

RAILFANS' DAY, SEPTEMBER 9, 1989

by Vic Neves

The theme for this year's event was the 50th birthday celebration for WP's first diesel, SW-1 501. Delivered to the WP as EMC 906, the locomotive was repainted to the original demo scheme by Norm Holmes and a group of members from Chico did some prep work prior to its painting. Hank Stiles did some mechanical repairs including the air brake valve stand. The number boards were made by Wayne Monger and installed by Jack Palmer.

The smoke from a fire near Sloat did little to discourage FRRS members and railfans alike from spending a day photographing our trains in the near autumn light of September. Almost 100 paid fans were treated to a well choreographed movement of trains throughout the day. Board member Wayne Monger working as planning/coordinator, using a computer, designed the day's events by pre-staging all the trains in advance and assigning different locomotives to each train. Then by assigning trains to different departure and arrival tracks minimized switching delays during the day's events. As the weeks prior to the event came crawling closer, FRRS Trainmaster, Steve Habeck, with help from other crew members including Bruce Cooper and Gordon Wollesan started the task of assembling train consists in the order prescribed on Wayne's computer sheet. This job - a hearty thanks to Steve Habeck for a job well done. The day before the event found Vic Neves at the throttle of WP 707 trying to keep up with the switching moves from veterans Hank Stiles and Steve Habeck. An otherwise two days worth of work was concluded in record time with additional help from Jack Palmer, Ned Clary and Brian Challender. Brian and Jack also swapped throttle time while Vic stumbled over the ground work. With all train consists set, the balance of equipment not to be used on Saturday was then shoved out on the West Pass.

The month leading up to September 9th, found Wayne Monger working feverishly on Milwaukee Road U25B 5057, trying to make it move on its own and then over the Labor Day weekend, his dream was a reality. The evening before the 9th, FRRS First Sub Club members Walter Ozanick, Wayne Sheldon, Matt Goings, along with Dave Dodds and Vic reapplied the engine hood doors back onto 5057. Although still needing additional repairs including a very determined bad order "low water" relay switch that kept shutting down the prime mover, crew members were able to keep the GE running throughout Railfans' Day. A special thanks Head Brakeman, Fred James and the use of his "thumb" on the low water override switch while making the necessary photo run-bys complete. Tickets that were duplicates of passenger coupons used on the California Zephyr were printed by John Walker.

Early morning of the 9th had Wayne Sheldon, Larry Van Horn, John Donovan and Jack Palmer working security at both gates. These First Sub Club members were assisted with ticket sales at the gate by Lynda Monger, Kent Stephens, Dave Dodds, Matt Going and Walter Ozanick. A hearty thanks for the great work.

