

Ward, Kathy Habeck, Daniella and Ashley Culbert, Caitlin & Ashleigh DeMartile, Marcy Kidder, Jay Knudson, Alex Amarel and Phil Zavella. Santa and Mrs. Claus made an appearance in the form of Dave Rudolph and Linda Knudson. Great job everyone!

12.05/10 Another storm dusted the museum with three inches of snow but blew the inversion layer out and the museum warmed back up to 30-60 degrees. John Walker, Phil Zavella and Doug Morgan cleaned up a mess caused from a broken water pipe in the shop area. Phil, Alex and John worked on snow and ice removal. Steve Habeck, Charlie Spikes and Rod McClure watered and restarted locomotives and got things ready for the second Santa Train. Jan Breitweiser donated the printing of free Santa Train tickets, which John Walker delivered to the local elementary school and local businesses.

12.11 Second Santa Train with Ed Powell and Pat and Linda Brimmer joining the team. Another outstanding effort with lots of smiling children. A great show!

12.12 A nice warm day. Several volunteers pitched in to take down and pack up the lights and decorations. In previous years, everyone skedaddled home after Santa Trains and the decorations often didn't get put away for weeks or months after the event. A special thanks to Pat and Linda Brimmer, Jim Halliwell, Ed Powell, Heidi Miller, Phil Zavella, Norman Holmes, Craig Simmons and Steve Habeck for successfully getting everything put away right after the event! Dave Epling, John Manter and Spencer Walker began demolition of the old model railroad in the gift shop to make way for the construction of a new layout.

12.13/20 John Walker continued cleanup of all the paper cups, plates, wrappers, tape, food and other trash left over from Santa Train. John, Doug and Phil cleaned out a recently acquired WP boxcar. Steve Habeck, Rod McClure and Doug Morgan did a final switch of the museum, drained locomotives and the water system. A final pickup of the garbage was arranged, last minute gift certificates, mail orders, phone calls and other business was finished up before closing the museum for the Winter on the 20th.

## End of Year Museum Manager Report

By John Walker

It's hard to believe that it has been 18 months since I came up to Portola to work as the Museum Manager. Despite my weekend involvement in the museum over the last twenty years, the day to day operation of the museum came as a bit of a surprise to me.

For most members and volunteers, the weekends are a great way to get out of the everyday "rat race", travel up to the museum to get some fresh air, hang out with friends and have fun watching and running trains or pitching in and helping with repairs or restorations. Even today, weekends around the museum are usually fun filled and relaxed. There is something about the camaraderie of friends and doing something fun that makes the work go easier and quicker.

But on Monday morning, the "rat race" begins again, whether your in Sacramento, San Francisco, Reno, or Portola. The daily chores have to be done. Trash has to be hauled out to the dumpster, bathrooms need cleaning, floors need to be swept

and mopped, counters and tables need cleaning, things that were left out over the weekend need to be put away, inventories need to be taken, supplies ordered or picked up from suppliers. And even though the volunteers have gone home after the weekend, the museum is still open and the visitors are still coming in. In retrospect, I suppose that it was natural, as a former "weekend warrior", that I never really considered what happens at the museum during the rest of the week. I even have to confess that I halfway expected the weekdays to be rather slow and even more relaxed than the weekends. Boy, was I wrong!

I've spent most of my lift in the retail/wholesale business. This was never my intended career field but I fell into it and I'm not ashamed to boast that I was pretty good at it. I was lucky to learn from some very smart business people the finer points of running a successful business operation. My experiences in business, the military and semi-military organizations such as the fire service and law enforcement have given me insight into various types of management and managers.

We all know the horror stories of some newly hired jerk that comes into a company and tries to change everything overnight. Knowledgeable, productive people get fired, good reliable equipment gets replaced, new software gets installed, policies change and soon the company is screwed up so badly that people don't want to work there anymore and customers take their business elsewhere.

