

## PRM in the Movies

By Pat Brimmer

Last spring while I was attending a season ending banquet for the Judge Memorial Catholic High School swim team, a father came over to me and said that his son Brian (Brian Christiansen, one of my former students) was in the process of making a movie and they needed to shoot some railroad scenes and could I possibly help. I told him to have Brian call me and tell me what it was all about and I would see what I could do.

A couple of weeks later, Brian called me and explained that he was attending a film school to learn about making movies and that they had developed a script that needed a boxcar and other train equipment. He asked if I thought the Union Pacific would let them use their equipment for the shooting. I responded that even if they did it would probably cost a lot of money. He then asked if the museum where I worked during the summer might be able to accommodate their needs. I told him I would check it out and get back to him as soon as possible since he told me that they wanted to do the shooting very soon.

After an email to Rod with all of the details of what they needed, Rod got back to me and said that it was a "go"; we just needed to make sure that they signed liability releases to cover any problems that might occur. Then, I got together with Brian and the production company to decide what they wanted in the consist. I took several pictures of our equipment along with me so that they could see what would be available. They wanted to have cars that matched in color for the most part and preferred dark colors. They also needed to have the middle car relatively empty so that they could set up lights, etc. The middle car also had to have doors that would open easily and one car on either side of the middle car had to have a door that would open easily so that we could put the generator in that car to provide power for the lights.

With that, I emailed Steve Habeck and asked if it would be possible to put together a five car train with their specifications, the SP 2873 for power and the WP 484 on the end. Steve emailed back to say that he could indeed put together such a consist but would need some lead time to do the necessary switching.

After contacting Brian again with the good news, we set dates of June 17 and June 18 for the shooting sequence. I emailed Steve again and gave him the dates and he said that the train would be ready to go and it would be on the west end of RIP 1. All I would need to do when I arrived was to get the cabooses out of the way, grab the WP 484 caboose and the SP 2873 and we would be ready to shoot. Then, I began assembling a crew for the movie train. I called Kerry Cochran to see if he would be available on those dates and if he would act as our Safety Officer. He said he would be available and would fill the Safety Officer role. What I wanted from the Safety Officer was someone who would be on the ground with the movie crew the entire time. Then, before the train made any moves, the movie crew would describe what they wanted to do and the Safety Officer would approve or disapprove of their request. If the Safety Officer disapproved of the request, then he would work with the movie crew to help them come up with an alternative. Also, the train was not allowed to move until the Safety Officer told the train crew that he had

approved their request and it was all right to move the train. Our biggest concern here was that the movie crew were young people, under age 25 with one exception, and that they did not fully understand the dangers that exist around a moving train.

When I arrived on June 16 to finish the setup, I found the consist not on RIP 1 as expected but on 3 rail where the caboose train normally resides. It already had the WP 428 on the back end and the other cabooses were stored on RIP 1. So, it was now a simple matter to get the entire consist on the south lead heading west with the SP 2873 on the front end.

The production crew arrived at the museum about 4:00 pm on June 17th. We had told them that we could only shoot between the hours of 5:00 pm and 10:00 pm due to our RAL program and the time by which all locomotives had to be shut down at the museum. After they unpacked their equipment, the train crew and movie crew sat down together for an in-depth safety meeting and to fill out the liability releases. The meeting lasted about 30 minutes and then we were on our way to the south lead where the train was parked. We shot several scenes over and over that evening and then the movie crew stayed past the 10:00 pm shutdown to do several static shots. It was funny to see them the first time they tried to jump up into the middle boxcar. It was a tad higher than they realized and they didn't make it on their first attempt. One scene that they wanted to shoot involved a fight in the boxcar while it was moving and one of the actors would be thrown out of the boxcar while it was moving. I had told them ahead of time that it was questionable as to whether we would allow that scene but we would see how things went after they were on-site. Well, after trying to jump up into the boxcar, and realizing how far off the ground they were and seeing the gravel roadbed they would fall on, they decided that it probably was not a good idea to do that stunt as planned. So, they set up a light on the south side of the boxcar and built a small fence with vertical slats. They raised the fence up about six feet on a stand and then from behind the fence one of the crew members moved a huge light in a slow clockwise circular motion so that it looked like the car was moving while it was really standing still. They did throw an actor out of the boxcar, but it was stationary and they realized how dangerous it would have been to do the stunt with a moving train.

