

9th Annual Railfan Photographer's Day

September 17, 1994

By Wayne Monger

This year, 12 different units were operational -- and this number did not include use of operational units WP 512, WP 501 and UP 849. FP7 WP 805A leading an A-B-A set of F's was to be the star of this year's show. The big uncertainty was if the recently delivered ALCo/MLW FPA4/FPB-4 set would be operational in time.

Norman Holmes exerted an unceasing effort of near-Homeric proportions that brought FPB-4 VIA 6860 and FPA-4 VIA 6776 back to life after 5 years of inactivity. Another incredible effort was made by Gordon Wollesen who made sure that all scheduled locomotives had charged batteries. David Dewey finished roof painting and detail work of 805A. Odie Lorimer then lettered the sides of both the 805A and 925C. Vic Neves touched up lettering and renumbered the wood sugar beet cars. Peter Langdon and Wayne Monger worked to bring Baldwin AS-616 O&NW 4 and S-12 USS 16 into operation. Brian Challenger, Dan Ogle, Tom Graham, Leslie Wood, Kerry Cochran, Phil Gosney, Doug Morgan and Hank Stiles floated between projects helping where they could. Bob Beattie worked on our A-8 motorcar to prepare it for visitors' lunch time rides. Steve Habeck directed up to three train crews making up the required trains, finishing "early" at 7:30 PM Friday night.

Sue Cooper had informed us early on that she wouldn't be available to supervise the Beanery at all on this day. Wayne Monger made contingency plans. Linda and Dave Dewey, Julie Anderson, Janis Peterson, and Sharon McGarr did a great job handling the crush of lunch time demands. Mardi Langdon and Wayne Monger whipped up a "killer" spaghetti dinner slaving over five gallons of spaghetti sauce and transporting it to Portola after dawn. That evening, Wayne, Mardi and Vic Neves were joined by Fred James and Jim Gronke, for the hot, thankless job of cooking 20 pounds of spaghetti noodles. Thanks go to everyone who helped clean up the kitchen and eating area following lunch and dinner.

The star of the show, WP 805A, had an emergency battery change-out in the morning. Some of the day's trains included: the 805A/925C/921D set of Western Pacific F's on a 10-car 1960's-era freight train; NW-2u WP 608 pulling a "Fruit Extra" of reefer cars and caboose SN 1632; a "1950's Shortline Freight" with four Baldwin diesels: AS-616 ON&W 4/AS-616 O&NW 3/S12 USS 16/DS-4-4-660 NVR 51; the "SP Sugar Beet Train" led by EMD SD9E SP 4404 and EMD GP9E SP 2873; and ALCo/MLW FPA-4 6776/FPB-4 6860 pulling the VIA 3-car passenger train with Norm Holmes at the throttle. All of the locomotives in use got through the day without "dying."

The after-dinner program began with two slide shows: Vic Neves with his photo review of the "FRRS Circle The Wagons 10th Anniversary" and Wayne Monger with slides on the railroads of eastern Oregon. Starting at 9 PM, Vic Neves directed two successful and spectacular shooles of the WP F's on the 1960's Freight Train. The second series had all four of the museum's cab units lined up side by side on tracks 1 through 4. Afterwards, those remaining saw a great slide show by Steve VanDenburg on the Cumbres & Toltec Scenic Railroad's "Rider Freight" behind the restored "Mudhen."

The entire "Railfan Photographer's Day" event went smoothly and safely, a testament to the professionalism and training of all of the FRRS operating department people under the supervision of Gordon Wollesen and Jim Gidley. Sr. A sincere thank you goes to all of the FRRS members who participated in any way to make this event go smoothly. These people include: Dave Anderson, Julie Anderson, Dave Bergman, Don Borden, Don Clark, Kerry Cochran, Ed Crary, David Dewey, Linda Dewey, Skip Englert, Jim Gidley, Sr., Phil Gosney, Tom Graham, Steve Habeck, Norm Holmes, Barbara Holmes, Fred James, Peter Langdon, Sharon McGarr, Wayne Monger, Vic Neves, Jack Palmer, Janis Peterson, Hank Stiles, Ed Warren, Jerry Williams, Gordon Wollesen.

The visitor count was nearly 100, including a rental car full of fans from Australia; \$1,145 was received at the gate. A special thank you goes to everyone who paid the entry fee and then volunteered to help out in some way.

The 10th Annual Railfan Photographer's Day is tentatively scheduled for Saturday, September 16, 1995 with even more surprises to be unveiled.

Conclusion of To Start an ALCo By Norman Holmes

versa I thought I'd use the starting wiring in the main generator to rotate the engine.

During the inspection of all the available ALCo units in Montreal, I could only look at the units. There was no way to evaluate their mechanical condition, only that they were all in running condition when retired. The units that I selected were ones that appeared to have the best body and wheel conditions. I learned from Gary that he had some of the most recent maintenance records of the A units and he told me that our A unit had some generator work done on it just before being retired. We contacted Dick Hulbert, a retired SP electrician to check the generator. He came to Portola and checked the generator using a "megger" on strategic parts of the generator. His conclusion was that while it was not perfect, he found no problems that would prevent us from trying to use it. He suggested washing the armature and fields with an electrical solvent, which we did. With the batteries charged, the starter button was pressed and the engine rolled over with no difficulty. Hurray!

Railfan Day was Saturday, September 17, 1994. This was Friday the 16th. The ALCo units were scheduled to pull a passenger train during the event. With help from Tom Graham, we watered the unit, connected a set of jumpers from 1857 and proceeded to crank over the engine. After a few minutes with the usual help from starting fluid and smoking jumper cables, the unit started. There were air problems to solve, the reverser wooden block to remove and the discovery of which switches has to be turned on before we could move both units.

Work continued on Saturday morning when we finally had the air problems solved. Both units were started and while I walked around outside looking for air or water leaks, I smelled electrical smoke. Smoke was coming out from inside the electrical cabinet in the A unit. I opened the battery switch, killed the engine and ran for some water to put out the fire. (I know you are not supposed to use water on an electrical fire, but the power was off and a bucket with water was the first thing I could think of. Besides the powder from a fire extinguisher makes a mess.) One of the control relay coils burned up, but luckily there was no other damage to nearby wiring. Dan Ogle was there to help and he was summoned to see what could be done. We found another identical relay on another ALCo unit, removed the burned relay and replaced it with the borrowed unit.

Time was running out, the ALCo's were scheduled to operate at 12:15 PM. Air pressure was still not up to what it should be, however shortly after the all-engine horn blow at noon, everything looked OK. We had an air test on the train and we pulled out on time. We eased out of the shop tracks, past Malfunction Jct. and around the balloon track. The photographers were all on the bank near Milward Switch, so here is where we needed to see what the ALCo's do best. Putting the throttle in run 8 the sky turned black and away we went. Speed was soon controlled with train brakes, a stop made and a repeat run was made. We had a train. The units are painted blue and yellow, the three VIA cars are blue and yellow. Portola now has its own "Blue Train." There is still more work to do on the units, someday we will want to repaint them to a different color scheme, but for now they run and next year at least the A unit will do for us what it was bought for, to relieve 921 in the rental program.