

Budgeting Our Resources (What Resources?)

By David Dewey

Last month I mentioned budgeting our resources so the society (FRRS) can better manage the museum to tell the Story of Railroading to the public. Now before we can talk about budgeting these resources, we must understand what they are and what we are budgeting for.

First, note that I stated that, "the society can better manage the museum...." This statement alludes to a primary thought; The FRRS exists as a separate entity from the museum. The museum functions as only one of the activities that the FRRS does to preserve the Western Pacific Railroad's place in history and make people aware of its, and all railroading's, importance to their lives. We (the FRRS) also do other things, such as publish *The Headlight* to also meet this goal. While the museum does occupy most of the FRRS' time and resources, it is not our only activity. We must stay aware of these other activities that benefit those who cannot visit the museum (Our publishing activities carry our message worldwide!).

Second, our resources are not limited to financial resources (OK, that's a fancy way of saying "MONEY"), nor our volunteers (Although the volunteers are our backbone, and carry more than their share of support--if you missed it, that was a big THANK YOU from me). Because we are organized as an educational, non-profit organization and operate a facility we call a MUSEUM, we benefit from a gigantic resource known as "The Public Trust."

Oh brother, there he goes again--using politicians' talk--wait a minute, hang in here, I didn't invent the word, I'm just using it, let's see what it means for us.

Society has long held the idea of a Museum as a part of "the Arts;" that part of our culture that is to be held in high regard (even if it is boring), and to be supported, without financial benefits (i.e., you're not gonna get a red cent back), almost like one's church. This ideal of supporting those things that only benefit our sense of well being runs deep, even through large profit oriented business organizations. This ideal is what allowed our museum to be born. Many of the core pieces of our collection were given to us, and our

present site leased to us, because of this public trust.

It is this same trust that inspires people and corporations to continue to give to the FRRS. However, as with all things in nature, this isn't a one-way street, and there are potholes in the street, many we don't see until we hit them. The trust requires nurturing, especially in these changing times.

Most importantly, we need to manage our organization so that the public senses a value received. This could be as simple as having a good experience visiting the museum. It could be an enjoyable train ride at the museum or elsewhere. Maybe it's a book we published, or someone who gives a presentation to a grade-school class.

At the same time, we also need to politely let the public know what we need in support of our goals. We do this by requesting membership, selling excursion tickets, magazines, and asking for participation in special projects (money, labor, or expertise donations). This must be done diplomatically and must give something back to the givers. This can be as simple as the satisfaction that they have helped save a piece of history. However, in order to be able to provide that satisfaction, we (FRRS) must manage our activities (preservation, display, education, and financial ability to care for the item FOREVER) so the givers will trust us to keep the piece saved.

The public trust is a complicated relationship that takes a lot of attention, but it is what allows a small group like us to have a big impact on the world around us. We presently have a world-class collection of "stuff" in our museum attracting visitors that has a major financial impact on the Portola area. We have publications that spread the message that "WP Lives" worldwide. While this has taken the dedicated work of a few, without whom this would not be here today, it would NEVER exist without the resource known as The Public Trust.

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Attention FRRS Life Members

A new class of membership now exists called Family Life. This allows a maximum of two people and two votes.

Everyone who was a Life Member prior to October 1, 1995 may upgrade to Family Life AT NO CHARGE and AT ANY TIME simply by writing a letter requesting the upgrade, and listing the second person, and by sending the letter to: FRRS Membership Chairman, P. O. Box 608, Portola, CA 96122.

This effectively means that no spouse of a life member requires their own separate membership any more.