoon of Saturday, March 23rd (photo from Greenville paper provided). Suspected cause is arson. Sound familiar? Another relic of the WP is gone.

The harsh winter we experienced here in Portola has not been kind to our property. There are 2 cross bucks and at least 3 other signs down around the yard. We also had a problem with the electrical system on WP 2001, causing the batteries to discharge and subsequently freeze during the bitter cold in January. They have been carefully thawed out, and are being massaged back to health. Not sure yet if they all survived without damage. These batteries are the nearly indestructible Crown set we purchased over 15 years ago, and are now in their 5th locomotive.

WP 484: The stove has been disconnected, and the fuel tank drained, in preparation for removal of the tank for cleanup underneath it, and repair of the seeping leak that has plagued this hack for a long time. We believe we have found and fixed the source of the seepage (the fuel fill hose, which had all the flexibility of PVC pipe, and had no hose clamps on its connections). The new 3 ½" diameter hose cost \$141.

Also, a legal narrow-band railroad radio has been installed and is serviceable; the old radio has been retained, with a new antenna, for scanning purposes only.

Other changes have been made inside the caboose to make it more secure, with more displays, and to allow it to be opened for visitors more frequently.

The baggage car has been upgraded with an appropriate clock, a UP calendar, and a poster of the UP Heritage units, as well as a more-permanent power supply routing to the back of the counter, for the convenience of our volunteers. We still need some help to get all the Santa Train stuff back into the party car (it's all staged in the east end of the baggage car, and outside the car on the benches).

A new, permanently-installed blue flag is in place on the west 1&2 lead (a fold-down type), courtesy of Poindexter. I have issued a bulletin (YDM #3) concerning the use of this blue flag.

Battery servicing is in progress, first on the RAL fleet, in preparation for the season. We also will need the lube oil topped off on most of our fleet (3 barrels ordered) prior to startup of these engines. If we intend to operate past Memorial Day, we will also need to order diesel fuel (at least 1000 gallons, preferably more). And, of course, we still need batteries, whenever we can get them.

I am in contact with Amphenol, the company that makes the connectors we need for installing radios in our equipment, to obtain quotes, and to purchase enough connectors to allow us to properly connect the radios.

I am still off work with my torn rotator cuff; I expect to get the surgery scheduled in late April, or early May. After that, healing and rehab will take 6 months or more. I have also had recent issues with my Crohn's disease, requiring a hospital visit on 4/4-4/5. Fortunately, we have been able to accomplish what we have almost exclusively due to the Elems boys, with them doing the work, and me directing traffic (see their work reports that I have included for the Board, detailing some of the extensive work they have completed).

Yard switching to accommodate the spring steam work week is planned for next week, possibly Monday, then Tuesday and Wednesday for sure, and more if needed. I intend to have everything ready for them by Friday, the 19th. There is still quite a bit of work to do to get engines ready, but we should get it done. The switching will also be hampered since we have no legal hand-held radios (as of this writing).

I plan on having the Silver Plate available for the crew training sessions. The Plate is currently on Rip track 1, west of the road boxcar. It is currently powered up, and we will set up a set of steps at the east end, in the gap between the Plate and the road boxcar created by the extended cushioned drawbar of the road boxcar, for access.

We have been getting 8-10 phone calls daily in the last month or so, so there are people out there that want to talk to us. Most calls are going to the answering machine, since we usually can't get to the phone in time from the shop area. Speaking of the shop area, the wood shop bay, and especially the machine shop bay, are in need of a thorough cleaning, straightening, and putting tools away. Also, the solvent tank has apparently been left open for extended periods; much of the solvent has evaporated, and what's left is full of sludge.