

From the Desk of the President



The 14th Annual Feather River Railroad Days was a great success this year, and the Portola Railroad Museum was a major player in this city-wide celebration. Railroad Days is always our biggest weekend, as far as visitor counts and activities are concerned, and it is to our advantage to pull out the stops and put on a good show. Once again our volunteers rose to the occasion, many of them spending several days before the weekend helping prepare the Museum for the large crowds. In particular, a few people need to be singled out for honorable mention for their extraordinary efforts: Don Borden, who spent three days in and around locomotives on the oil pan with the Hotsy pressure washer wand in hand; Jack Palmer and Kerry Cochran, who worked on whatever needed to be done; Ken Iverson and FRRS Directors Clyde Lippincott and Doug Morgan, who tackled the messy job of cleaning up the oil pan; Peter "Doc" Lyman, for his invaluable direction and assistance in troubleshooting & repair, primarily on WP 2001; and FRRS Director and CMO Hank Stiles, who spent the entire week before Railroad Days working at the Museum. Restoration Specialist David Dewey also responded well under pressure by completing the external painting on WP 2001 in time for the weekend. Many others volunteered hours and days of their time, all of which contributed to the success of the event; everyone's contribution of time, money, and sweat is very much appreciated.

It was a silver-and-orange weekend at Portola. Pulling our three-car ex-VIA passenger train (2 coaches and the lounge) was our A-B-A set of WP F-units, 805-A/925-C/921-D. Although 805-A was not running due to the stubborn cylinder liner leakage problem, it was used as the controlling unit, and a generator/battery setup was employed to operate the Mars light, to everyone's delight. The Railroad Days Honorary Trainmaster, Brigadier General Chuck Yeager, operated the F's on one of the backup moves, and then rode the cab during a revenue run, looking over my shoulder and watching my every move with interest. I believe he was impressed with our facility. Also very impressive was the motive power for the caboose train; it was the debut of WP 2001 in stunning silver and orange. A check of the records confirmed that 2001 had last been used in revenue service at the Museum on August 23, 1987; its return to service on August 17, 1996, makes almost 9 years as a hangar queen; never again!

With the success of Railroad Days behind us, it's time to look ahead to Railfan's Day. This year, with the first annual WPRRHS convention taking place in conjunction with Railfan's Day, I believe we are offering a full and well-rounded day of entertainment and activities; I hope you are planning to join us. Once again, I thank you all for your continued support of the FRRS.

Steve Habeck

Preservation Column...

What's Important?

By David Dewey

Each of us has a unique vision of what is important to save and to display at the museum, or what facilities are important to have there. Most of this is based on our own personal interests. This is part of what makes the collection so diverse. It is also why we have so many things needing attention! What we all need to agree on is why we have the museum, and then go from that point to work together for everyone's benefit.

We call the place a "Museum" because we claim to want to show and share with the general public the importance of all this stuff we have saved. If we didn't care about sharing it, we could be a private RR club, open to members only. There are some advantages to being a private club; you don't have to worry about people wandering around, possibly getting hurt, or having to explain what stuff is, or even making sure they're having a good time. The disadvantages are that you don't get much public support to help save stuff or have stuff given to you, and, when the membership ages, fewer and fewer people are interested in saving the stuff so it eventually rots away.

So, since we are open to the public, it is as important to us to make things as convenient for the public as we make it convenient for ourselves. This can be as simple as not parking one's automobile where it blocks a walkway, to designing a work space so visitors can watch work in progress without getting in the way or exposing themselves to a potentially dangerous situation (like watching an arc weld without protection, for example). It sounds simple, but it is a profound difference in one's thinking process, and results in giving our visitors a much more pleasant and interesting visit! Happy visitors means more visitors, and more visitors means more support for getting or fixing more stuff -- and I think we can all agree that we want to encourage greater support for our pet project(s).

On a slightly different note:

We have finally succeeded in acquiring a steam engine. I know some of you think we should stick to diesels and WP stuff only. However, if we ignore steam, we fail to tell the whole story of WP history. Without the steam engine, railroads would still be local haulers using mules, etc. to move stuff like ore within an industrial complex. The steam locomotive made long-distance train travel possible, which fueled the industrial revolution. The WP itself was built with steam engines. The engine we are getting is most appropriate in a yard situation, which our museum trackage is. True, a WP engine would be nice, but the only existing ones are ensconced in their present display sites, and are unavailable. Also, steam will attract some different volunteers to the museum to augment our volunteer work force. This should help us get more stuff done, and enlarge our "Portola Family." I personally look forward to the new challenges and opportunities this project brings.

Hope to see you at the museum!



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