

Fifth Annual FRRS Railfan's Day September 15, 1990 by Wayne Monger

Railfan's Day at the Portola Railroad Museum has evolved into an event that represents the "finale" of another successful operating season at Portola, a time when the true aspects of rail preservation come to life for the cameras in recreated trains of the past years and a day when trains are operated for the pleasure of the members in attendance rather than the general public.

To stay with the successful theme of operating trains of different eras on short headways throughout the day, co-directors of Railfan's Day Vic Neves and Wayne Monger went nearly from dusk to dawn one early August night planning and replanning every single move that would be needed from the start to finish of the activities of September 15. One of the benefits of this all-night session is the "Dispatcher's Track Diagram" board that hangs in the Operations Office. Just days after this, former Railfan Day director John Walker got the tickets for the event ordered, while Vic Neves took on the responsibility of setting up and producing copies of the schedule of events in the form of a railroad timetable. Once the specifics of what the train movement were to be and which pieces of historical freight equipment were to be used in each train, operations supervisors Steve Habeck and Hank Stiles got together for some lengthy planning sessions on how to switch out the entire museum collection and place the needed equipment into trains - and into the proper order as required by the overall plan for September 15. Without the professional wisdom of these two knowledgeable railroaders, getting the equipment set up would have taken many more days than it did. As it was, all switching movements had to be planned around the "Rent-A-Locomotive" program operated by Bruce Cooper.

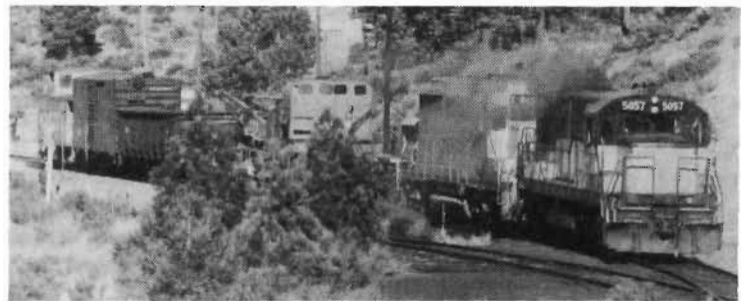
Following the conclusion of Railroad Days in August, preparations for Railfan's Day increased in intensity. John Ryczkowski applied the lettering to SW-1 501, completing its appearance as it looked when it first started working for the WP in 1939. John Walker and Wayne Monger "completed" a nearly three year project of restoring and re-lettering covered hopper Sacramento Northern 5005, with help from Mardi Vincent. This project took four 10-hour days to complete. Norm Holmes prepped and painted S-1 512 into the original black with white "zebra stripes" that these locomotives came with in 1940. To improve the appearance of some of the freight car fleet, hopper car 10649 and 50-foot plug-door box car 36006 were scrubbed of the years of grime. The new "Altamont Sign Crew" consisting of Vic Neves, Wayne Monger, Mardi Vincent, Fred James and others constructed and painted new signs for "Malfunction Junction," "Milward Switch" and "Terminal" plus installing other signs. Hank Stiles, Steve Habeck and Gordon Wollesen took care of installing the new heralds on the cab of the 512. With the help of over a dozen people, under the direction of Hap Manitt and Steve Habeck, the museum grounds and trains were ready for operation by Saturday morning September 15.

As was the case last year, the day started with an orientation and safety meeting for the paying photographers and the museum crews in the Flannery Meeting Room at 10:30AM. With 12 trains being operated in the span of the day, there were a few "firsts" during this year's Railfan Day event. These included actually operating a passenger train both ways completely through the engine house on Track #1; second generation diesel power in the form of GP30 UP 849 and U25B MILW 5057 "MUed" and operating together on the Maintenance of Way train; a simulated military train (dubbed the "Iraq Special") operating at the museum and motorcar rides during the lunch break supplied by Hank Stiles and Bob Beattie. In all, there were just over 100 paying photographers/railfans in attendance this year, as well as over two dozen FRRS members involved in train operation, food service, gift shop and fare collection at the main gate. As in the past,

most of the people interested in photographing the recreated freight trains planted themselves on the hillsides around the outer edge of the balloon loop in the area of Milward Switch. Some of the trains during the day were scheduled to stop at Milward Switch to let off and/or load people for the trip back to the main building and the other end of the museum grounds.

With the conclusion of the operations at 5PM, the kitchen crew headed up by Sue Cooper and Emory Goddard had the spaghetti dinner ready for the 50 or so people that had decided to remain at the museum for the after hours activities. Following dinner, the entertainment started with a slide show featuring WP's bicentennial locomotives 1776 and 1976 from the collections of Norm Holmes, Vic Neves and Wayne Monger. At just before 8PM, two dozen photographers got their cameras, tripods and cable releases and headed for the Milward Switch area once again. Under the direction of Vic Neves, the first of two night photo sessions was set up, with the subject being GP7's 707 and 708 on the 1960's freight train. Following nearly one hour in the cold and two separate sequences using multiple flash bulbs, the photographers moved onto the subject of SW-1 501 and S-1 512 sitting side by side just west of the engine house. Upon return to the warmer confines of the Flannery Meeting Room, the drawing was held to determine the winner of the 3rd Annual FRRS Visitor Center/Depot Raffle. Other door prizes were handed out also, then the slide shows continued with noted author Ken Rattenne's "South Bay Vignettes" show, Vic Neves's show on the SP's sugar beet trains and Wayne Monger's show on the last years of the Milwaukee Road in the West.

In all, your museum made nearly \$2,000 from this single day event, but even more important is that everyone went home happy and satisfied at least until next year's operating season begins. We would like to thank the following people for their efforts in making the 5th Annual FRRS Railfan's Day a huge success: Jim Gidley, Sr., Kenny Thompson, Fred James, Bob Lindley, Mardi Vincent, Wayne Monger, Brian Challender, Kent Stephens, Dave Anderson, Rich Canino, John Ryczkowski, Skip Englert, Gary Cousin, Pat Cousin, Hank Stiles, Dave McClain, Ed Warren, Vic Neves, Steve Habeck, Roy Ritchey, Norm Holmes, Barbara Holmes, Hap Manitt, Sue Cooper, Emory Goddard and daughter, Gordon Wollesen, Lynda Monger, Julie Anderson, John Walker. Please forgive us if we have forgotten to mention anyone. Everyone who helped is sincerely appreciated.



Second generation Diesel power U25B Milwaukee Road #5057 and GP30 UP 849 bring the M of W train westbound past Milward Switch and around the balloon loop. Photo by Vic Neves



50-year-old NW-2u WP608 has brought the 1940's freight train around the balloon loop and heads into Rip Track #1 past Malfunction Jct. and the 1960's train waiting in the Ramp Track. Photo by Wayne Monger