

FEATHER RIVER RAIL SOCIETY

DATE: April 2017
ITEM: President Report
FROM: Steve Habeck

After a winter that will be talked about for quite some time, we have finally begun seeing a large, bright ball of light moving across the sky during the day, bringing with it longer days, and warmer temperatures. Mostly due to weather issues, we were unable to clear the shop for the Mechanical Department until the middle of March, but once we gave them some shop space in which to work, CMO Bil (1L) Jackson, asst CMO David (Fritz) Elems, and able helper Ethan (Zeke) Doty got right to work, and as I write this, the QRR (SP) 1100 and the Kodachrome (SP 2873) have been serviced and released for duty. WP 917-D has had most of its servicing completed, but a rusted, frozen power contactor (S13) is keeping it out of service (but not for long).

Also, Ethan Doty and Loren Ross braved the elements earlier this year and got all the Christmas lights off all 7 cabooses (and the engine) while I was dealing with work issues and a stubborn congestion problem. This work facilitated moving the cabooses out of the way, so the passenger cars from the shop could be placed on track 3, out of the way of the Mechanical Department.

One of the reasons we were delayed was access to the Museum, or lack thereof. After the Santa Trains, we got around 3 ft of snow, and then the rains came. Then it got cold, everything froze, and we got more snow. This resulted in many hours of backhoe time by Ethan and Fritz, and a lot of shovel time for them and others (including Director Greg Elems and both his sons, Matt and David, Director Charlie Spikes, and Duane VanderVeen).

Meanwhile, several people were kept busy squeegeeing and vacuuming water from the north side rooms in the shop. This is a problem every winter, but was especially troublesome this year due to the amount of water we had to deal with. Director Charlie Spikes, Duane VanderVeen, Loren Ross, Ethan Doty, Director Greg Elems and his son David Elems, and probably others, kept after the nearly-continuous inflow of water. Over 300 gallons of water were sucked up and dumped with the shop vac during the many sessions worked.

Despite the widespread flooding and other problems in Portola, the Museum came through with minimal damage, with the notable exception of our main access road, which was destroyed by a combination of heavy water flows undermining the pavement, and lots of heavy truck traffic by UP and their contractors during the flooding. I have responded to an application from FEMA for assistance, and have begun inquiries with UP for possible assistance. In the meantime, exercise caution when coming into the Museum once you pass the City's yard and start down the hill to our gate.

Due to several issues that were not resolved to our satisfaction, we let Elise Tiffany go. We have hired a new person, KC Dunn, to work in the store, and I am sure everyone will be pleased when you get to meet her. Director Leisa Wesch has stepped up to oversee the transitions occurring in the WP Store, and manage its operation till things settle out. The Board authorized purchasing a new point-of-sale system and related components, and Directors Eugene Vicknair and Leisa Wesch, and Ethan Doty have been working on the inevitable teething issues involved. Check out the new layout of the WP Store; we can always use helping hands to make it even better. The soda fountain is also up and running for the season, thanks to Director Charlie Spikes, who had to badger Swire and threaten to toss the machine outside before we got them to show up.

We are preparing for the spring steam work session, and some folks are already here (Bob Sims, Roger Stabler, and Kirk Baer). We are kicking off a major fundraising campaign, with the goal of having the 165 under steam by Railroad Days. This work session will hopefully see much critical work done towards accomplishing this goal, and we expect to have people working on the engine all summer, as well. Check out our social media blasts, and help bring steam back to Portola in 2017!

Next month, we will be having our Convention in Reno, NV. There's still time to sign up for what should be a great set of events. We hope to have news regarding the Convention banquet speaker very soon. I hope to see many of you there.

The last chapter in the saga of Doug Morgan's equipment may soon be written. His deadline to remove his equipment has come and gone. We have one more Court hearing upcoming which, hopefully, will resolve this issue for good.

In other equipment news, I have started a dialog with the Manager of the Collins Pine lumber mill in Chester, where they still have the home-built Carr-bell plow sitting there. Collins Pine very much wants to see this plow preserved; since the deal with the group in Truckee fell apart, they have reached out, looking for someone interested. I responded, since I went there with the Truckee guys some time ago, and was very impressed with the resourcefulness that went into this plow's construction. Collins Pine may even be able to provide some assistance (equipment and funding) to ensure the plow's preservation. This is local history, right in our wheelhouse; Collins Pine's railroad, the Almanor Railroad, interchanged with the WP at Clear Creek Junction, between Almanor and Westwood, on WP's High Line (the old 4th Sub). We would be remiss in our mission if we didn't make an effort to save this plow.