

For I Have Spake With God

By Bob Wilcox

A railyard high in the Sierras. A hot July day, with the sun beating down. The great, sleek streamlined engine waited near the throat of the ladder track. As if some huge tamed beast, its innards rumbled as it patiently ruminated, awaiting its call to duty.

As we approached in humble reverence, its one great eye seemed to follow us benevolently. The handrails were hot in our hands as we climbed the steep ladder to the cab. Our guide directed us to the dreamed-of throne, the engineer's seat. In only a few words, we were shown brake, throttle, and reverser.

With trepidation, we set the direction control to forward, and released the brake. So far, so good -- nothing happened. No bolt of Lightning, no warning Voice from the sky. Then gingerly and tentatively we moved the throttle on. The great beast gave a throaty bellow, as of a giant groaning to get out of his easy chair. The ammeter on the panel climbed, and the mighty locomotive began to move its huge bulk out of its resting place.

Another notch on the throttle. Again the bass bellow, as the powerful diesel worked to catch up to its load. By now we were rumbling along at a cautious but respectable yard speed. Off with the throttle. The beast's huge mass continued to glide, now without effort, now the great powerplant quieted.

We continued thus for some moments as we glided

free, out past the last switch of the yard throat, onto the balloon track. A slight grade then began to slow the immense weight. Again the throttle, barely. Again this rumble to life, again the seeming effortless motion, as we climbed and turned along the curve of track.

The end was in sight: a crossing and stop sign. Our goal was to bring the great machine to rest there. An imagined "President's Car" awaited, with the Railroad President preparing a liquid toast to our successful first run. Could we connect without spilling the drinks? Would we be fired on the spot for crashing headlong into this car?

More trepidation -- our first braking. To our surprise, the mighty engine had mighty means to stop! "You really hammered it down," said our guide, explaining about not locking up to avoid flat wheels and fallen passengers. Stopped far short of our goal, a little throttle moved us gently forward, and a little brake got us "close enough."

What a thrill, the dream of a lifetime. Mary and I spent the rest of our hour taking turns -- starting, cruising, and stopping this incredibly responsive, great streamlined F7A engine. Its 1500 horses effortlessly moved its 125 ton mass, all at the lightest command of our fingertips.

You, too, can rent a diesel at Portola.

Silver State TRAIN '92 Convention Was a Success

The Silver State Train '92 Convention was a success. Over 160 members of the Tourist Railway Association attended the 3 day event with a number of people arriving one or two days early to participate in the pre-convention tours.

The convention was jointly sponsored by the FRRS and the Nevada State Railroad Museum including their "Friends" organization. The Reno Hilton, formerly Bally's and MGM Grand, was convention headquarters.

The November 4, 1992 afternoon trip to Portola had 59 people signed up, but because of a late Amtrak arrival in Reno, 8 were not able to go on the tour. At Portola, Matt Barton, Bruce Cooper, Jim Ley, Hap Manitt, Hank Stiles and Gordon Wollesen had everything ready including 8 diesels and 3 cranes running. An around-the-loop train ride was provided along with a crane demonstration where Jim Ley operated our 200 ton crane and lifted one end of a caboose off its truck. Sue Cooper and Rose Hersted served cookies and drinks in the Beanery while Barbara Holmes did a brisk business in the Gift Shop.

The November 5, 1992 trip to Virginia City had 94 on board 2 buses. Upon our arrival, Bob Gray's restored Virginia & Truckee Railroad had two steam engines (V&T #29 2-8-0 and FRSL #8 2-6-2) and two excursion cars which took us to Gold Hill station. On the return we made two photo runbys. GREAT! We had time for lunch and for visiting Virginia City, then we bused down the hill to Carson City where the NSRM had the "Washoe Zephyr," a 1920's gas car, waiting to give

rides on their museum trackage. Tours of the restoration shop and museum areas were included before the return to Reno.

On Friday, November 6, 1992 a half day spouse's tour to the Wilbur May Museum and Meadowood Mall in Reno accommodated 18 while the TRAIN Board of Directors held their meeting. In the afternoon, there were seminars on Americans with Disabilities Act, Crossing Signals, Festival Planning and Gift Shop Operations.

Saturday, November 7, 1992 had seminars on FRA Regulations, Museum Assessment Program, Hours of Service, Hand Car and Motor Car racing events, Incident and Accident reporting, EPA Regulations and Hazardous Waste Handling and Diesel Electric troubleshooting and battery maintenance. The seminars were well attended and we heard good comments on the quality and variety of them. The Saturday evening banquet was also well attended with John Bromley, Union Pacific Manager of Media Relations as the guest speaker.

FRRS members participating were: Norman Holmes, who did most of the planning, Ed Warren, John Ryczkowski, David Dewey, Jim Druckmiller, Skip Englert and Jack Gibson. Jack is a member of Friends of NSRM also and was the main contact with the Nevada Museum and was responsible for all the printing. Members of the TRAIN organization also were invaluable for their help to make the event a success. Thanks go to all.