I'm not that kind of manager. Despite my previous involvement with the museum, I didn't want to come in and start snapping my fingers and changing things the first day. I knew that I had to watch and learn why people did the things they did and why they did them that way. Firmly imprinted on the front of my brain, is the knowledge that this is not "my" museum, it's "our" museum. And the Board of Directors didn't bring me in to chop off heads and change everything overnight. By watching and asking questions, I learned that a lot of the things that are done at the museum are done that way because "That's the way we have always done it". Or because that's the best way to do it given the equipment and facilities that we have to work with. And this is not necessarily a bad thing; it's just the way it's done. Some things work very well and some things didn't. Some things worked but it was time to try something different.

One of my first concerns was security. The museum has always had an informal open door policy. The first person who arrived at the museum in the morning opened the gate and the building and it stayed open until the last person left for the day (unless that person didn't know they were the last one out and left everything open all night). The tool room, operating office, gift shop, display room, storage areas, the shower car, locomotives and cabooses were left wide open most of the time. It took some doing but one of my first objectives was to establish some regular business hours. Unless you're running a 7-11 convenience store (which I did during college), you just can't leave the doors open 24 hours a day. There are many daily jobs at the museum like cleaning bathrooms, taking out the trash, sweeping and mopping, painting, cleaning, taking inventory, ordering supplies, banking and answering overnight phone calls that are best done when visitors are not present. Some people argued that they were afraid that we might turn some visitors away. But I contend that there is no reason to try and accommodate visitors at 7 am in the

morning or 8 pm in the evening. Who among us would travel several hundred miles to visit a museum and expect to find them open at 7 or 8 in the morning or expect to come in and look around after dark? One thing I've learned over the years is that when your business is open, you're open. You've got all your preparations done and your ready to serve the customer. And when you're closed, your closed. Sorry, come back tomorrow when we're open and ready to serve you. The Operating Dept. office, tool and supply rooms are now kept locked when not being used.

Another problem on the security front was unsupervised children running amuck around the museum. While we encourage families to visit, we can't be a day care center for all the local kids who can't find anything better to do in the summer. During the first week on the job I found kids climbing on top of cars, flipping battery switches on in locomotives and turning on headlights (draining batteries), getting into shop areas and areas that were unsafe for visitors. Eventually, I even caught one group of them "slim-jimmying" our donation boxes! After consultation with FRRS President Rod McClure, we reinstated an old policy of not allowing children under 18 on the grounds unless they are accompanied by an adult. The policy was supposed to be in effect already, but there were no signs posted or anyone to enforce the policy. I hated to be the heavy, but the damage done to equipment and the insurance liabilities demanded we take action.

Over the last twenty years, I've often walked through the museum and wondered why nobody could find the time to clean up that little area, repaint that wall, sweep up that mess or reorganize that pile of stuff. Surely, the local people who ran the museum could find time during the week to do this, right? Well. It didn't take long for me to find out that the weekdays are just as busy as the weekends and there just never seems to be enough time to do a lot of the little things that you think would be easy to do. As I've gotten older, I've started making these little lists of things that I want or need to get done every day. It's not the onset of Alzheimer's or just being overly retentive either. It's just that no matter what you plan to get done at the museum, visitors, phone calls, and unplanned events distract you from getting the things you want to get done. At best, I'm lucky to get 60% of my list done on any given day. And sometimes it takes a week or two before I can clean up that little area, repaint that wall, sweep up that mess or reorganize that pile of stuff.

In all sincerity, I have to take my hat off to Norman and Barbara Holmes, Hap Manitt, Gordon Wolleson, Bruce and Sue Cooper, Skip Englert, Doug Morgan, Ken Roller and others who kept the museum open every day for over twenty years. I also have to admit that there have been many days when the museum kicked my butt and I went home relieved that somehow, I made it through the day without anything else going wrong (with the same list I came in with-still in my pocket). I quickly learned that the day-to-day operation of the museum is a full time job in itself and that if you want to tackle a big project, it's best to wait until after closing the gate at five o'clock and bring the sleeping bag because it's probably going to be a late night. And I would never get any of these things done if it wasn't for the help of Linda Knudson and Julie Anderson who handle the gift shop while I'm out working on something.

