

Results of the

11th Annual National Track Motorcar Championships

of August 6, 1994

By Wayne Monger - FRRS 1st Vice President

The eleventh year of the National Track Motorcar Championships, which was held at the Portola Railroad Museum on August 6, was the last time that this event will held during the summer operating season. Due to the increasing number of the general public that come to Portola to visit our museum on summer weekends that expect to find our train rides available and the fact that private motorcar operations are no longer held to only the summer months on the West Coast, the date of the 1995 NTMC is moving. The FRRS Board of Directors decided during the August 1994 meeting that the 1995 NTMC and the jointly sponsored Almanor Railroad motorcar excursion will be moved out of the summer season and will occur on September 30 & October 1, 1995. To all of you motorcar owners - mark your calendars now!

Due to many past suggestions from participating motorcar operators to "do something different next time" and pressure from the primary West Coast motorcar owner's organization to eliminate the "racing" aspect of this event to further promote safety, the format of the 1994 NTMC was changed to that of an operating skills and knowledge of safety rules contest. Motorcar operators were judged on how well they could start and stop a motorcar within a certain space, how well they could safely cross a road crossing, measure the track gauge and throw a switch while running against the clock. This change came as a disappointment to many of the past NTMC participants that wanted to come to Portola in 1994 to strictly race their cars, who in turn did not show up to participate in either the NTMC or the Almanor Railroad motorcar excursion.

Competition was disappointingly light, with only 5 motorcars competing this year in this new format NTMC - one belt-drive and four gear drive. For the first time in four years, none of the women motorcar operators participated. But the people who did show up had a great time on both days. Jerry Dorville of Grass Valley, CA. was the only person running a belt drive car, making it across the finish line with a time of 7 min. 59.72 sec. in his Fairmont M-14. FRRS member David Dewey of Oroville, CA tried all morning to get his Fairmont M-19 running properly in time but the car refused to cooperate - giving Dave a chance to show the assembled group a lesson on how difficult the older Fairmont cars are to get running right! For the gear drive cars, FRRS member Terry Decottignies of Chico, CA got 1st Place with a time of 4 min. 20.82 sec., FRRS member Walt Ozanick of Milpitas, CA got 2nd Place with a time of 4 min. 27.97 sec., 3rd Place went to John Schubert of Guerneville, CA with a time of 4 min. 47.80 sec. and 4th Place went to Roy Richey of Blue Lake, CA with a time of 6 min. 12.17 sec. All four of these people were using Fairmont MT-19 cars that were built for the Southern Pacific.

A big "thank you" goes out to the FRRS members that

helped put together and run this event. Acting as judges of the event were Steve Habeck, Bill Evans, Melony Evans and Vic Neves. Acting as the official timekeeper was Gordon Wollesen. Scoring was recorded by Dave Dewey and Linda Dewey. Vic Neves also provided the PA system and did the announcing along with Wayne Monger. And without Hap Manit finding one of the scoreboards just days earlier, the event would not have gone as easily as it did.

Following the quick conclusion of the NTMC and the awards ceremony, two motorcar repair clinics were held inside the main museum building. Walt Ozanick presented the first clinic on how to repair sheet metal on motorcars. Then the second clinic was presented by Bill Evans, an excellent session on maintenance and repairs to motorcar carburetors. Meanwhile, the usual weekend caboose train began operations so museum visitors could have a train to ride. That evening, the annual motorcar operators' & families' Bar-B-Q pot-luck dinner was held at the museum picnic area while motorcars were run on museum trackage until 8 PM.

On Sunday, August 7, motorcar operations moved from Portola to the Plumas County town of Chester, which is home to the Collins Pine Company and their private Almanor Railroad. This 6th annual motorcar excursion was jointly co-sponsored by the FRRS and Motorcar Operators West, as the insurance for this run was obtained through MOW and the American Association of Railcar Operators. This year there were 9 motorcars, the five mentioned above as well as FRRS and MOW Director Vic Neves of San Leandro, CA and his MT-19, FRRS members Bill and Melony Evans of Palm-dale, CA and their MT-19, Grover Cleveland of Penn Valley, CA and his M-14 plus Mark and Pamela Slattery of Meridian, CA and their MT-19. Two round trips were made over this 13 mile railroad between 10 AM and 6 PM.

In spite of the small turn-out for the 1994 NTMC, all participants were enthused about the new format once they had all run through the course once. By having the NTMC scheduled for a non-operating weekend at our museum in 1995, there is a strong possibility that there either will be a return to strictly the "racing" format of the past or offering both formats as separate competitions on the same day. This will be determined over the next year as we get feedback from various motorcar owners.

One final note from the 1994 NTMC. Mark Norstad of Corte Madera, CA has donated the home-built six-person rail bike that competed in the 1992 and 1993 NTMC to the FRRS. This rail bike has already become an item of great interest to our visitors as they enter the main entrance of the shop building. Thank you Mark for this great donation. It is made even more special knowing how many hundreds of hours were spent by several people in building this from scratch.

