

Santa Train '95

By Gordon Wollesen

The Portola Railroad Museum presented its final Special Event for 1995 on the nights of December 2nd and 9th, the annual Santa Train. This event was started several years ago when Skip Englert came up with the idea of running a lighted Santa train at night. The idea was accepted, tried and became a popular annual event.

Santa Train '95 planning was started last summer by Steve Habeck and Gordon Wollesen. A lot of planning goes into this event. By the middle of October the plans were formulated and ready to implement. By the middle of November the yard was set and the caboose train spotted in the diesel shop. The caboose train was put in the house because of past experience trying to string power cords and Christmas lights on wet, frozen cars. This way the cars stayed dry.

Decorating the train was started about November 24th and completed on November 29th. The Santa Train was advertised in eight newspapers during the two weeks prior to the event. All the other preparations were being taken care of. The Beanery crew was baking a zillion cookies and taking care of decorating the Beanery. A Christmas tree was obtained and set up in the house. By Saturday, December 2nd, all was ready with time to spare. This year there was no last minute chaos.

The First Night: People started arriving an hour before the event was to start. The first train was scheduled out at 5:30 PM. The train was run every 30 minutes starting at 5:30 and the last trip departed at 9:00 PM. A total of eight trips were made, each lasting about 12 minutes. There was a fairly good crowd for this night's event. I estimate that there were about 250 kids of all ages that came to ride the train, to talk to Santa and to partake of the goodies provided in the Beanery. The night started out cold and as the night progressed it got colder. Even though it was cold, all went well and every one had a good time.

The Second Night: Again people began arriving an hour before the event was scheduled to start. The train ran on the same schedule as the first night. This night there was a great crowd. I estimate that at least 500 people attended. At least six runs were made with a full train, 80-100 people were stuffed into four cars and a full locomotive cab. This night nine trips were run. The ninth was an extra run at 9:30 PM for the "late arrivals" and those that didn't want to leave. All went well and everyone again had a great time.

Santa Train '95 was a great success. Many comments were heard that were very positive: "This is great, had a good time, thank you very much and please do it again next year." As in the past Santa Trains, there was no charge for the train rides or Beanery goodies. This is our "thank you" to the public for their support of the museum. Will we do it again in '96? A very definite YES! It takes a lot of hard work to put it together. Is it worth the effort? Yes it is.

Now is the time for a big "THANK YOU" to those that worked putting this event together:

Decorating the train - Steve, Mary and children Habeck, Mary's sisters Vickie and Susie.

Decorating WP 512 - Steve Habeck, Tom Graham, Judy and Melissa McGrath, Vince Martin.

Decorating the Christmas tree and engine house - Hap Manit, Vickie Krois, Mary Habeck and children.

Helping wherever needed - Ken Iverson, Marty Anderson.

Wiring the train for electrical power - Gordon Wollesen.

Decorating and setting up the Beanery - Sue and Bruce Cooper, Lolli Bryan.

First Night: Beanery crew - Lolli Bryan, Edna Ede, Ellen Housen, Missy Iverson. Gift Shop - Barbara Holmes. Train crew - Steve Habeck, Marty Anderson, Peter Langdon, Tom Graham, Ken Iverson, Judy McGrath, Melissa McGrath, Bob Carr and Vince Martin. Gordon Wollesen superintendent and power car operator.

Second Night: Beanery crew - Sue Cooper, Edna Ede, Diane Wollesen, Ellen Housen, Missy Iverson, Bruce Cooper.

Gift Shop - Lolli Bryan.

Train Crew - Steve Habeck, Marty Anderson, Kerry Cochran, Ken Iverson, Vic Neves, Bob Carr.

Gordon Wollesen superintendent and power car operator.

Last but not least a special thanks go to Norman Holmes for his support and help where ever needed, to Rolf Goudard (Portola City Councilman) for playing Santa Claus both nights, to Larry McBride and Bruce Cooper for providing generators to power the lights on the train and locomotive. Credit and thanks go to the City of Portola for providing the Christmas tree. If I forgot anyone, please forgive me. I thank you too.

Report from...

The FRRS Chief Mechanical Officer

By Hank Stiles, FRRS CMO

This is a new feature of the Train Sheet. This column will keep the members of the Portola Railroad Museum current on what is happening in the FRRS Mechanical Department. It is the goal of the FRRS Mechanical Department to keep our equipment in excellent condition. If any members have any suggestions that would help in keeping our rolling stock up to world class standards please feel free to give me a call with your ideas. I can be reached at (916) 363-8572 or e-mail (103344.2501@compuserve.com). Our rolling stock is in safe operating condition. In fact, we have more equipment in better condition than most operations like ours. We can only keep on top of this mountain of maintenance by the hard work of the mechanical department volunteers.

To better use the limited help we have in the mechanical department, I have, with the blessing of the Board of Directors, divided our fleet of locomotives up into Service Categories as follows:

IN SERVICE: Locomotives that may be used at any time.

RESTRICTED SERVICE: Locomotives that need minor repair. Requires C.M.O. authorization to operate.

OUT OF SERVICE: Locomotives with repairs required. May not be used until repair.

DEAD LINE: Locomotives that are in need of major repairs to return to service.

These Service Categories have made a lot of difference in keeping our fleet in good condition.

Again this spring we will be having our Locomotive Maintenance Clinics on the first weekend of each month from April through October. I would like to invite each and every one of you to come up to the museum and learn how to maintain the equipment in our collection. These clinics are a way for you to put your skills to work on our equipment. It is also a way for those of you who would like to learn new skills, to help yourself and the museum. By the way, if there is a locomotive that you would like to see in the IN SERVICE category feel free to get in touch with me and we will devise a plan to repair that locomotive, remember locomotives that have been repaired have to be tested and who better is there to test it than those who have worked on it?

This spring we have the honor of putting in service two EMD GP9's, the WP725 and WP731. These locomotives were purchased by the museum and should be on the property by the time you read this. We will also be putting EMD GP20 WP2001, with a very nice as delivered paint job, back in service after a long stay in the enginehouse.

So please, all of you who can help, call or e-mail me and let me know when you can come up and help take care of our treasures. Thank you. Hank Stiles.