Another problem I discovered is kind of funny, and kind

of sad. I guess you could say it's tragically funny. In retrospect, I suppose it's a classic case of Human Nature at it's finest. The problem was constantly bumping into things that had no apparent reason for being there. Like the snow cone machine in the middle of the gift shop that wasn't being used because no one hooked it up to an outlet (the outlet didn't work anyway, but that's another story). The empty candy dispenser-which no one had a key for. Or the metal locker that was sitting all by itself out on the engine room floor. When I asked why these items were located where they were, people answered, "That's where it's always been" or "don't touch that, it belongs to so and so". When I suggested that it might work better in another area, many people agreed but pointed out that they didn't have the authority to move it. Well. Rod gave me the authority and the stuff got moved.

There were pictures on the wall that were falling out of their frames (or simply taped to the walls), torn table covers, broken chairs, dirty flags and dilapidated baggage carts and speeders everywhere. After consultation with various directors, we agreed that it was time to clean the place up and put our best stuff on display and we began moving the broken, beat up and unsightly items into storage until we can find time to repair and refinish them for proper display.

There were numerous lockers and cabinets around the museum that were padlocked but nobody seemed to know whose locker it was or what was inside it. Tools, parts, supplies, paint and other items were scattered everywhere and the supply and tool rooms had no sense of organization. Thus, we began a program of trying to get all of these supplies in centralized locations. After several weeks of inquires, the bolt cutters finally came out and the locks were cut revealing a small fortune in various supplies and tools that had been hidden for years (I found seven cases of Sweet & Low in seven different locations)! We found tools in the gift shop, food supplies in the old gift shop, locomotive door locks and hand tools stashed in desk drawers.

With the help of Doug Morgan, Jack Thompson and Hank Stiles the tool room was reorganized. With the help of Keith Smith, all of the museum's paint and painting supplies were checked and reorganized in one place. Then we began gathering up all the various nuts and bolts, washers, nails and screws and got these centrally located in one place. All of the various carpentry tools were gathered up and set up in a dedicated Carpentry Shop. The daily supplies like light bulbs, cleaning supplies, trash bags and packing material were gathered up, sorted through and stored in new locations.

This program was extended outside the building and with the help of Dave Novarina, Rod McClure, Kerry Cochran and Norman Holmes, several tons of scrap wood, wires, cables, conduit, pipes and scrap metal were picked up off the ground and properly stored or scrapped. The museum had an assortment of some 30 computers, scanners and printers that were stored in various locations. I gave computer genius Jim Eroh the task of stripping out the best parts from all the units and getting at least six units up and running. Jim's computers are now running in the Op's office, the break room and several more are waiting to be used in other areas.

Over the years, we've collected a lot of things. In the early days of the museum, we're often reluctant to throw anything away for fear that we might need it some day. Now, some

twenty years later, we have boxcars full of things that we still haven't used and in several cases; don't remember what they are, where it came from or why we kept it. Slowly but surely, we have begun cleaning out the cars, throwing out a lot of junk and reorganizing things so we can find them if, and when we ever need them. Norman Holmes, and Doug Morgan are a tremendous help when it comes to sorting the junk from the good stuff. Norm knows if an old desk came out of the Elko depot or government surplus while Doug knows if an old piece of metal is scrap or a piece from a locomotive or passenger car.

The end result is a cleaner, better-organized museum. Once the junk was moved out of the way, it became easier to touch up the paint and put in some new signs and displays. In the last issue of the Trainsheet, Hank Stiles thoughtfully mentioned in his CMO report that I had brought a sense of continuity to the museum which had been absent for some time. This is perhaps the best compliment that I've received since beginning full time work at the museum. If we've done nothing else over the last eighteen months, I'm very proud to see that everyone at the museum is working together and sharing our supplies and equipment in a more efficient manner.

Another interesting phenomenon are the visitors who just don't seem to comprehend what we're doing here. The old rails and the railfans love us (and we love ourselves). You've heard the old expression that a person "can't see the forest because of the trees". Well, we still have some visitors who can't see the museum because of all the locomotives and freight cars that are in the way. Some people actually walk up to the entrance door on the east end of the building and hesitate because they think they've stumbled into the back shop area and are in the wrong place. They're looking for some grand entryway into the museum.

