

Spring Cleanup

May 22-23, 1993, our annual get-ready-for-summer cleanup, had a much better response than in years past. We always have, and still have, clean up to be done to keep our museum presentable to the public. Helping this year were: Dave and Julie Anderson, Hap Manitt, Brian Challender, Bruce and Sue Cooper, Clyde and Linda Lippincott, Skip Englert, Jim Gidley, Sr., Steve Habeck, Judd and Lola Hewitson, Norm and Barbara Holmes, Bob Lindley, Dave Mihevc, Ken Roller, Hank Stiles, Ed Warren, Errol Spangler and Gordon Wollesen. Particular thanks need to go to Brian who rearranged tools and work benches in the welding and machine shop bays. Now we need someone to install the three-phase 220v wiring to the machines. The wood shop also received attention from Dave. After numerous suggestions of installing shelves in box cars to greatly increase storage capacity, Hank Stiles, Dave Anderson and Dave Mihevc built good strong wooden shelves in boxcar WP 64004. Hank says that he isn't going to stop there. Look for more boxcars to be so equipped in the future. It will allow us to increase efficiency in finding parts instead of having to dig through boxcars.

Sue and Linda made lunches for the cleanup crew which were greatly appreciated.

Builder's Plates

One of the most collectable railroad items are locomotive builder's plates. Often this is the only item left from a locomotive after it has completed its service life for a railroad. We have no fault with collectors obtaining the plates when the locomotives are being scrapped, but when a locomotive is still in service or going to be preserved, it is a crime to remove them. Stealing ANYTHING from railroad property is a federal offense, a felony. The FBI can and will put you in jail. Our latest diesel locomotive (FM 1857) arrived in Portola without its builder's plates. The Department of Defense plate was still on the locomotive when it arrived, however the next morning it was gone. This was while it was still in the UP yard. Only one of our 34 locomotives still has its builder's plate and it is welded in place.

WP LIVES!

Fairbanks-Morse H12-44

Our newest locomotive is a Fairbanks-Morse H12-44, No. 1857. This unit was built for the U.S. Army in January, 1953, with serial number 12-L-681. It was one of twenty purchased to work at various military bases as switchers. Our unit was not placed in service until 1965 when it arrived at the Sierra Ordinance Depot, Herlong, CA. It, along with No. 1855 served as base switchers until last year when they were replaced by EMD Geeps. The Army wanted to standardize their locomotive fleet with EMD Geeps and GE 80 ton units so this and other units were declared surplus. We were able to obtain our FM through the government surplus program for only a paper transfer charge and a freight bill to move the unit from Herlong to Portola, 50 miles. The unit is in excellent shape with only 58,000 miles of service. Because the Army does not wish to have their name remain on the unit, John and Mary Ryczkowski lettered it to Feather River & Western No. 1857.

No. 1857 is one of 20 switchers purchased which was numbered 1843 to 1862. All have been declared surplus and several already have been donated to railroad museums. The 1855 is going to the Nevada State Railroad Museum for operation near Las Vegas; the 1856 went to the Pacific Locomotive Assn., and is now stored in Oakland. FM's are rare today, they were a distant fourth in the locomotive building business and very few have survived the scrapper's torch. Except for some minor industrial builders, the 1857 gives our museum examples from all the major locomotive builders.

The following information is from PLA's Club Car publication written by Jim Noble:

"Weight 249,000 lbs., Engine 6 cylinder model 38D8-1/8, HP 1200 @ 850 RPM. The engine used in all modern Fairbanks-Morse locomotives is an opposed piston design which was designed before World War II to be used in submarines. The engine has two crankshafts, one above the other with the attached rods and pistons facing each other. On the compression stroke the pistons come together in the center of the engine and thus there is no cylinder head. It is without a doubt the smoothest running engine ever built, but is infamous for its ability to produce quantities of white smoke when opening the throttle."

Southern Pacific operated a number of FM's in the San Francisco Bay Area until they were banned by the air pollution control district!

Life Member News

The FRRS has recently had a large number of people joining or renewing as life members. Life membership in the FRRS now totals 112. We are very grateful for this confidence shown in us. Welcome the following new lifers:

Ruth Schmierer, from Chula Vista, CA is our 100th Life Member.

Leanna Gaskins
from San Francisco, CA

Stan Thomson
from Concord, CA

Jim Smith
from Beckwourth, CA

Frances G. Noel, Jr.
from Cobb, CA

L. Wheaton Smith
from Palo Alto, CA

Brian Matsumoto
from Arlington Heights, IL

Peter Lyman
from Pasadena, CA

Mark A. Hasham
from Cupertino, CA

Ed Sanderson
from Stockton, CA

Joe Hill
from Auburn, CA

Robert Doyle
from Sacramento, CA

Sue Lewis
from Portola, CA

Tom Gibson
from Spring Valley, CA

Ronald D. Atkinson
from El Cajon, CA

Don Breitbarth
from Sunnyvale, CA