

The Incredible Journey is Over At Last...

WP GP9's 725 & 731 Are Home

By Steve Habeck

On February 8th, our WP GP-9's finally made it back home to Portola. The units were delayed in Council Bluffs and Omaha pending inspection and some minor air brake repairs, but when they started moving west they arrived in record time.

This "Incredible Journey" for Helm Financial engines 300 & 306 that began three months ago (11/9/95 - 2/9/96) finally ended when MTO Ray Breedlove of the UP in Portola had the crew of the OGST set WP GP9's 725 & 731 (and Norm's EMD/Baldwin FRW 531) inside the Museum fence, at Malfunction Junction. The Geeps are home!

There's no doubt as to these units' heritage. There are WP green and orange showing through all over the units, particularly the short hood end of the 731 (the "WP" letters and the stripes are easy to see). The 731 has the knockdown numbers in the number boards; the 725 has one-piece boards, but most everything we should need to put knock-downs back in looks like it's still there, or can be easily modified. All cab glass is intact, no cracks (and, of course, is all FRA part 223 glazing). Both units have speedometers on both control stands. We will need about four class light lenses between the two. Despite the heavy rain during the last 2 weeks, both cabs were dry.

Other notes: The wheels on the 725 are all thin, particularly #3 axle. 731's wheels are much better, but definitely not new. 725 also shows evidence of having been sideswiped on the fireman's side some time in the past. The units were shipped coupled nose to nose and MU'ed, and that's how they were delivered, including an MU jumper cable. WP's order for their 8 GP9's was EMD order #5407, and these units bear frame numbers 5407-1 and 5407-7.

On Saturday afternoon, February 10, 1996, both units were spotted on the oil pan on track 3, with battery chargers hooked up and humming. We plan to get started on getting rid of the numbers 300 and 306, too, to make room for the numbers 725 and 731.

Cosmetically, these units are not much to look at, but with one look into the engine compartments, it's clear that we have well-maintained units on our hands. They should be excellent runners (both still have some fuel in them, too). We have now paid the transportation bill to the UP, which was \$10,150 (we waited until they were delivered, although they've been in Portola for almost two weeks already). By the way, MTO Breedlove left a message on the Museum's answering machine apologizing for the delay in setting the units over. Nice touch.

GP9 Fund

The GP9 fund now stands at \$7,067.75. This is only 10% of what we need to replace funds used from our savings account. Several other railroad preservation groups that we are familiar with will not use general funds or savings to purchase equipment for their collections, but rely solely on members contributions. We were in a position where we had to use our savings to purchase the WP GP9's on very short notice or lose them to the scrappers. Several of our members have made substantial donations to this fund and we have a challenge from Life Member Peter Watkins for all Life Members to contribute \$500 to the GP9 fund. If each of the 162 Life Members contributed \$500 to this fund we would have more than enough to cover the costs of the units and to cover costs to restore them to WP paint.

The following have donated to the GP9 fund in January and February:

Roger Arnold
Don Breitbarth
Randall Cape
Mark Cooper*
George Crandall
Russ Czuleger*
Dan Davella
Ed & Lynn DeLozier*
Robert Dobbins*
Jerry Foote
Barry Garrett
Norm Gidney*
Dennis Gilkey
Peter Goodier*
Robert Gordon
Paul Guercio*
Peter Haas*
William Hartley
Scott Holyoake
IBM Matching Fund
Richard Kirker

Doug Laurice*
Tom Lerza
Clyde Lippincott
John Nardi
Pacific Gas & Electric*
Jack Palmer
Peter Parrish
Ray Sarno*
Richard Severance*
Wayne Sheldon
Enrico Stein*
George Wahl*
Mike Wallington*
Peter Watkins*
Phillip Wyche
Mel Zernow
Gregory Zucco

* indicates a donation of \$100 or more.

Material Donations

The following items were recently donated: A military camouflage cover for use as a summer deck cover from Robert Shepard; eight HO gauge CZ passenger cars from Jack Hathaway. Leonard Ferreira donated a wheel alignment gauge, a car mover and an air gauge test device. Also an anonymous person left 277 track spikes painted and lettered from almost as many US railroads. It will be a challenge to figure how to display them.

Thank you everyone.

Help Wanted

We are still in need of sightings of WP cabooses. Please send the number and location of any that you know of that are preserved. Also we have had no response asking for photos of WP semi-trailers. This is an often overlooked facet of WP's freight operations.

The Western Pacific Headlight

At long last we have issued Western Pacific Headlight No. 11. It was mailed to all Active, Family, Sustaining and Life members, and to those classes of members who have dropped their membership during the past two years. We mailed 1,183 copies on February 20, 1996 with a total weight of 346 pounds. If you did not receive your copy within a reasonable time, please contact us. We expect the WP Headlight to be published on a regular basis. Thank you for your patience.

Trains Unlimited Tours

Don't forget the Trains Unlimited raffle drawing which will be held on June 1, 1996. If you haven't sent back your tickets and donation, there is still time. If you want to trim the odds, we have additional tickets for sale at \$7 each, or 5 for \$30.