

# Norm Holmes Honored at Chamber of Commerce Dinner

Reprinted from the *Portola Reporter*, May 1, 1996, "Holmes Honored at Chamber Dinner," by Terri Nacar.

The life-long dream of one man, Norman Holmes, has helped put Portola on the map and brought thousands of dollars into the city over the past 13 years.

To show their appreciation, members of the community [and Rail Society members from as far as Butte, Montana] turned out at the Eastern Plumas Chamber of Commerce dinner honoring Holmes.

The dinner, which was held Saturday, April 20, 1996, was attended by over 84 people. They came to hear all they ever wanted to know about Holmes and to raise around \$2,000 for the Norman Holmes Scholarship Fund.

Skip Englert, who emceed the evening, compared Holmes to the 49ers and the pioneers, saying that Holmes also had a dream. "His dream was not of the future, but of preserving the past so that our children and our children's children would have a hands on remembrance of what helped shape our nation - the railroads," said Englert. Holmes' dream became a reality in 1983 when he obtained the site from Union Pacific, which is now the Portola Railroad Museum operated by the Feather River Rail Society.

In a letter read by Englert, Union Pacific's past President Mike Flannery said, "This is a well deserved recognition of Norm's contribution to the Portola Railroad Museum - without Norm's tireless efforts the museum would not have attained its present successful status."

Several people recalled the old days of the motor car races and trips, laying the tracks and obtaining the first locomotives and rail cars. Thanks to the efforts of Holmes and the many people he got to volunteer, visitors to the museum can now climb into the cab of a full size locomotive and drive it down the tracks.

Holmes has been a railroad man all his life, retiring after 43 years of service (as engineer on Western Pacific and Union Pacific). He has not retired completely, as he spends over 300 hours per month at the museum, volunteering his time to preserve the past.

According to his son Steve Holmes, "My father has had an obsession with trains as far back as I remember. When I take a vacation, I like to get away from work; when Norm takes a vacation he plans it around locomotives, train yards and anything at all that has to do with trains," said Steve.

Another member of the Holmes family was also honored at the dinner. Barbara, Norm's wife, received high credit for, as repeated by many of the speakers, "putting up with Norm and his obsession with trains for all these years." For that, Barbara received a standing ovation from the crowd. Eastern Plumas Chamber of Commerce President Dale Fraser presented Holmes with a plaque commemorating the evening.

Chamber Manager Betty Heck gave Holmes the difficult task of choosing the recipient of the scholarship, within the next few months.

[After the dinner, FRRS members Vic Neves and Wayne Monger showed a collection of old slides showing the construction of Norm's "backyard" railroad and early views of the museum.]

[Norm wishes to thank all those FRRS members who contributed to the scholarship fund and/or attended the dinner.]

Brackets indicate text not in original newspaper article.

# FRRS Annual Membership Meeting

Don't forget that on June 22, 1996 we will be holding our annual membership meeting and dinner at the Museum. Everyone is welcome. Dinner is at 6:00PM and the meeting starts at 7:30PM with the counting of the ballots.



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### The Museum's Diary

- March-April, Bruce Cooper cleared snow.
- March-April, Gordon Wollesen charged locomotive batteries and worked to redo the women's restroom and to install a water heater.
- March-April, Lolli Bryan helped in Gift Shop and with archives.
- March-April, Ken Roller was tour guide and watchman.
- Feb. 29, 1996 Norm went to Reno to pick up horns and bells for GP9's.
- March 12, 1996 Norm went to Reno to pick up Train Sheet, Ken and Missy Iverson folded and collated it.
- March 14, 1996 Norm and Barbara labeled and mailed Train Sheet.
- March 15-16-17, 1996 and into April, Tom Graham, Judy and Melissa McGrath, Ken Iverson, Art and Jeremy Young, Jack Palmer, Jim Ley, Norm Holmes, Nick Tynan, Jim Gidley, Sr., Ed Powell, Hank Stiles, Chuck Barker, and a few others cleaned, built new divider walls, painted them and generally got the shop area in order.
- March 22, 1996 Steve Habeck, Hank Stiles and Ken Iverson worked on WP 731.
- March 24, 1996 Norm prepared Long Island FA-2 for shipment to Illinois Railroad Museum.
- March 26, 1996 and on - Lolli Bryan cleaned interior of UP Business car 105 in preparation for putting our library books in the cabinets for reference.
- April 1, 1996 Last snow occurred of the winter season.
- April 5, 1996 Dan Ogle worked on electrical relays in engine 731, he found burned unit and had it repaired at his own expense.
- April 5, 6, 1996 Bruce Cooper serviced dump truck.
- April 8, 1996 Bruce Cooper hauled 5 truck loads of gravel to fill pot holes in entrance road.

## 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.