I'm a student of human behavior. I often wonder why people do what they do and what they're thinking. It's actually a good way for a salesperson or host to size up their customer and approach them in a non-threatening way. This is something that just gets inbred into people in retail business. Business journals teach us to observe our customers and try and get inside their heads. If the customer (or visitor) doesn't understand what you're doing, then it's your fault and you need to find a better way to communicate your message or service (remember, the customer is always right, even when they're wrong).

Obviously, we needed to do better in communicating our message. The first step was improving the entryway with the new sidewalks. This was a tremendous improvement. Then we needed to get a new entrance sign. Something bold, colorful and inviting. Once the folks got through the door, we needed a new sign that would welcome them and tell them what they were looking at. After working on several variations, we hung a huge new sign in the entryway that tells the history of the museum, explains that the shop is supposed to look like a shop and that the noises, smells, parts and pieces that they see and hear are part of the unique, hands-on visiting experience that we offer. The sign is a bit wordy, but it makes a definitive statement about who we are, what we have done and what we are doing. If people keep asking the same questions repeatedly, it makes sense to make a sign that answers these questions. This sign does that and we've received some nice compliments for it. Jan Breitweiser and the ladies in

her print shop were a big help on this project. They proofread the verbiage and offered suggestions from the "female perspective" that made the signs more attractive. Perhaps surprisingly, during the summer, a lot of our visitors are women bringing their children to visit. This was an important consideration in the design and layout of the sign.

Communication within the membership and volunteers is also important. To that end we've revived Hap Manitt's old "Caboosing" column in the Trainsheet to help keep you informed of the daily activities around the museum. We also hope to have a new web-cam up and running soon. This will allow all of the members to catch a glimpse of what's going on at the museum. My daily presence at the museum helps to further communication between the different departments and keeps the directors and department heads informed of the overall activities and concerns of the museum.

In addition to opening and closing the doors, maintaining the property in good order and providing security, my primary job is running the gift shop. I've been involved with the gift shop since the beginning of the museum. I've worked with all of the gift shop managers over the years and I'm proud to say that the museum has always had a good sales program. Chris Skow, Norman and Barbara Holmes, Lolli Bryan, Jan Breitweiser and others have always done a great job with the shop.

If there was one complaint about the shop, it was that it was too small. Jan Breitweiser made the decision to move the gift shop into the old Beanery. This was a big change in the old status queue and some people opposed it. Unfortunately, the demands of her family and her various business enterprises, reluctantly forced Jan to relinquish the gift shop position. Luckily for me, I inherited a bigger shop; new fixtures and clever new products that Jan help develop. Jan established a solid foundation that I was able to build on and continue to improve. Jan and her husband George continue to be great supporters of the museum and have personally helped me in tremendous ways. They're great people and I owe them a great deal of thanks for their kind assistance in helping me make a smooth transition.

The gift shop requires a huge investment in merchandise. The Board of Directors and Treasurer Dan Brady has been very patient with me as the bills came in. Eventually, the addition of new merchandise and the expansion of our book, video, t-shirt, poster, print and model selection began to pay off and sales increased steadily.

Eventually, I hope to build our gift shop into one of the finest railroad bookstores on the west coast. I'm also trying to establish the shop as a premier gallery of railroad art, prints and photographs. In time, I hope we will become the essential source when it comes to WP models and memorabilia. We have a mail order catalog available again and the gift shop will hopefully be up on our web site by the time you read this.

I sincerely hope that you will support the museum through your purchases in the gift shop. This is one of the museum's best revenue streams and it is very important that our members support it. I'll do my best to try and stock the items your looking for and get them to you quickly. Looking for something specific? Give me a call. We want your business!

Despite high gas prices that kept a lot of people home this summer and a home building boom that tied up a lot of our

staff and volunteers this year, I think we had a great year. As I write this in early January, it's 8 degrees outside and the museum is blanketed with four to five feet of snow. The museum is closed and the volunteers and staff are taking some well-deserved time off. But there is a feeling in the air. There is anticipation for the coming year that has a lot of us itching to get back to work at the museum. With your help and continued support, I believe that we're going to have another great year. I look forward to seeing you up at the museum this year.