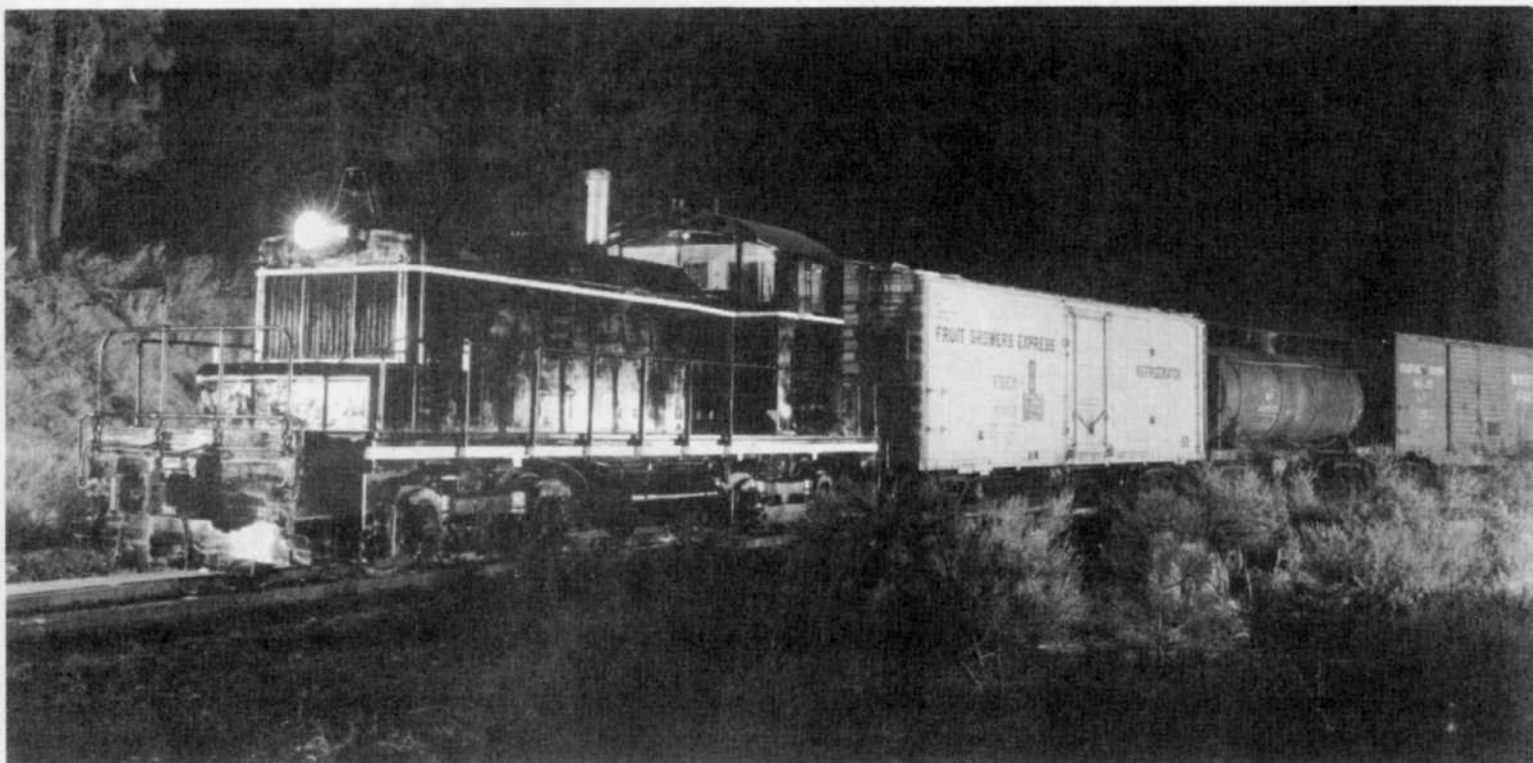
Vic Neves and Hank Stiles conducted the orientation/safety meeting for the visitors before the 11:05 AM departure of Feather River Shortline #8 with caboose load of fans to Milward switch to start the day's runs. With Vic Neves at the controls as Dispatcher, crew members worked the schedule of movements with clock work precision and kept things rolling with no delays. FRRS Trainmaster Steve Habeck, helped coordinate all the moves with the Dispatcher and also worked the dubious position as Malfunction Junction Herder.

Conductors Gordon Wollesan, Jim Gidley and Steve Milward made sure Engineers Dave McClain, Bruce Cooper, Hank Stiles, Jim Ley, Wayne Monger and Jim Boyton kept things moving smoothly. Fireman on these runs were John Marvin, Larry Hanlon, Ned Clary, Jack Palmer, Bruce Cooper and Dave McClain. Head Brakeman on all runs

were Dave Waters, Brian Challender, Fred James and Mark French. If we left anyone out of the crew listing, you probably weren't there. The noon time whistles from FRSL #8, and diesels UP 849, WP 512, WP 921, WP 501, WP 707 and Milwaukee 5057 left no doubt to Plumas County that the museum was open for business that day.

Everything ran smoothly throughout the course of the day, even after radio equipment began to give use problems, crew members kept the lines of communication open. A fine spaghetti feed was served up by Sue Cooper and company. After dinner Chris Skow and Trains Unlimited Tours treated the fans with a slide show and a drawing for two to Chile. Wayne Monger treated the fans with a slide show of "SP in Siskiyou County". All photographers than gathered near Milward switch for a night photo session of SW-1 906 (WP 501) and the 40's train. Two sets were made as a very patient group listened to Vic Neves blast out instructions through the PA radio. Mark French, Wayne Sheldon and Walter Ozanick operated the flash bulb guns under Vic's direction. Thanks to Ken Rattenne for additional exposure info during the shoot. A slide followed for the few remaining fans on "Oliver Brothers Salt RR".

Special thanks go to John Walker and his three years experience from past events. Wayne and Vic certainly know now what needs to be done in the future. Thanks to Norm and Barbara Holmes for operating the gift shop and keeping things operating smoothly throughout the museum. Thanks to Hap Manit for making all the necessary requirements to keep the facilities operating. Thanks to Hank Stiles, Bruce Cooper Gordon Wollesan and Steve Habeck in the fueling of FRSL #8 and Jim Boyton for operating her for Railfan Day. Thanks to Wayne for running the ads in Pacific Rail News, Lark and Flimsies. A special thanks from all the operating department to all personnel that were involved in Railfans' Day. If we missed your name, our sincere apologies. See you all next year.



EMC SW-1 (WP 501) is illuminated at Milward switch during the night photo session during the 4th annual railfan day at the Portola Railroad Museum.
-photo by Vic Neves