



# The Train Sheet

Issue 97

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News from the Feather River Rail Society and the Portola Railroad Museum

## A Memory Preserved by Paul Finnegan

Similar to many of our museum members, my love affair with trains began a long time ago as a small boy. My family often traveled from the big city of Spokane, Washington to their small town roots of Butte, Montana. My favorite mode of transportation for making this journey was always the Northern Pacific's *North Coast Limited*. I eagerly looked forward to the return trip home, not to get home, but rather since we waited for the train leaving Butte in the mid-afternoon on the platform. Unlike the big city where you waited downstairs and couldn't even see the train arrive, in Butte I could feel the train's power and hear it thunder into the station.

Even better than the ride on the train was the wait before the NCL's arrival. My grandfather, Kenneth Julson, would take his only grandson by the hand and walk the length of the platform time and time again. He would explain railroading in terms a five-year-old, then later an eight-year-old, and later still a ten-year-old could understand. There were usually two GP-7s idling in the ready track for the local



In "Perلمان Green" paint WP GP7 707 at Portola on September 17, 1999 - Frank Brehm

work and switching in the yard. Since switching usually fouled the main, when the passenger train was due, the crew would wait on the siding adjacent to the passenger platform and watch the world go by.

With my grandfather's friendly smile he often got us invited up into the cab of the idling locomotive for a visit. I knew no greater joy than a visit in the cab when I was young. Today, the Northern Pacific is gone and the passenger station in Butte is shuttered and bare -- but here in our museum we keep my boyhood memories alive with our Western Pacific GP-7s, 707 and 708.

(Continued on page 6)

### Inside this issue:

Notes from the Chairman	3
Obituaries	3
Notes on The Headlight	3
Departmental Reports	4-5
From the Editor	6
WPRRHS Reports	7
Past Board Minutes	8-11
Special Fund Status	12

## A Memory Preserved

*(Continued from page 1)*

In 1930 General Motors purchased the Electro-Motive Corporation (EMC), which designed and sold gas-electric cars. GM also purchased Winton Engine Co., the largest supplier of gasoline engines to EMC. Winton also manufactured diesel engines. GM combined these resources and brought to market diesel switchers and passenger locomotives in 1935. The subsidiaries were fully merged into GM by 1941 as EMD, the Electro-Motive Division.

EMD's Road Switcher model GP-7 was the first model using the high hood outside walkway style, that would be used by many units that followed. Western Pacific's GP-7s had dual controls and were at home on locals and main line freights. The original Pyle-National "barrel" style headlights were replaced by twin sealed-beam lamps in the late seventies. The GP-7s closed the door to steam power on the WP, and completed the dieselization of the railroad. They could be MU'ed with the mechanically similar F7s.

The GP-7 was a very successful model. EMD sold a total of 2,729 units. By far, the majority went to U.S. railroads -- 112 units going north to Canada and two went south of the border to Mexico. The design was based on the EMD 567B 16 cylinder 2-cycle diesel engine and developed 1500 horsepower. Each cylinder

measured 18½ x 10 inches. The "567" number comes from the displacement of each cylinder in cubic inches. The engine idles at 275 RPM and redlined at 800 RPM. The total loaded weight is 251,700 pounds. Depending on the gearing, the maximum speed of a GP-7 ranges from 55 to 89 MPH. The fully loaded GP-7 can hold 18 cubic feet of sand, 230 gallons of coolant, 200 gallons of lube oil, and 1500 gallons of fuel. It is 55' 9" long and the maximum height above the rail is 14' 6".

If you want to learn more than you ever really wanted to know about the EMD GP-7 visit the web site, <http://gelwood.el.wny.org/manual/gp7opman.html> where you can read the operating manual published by EMD.

Both of Portola's GP-7s were built in October 1952 by EMD. The museum's first GP-7, #708, was donated by Union Pacific in 1984. Our operational unit, #707, was retired by UP in 1985 and donated to the museum two years later.

## From the Editor

Although this issue is late, the publication will be back on a regular schedule with the next issue, which will be mailed in early January 2000.

I would like to direct your attention to the article by Paul Finnegan which starts on page 1 of this issue. After mentioning to Paul during a visit at the museum that I was looking for articles or interesting stories to use in the publications he sent this to me via email. I am sure many of us have fond memories of past activities that have been rekindled while we help at the museum.

I invite all of you to visit the museum and if you choose, get dirty. There are always tasks that need attention. While you are there perhaps you could put pen to paper and let the other members know of your experience.

Without going into details, you can read about them in the separate departmental reports, this operating season so far has been a very busy and productive one. Many planned activities have taken place as well as many small jobs completed. Without the help of a small dedicated volunteer force much of what goes on at the museum, let along the day to day operations, would never see the light of day. Please remember this is your organization and help is always needed.

As a final note, please remember to keep your address current with member services.

-Frank Brehm

## Year 2000 Calendar

The year 2000 Calendar project is now complete and has been received from the printer. Orders are being processed and sent out at this time. Management of this project was under the direction of the WPRRHS.

This is an impressive calendar with the proceeds helping both the FRRS and the WPRRHS.

With a list price of \$9.95, membership price is \$7.95 each. The calendar will be available in the Gift Shop. Mail orders are welcome. Shipping is \$1.50 for up to four calendars and CA residents are reminded to include 7.25% sales tax. Send your order to;

FRRS Gift Shop  
P.O. Box 608  
Portola, CA 96122-0608

Or call 530-832-4737. Credit cards are accepted.

We are also planning the 2001 calendar. If you have any WP related photos for possible inclusion in the calendar and would like to contribute a photo for consideration please send it to either

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