Thanks to everyone for your continued faith and support.

## Summary of Recent Board Meetings

*Any member in good standing may request a complete copy of the transcript of board meetings from the Society. There is a nominal charge for each copy which covers postage and administrative costs. Full minutes are posted on the FRRSlist hosted by Yahoo Groups.*

### October 2004

#### Motions Passed:

Motion # 04-10-01 – Removal of Financial Reports from Consent Calendar. Motion made by Director Vicknair, seconded by Director Holmes. All Directors present voted in favor. Motion carried.

Motion # 04-10-02 — Approval of Consent Calendar as amended. Motion made by Director Brehm, seconded by Director Cochran. All Directors present voted in favor. Motion carried.

Motion 04-10-04 – Addition of Item of Urgency discovered after publication of the Regular Meeting agenda. Motion made by Director Brehm, seconded by Director Cochran. All Directors present voted in favor. Motion carried.

Motion 04-10-05 – Change of Regular Board meeting scheduled for November 6, 2004 to November 13, 2004. Motion made by Director Brehm, seconded by Director Cochran. All Directors present voted in favor. Motion carried.

Motion # 04-10-03 – Approval to proceed with movement of SP 1100, with a budget of \$5,000 from line item 52000 – Acquisition/Deacquisition, Other. Motion by Director Holmes, seconded by Director Brehm. All Directors present voted in favor. Motion carried.

#### Actions and Notices:

David Epling was contacted by another member who advised he is retiring and moving out to the West Coast. He has offered to donate a complete set up to install a live webcam at the Museum.

SP Rotary snowplow and power unit have arrived on property.

#### Closed Session:

Adjourned to close session at 3:15 pm and adjourned back to open session at 3:40 pm. Legal Counsel Alan Turner reported that the Board considered a number of items in closed session relating to museum property and litigation matters. Consensus direction was given as to both issues. No formal

action was taken by the Board.

## Special Directors Meeting - October 26, 2004 via telephone conference

#### Motions and Actions:

Motion # 04-10-01S – Authorization to proceed with formal offer for the purchase of CZ dome coach “Silver Lodge” from Denver Railcar in the amount of \$57,000 with terms of non-refundable deposit in the amount of \$5,000 upon acceptance of offer, an additional \$20,000 due at time of closing no later than January 10, 2005 with balance due to be financed by owner at 6% APR with a term of 5 years with all funds to be posted from The Zephyr Project account, and pending legal review of final sale contract. Motion made by Director Brehm, seconded by Director Vicknair. All Directors present voted in favor by roll call vote. Motion carried.

### November 2004

#### Motions Passed:

Motion 04-11-01.. Minutes – Approval of the minutes of the regular meeting held October 2, 2004. Financial Reports – Profit and Loss statement through November 12 and Balance Sheet.

Motion 04-11-02.. 2005 FRRS Calendar, Acceptance of 2005 FRRS Calendar as corrected. Motion made by Director Cochran, seconded by Director Brehm. All Directors present voted in favor – Motion carried.

Motion 04-11-03.. Silver Lodge Acquisition, Reconfirmation of intent to purchase Silver Lodge and allow Director Vicknair to continue negotiations. Motion made by Director Vicknair, seconded by Director Stiles. All Directors present voted in favor – Motion carried.

#### Actions and Notices:

SP1100 was moved to Litchfield due to concerns about the rail lines' trestle bridges, lack of maintenance and possible washouts. It is currently on private property and under the careful watch of a local farmer to prevent vandalism.

Director Vicknair reported that with the efforts of Jay Sarno, Don Borden, John Walker, Seth Adams, Gail McClure, Ken Iverson and Mr. Vicknair himself, a great deal of work has been completed in the Silver Debris, soffits are 80% complete, wiring is done and temporary power to the car has been established.

Annual Santa Train is scheduled for December 4th and 11th in Portola, CA.

#### Closed Session:

Meeting adjourned to closed session at 3:11 pm and reconvened to open session at 4:10 pm. Director McClure reported out of closed session the following: Regarding equipment issues under consideration, the Board provided consensus direction to President McClure and Director Vicknair, no reportable