They left the museum grounds about midnight on Friday night and returned on Saturday as we were completing the last run of the caboose train. After our crew rested for about 30 minutes, we put the train together again and out on the south lead to start another five hours of filming. And, just as the professionals do, we did many shots over and over. By 10:00 pm Saturday night, the train crew was totally bushed and so were the members of the movie crew.

We thought that that would be the end of the filming, but around the first of July, Brian called me again to say that some of the scenes they shot did not have enough daylight and could they come back up again to repeat some of the shots while there was more daylight. After checking with Rod, Steve and Kerry, it was agreed that they would return on July 22nd to finish the shooting.

So, on July 22nd, they showed up about 4:00 in the afternoon and we proceeded to re-shoot some of the scenes over again and also some new scenes that they felt they needed. We again had a fun time watching them shoot the scenes and gave a sigh of

relief when they left about 10:00 that night. The train crew was pooped after pushing the twelve hour law on each of the three shooting nights.

Kerry and I were very impressed with the maturity of these young folks who were on the movie crew. We really had anticipated that they would be very demanding of what they wanted to shoot and that they would want to try all kinds of things that the Safety Officer would have a difficult time approving. Well, our concerns were definitely unwarranted! They listened carefully in our safety meetings and constantly were asking what was safe and what was not. Overall, it was a real pleasure and a lot of fun having them on-site and working with them for nearly twenty hours.

The movie will be shown on two occasions in Salt Lake City sometime in November. The production company will let me know as soon as they set the date. They have also promised to give us a DVD of the movie to keep at the museum.

A special thank you goes to Steve Habeck and Loren Ross who put the first movie train together. It took them about 3 – 4 hours to decide what to use and then to dig it out and get it in the correct order on the train. Also, thank you to Kerry Cochran and those who helped put the train away after the first shooting. I had to leave early Sunday morning to drive to Pasadena and could not help. And finally, thanks to John Walker, our Museum Manager, who was always ready and willing to help in any way he could (and he was a big help!).

Thanks also to those train crew members who volunteered their time to come up and help with the movie train. They are: Seth Adams, Lew Barnard, Eddie Chase, Dave Epling, Ken Iverson, and Craig Simmons.

## **A Big Thanks to our Museum Manager and Many Others**

By Pat Brimmer

I'd like to offer some personal words of thanks based on my observations during the times preceding Railroad Days and the Challenger visit.

First, I want to publicly thank John Walker, our Museum Manager, for all of the planning and effort that he put in getting the museum ready for Railroad Days and the arrival of the UP 3985 Challenger. I spent a full two weeks at the museum prior to the departure of the Challenger on September 2nd. During this time I observed John doing everything he could to make sure that the museum was in tip top shape for these two events. Please don't misunderstand me, he didn't do it all alone, but he did have to have a game plan that could be executed by whatever volunteers showed up to help. Not only did John have a game plan but he was always out there working right along side everyone else to make sure it all was finished.

Charlie Spikes took on the yeoman's chore of replacing the fire hydrant so that we could water the Challenger while it was on museum property. The first challenge came when they discovered that the hydrant was no longer connected to the water line. It had rusted away at the elbow about seven feet underground. So, he and Doug Morgan spent a lot of time down in that hole figuring out how to best solve the problem. Of course after the problem was solved, then the hole had to be filled in. Numerous vol-

unteers were available and grabbed shovels to start the task of filling the hole. Then, we needed to have gravel on the top of the dirt. So, Kerry Cochran got the front loader and started bringing us buckets of gravel to spread in the area. Eventually we ran out of gravel, and the area around the oil house and the new placement of the water supply looked really great. It was finished just the day before the Challenger was due to arrive.

While I was at the museum in July for an extended stay, I noticed that Doug Morgan came into the shop area and began cleaning everything west of the carpenter shop. It took him two and one-half days working by himself to clean up that area. As far as I know, no one asked him to do it; he saw that it needed to be done and just did it. My guess is that he was cleaning up messes left by everyone but himself.

I would like to thank my wife Linda for finishing up a project that I started in July. John Walker asked me in July to repaint the bench seats on the MOP. I was able to finish one end during the week I was at the museum in July. I told John that I would finish the other two benches when I came back in August. Well, we had several RAL's that I covered in August and I helped John with other preparations for Railroad Days and the Challenger visit. So, Linda ended up doing all of the sanding, priming and painting for the other two benches and then helped me re-install the units after the paint was dry. The benches were installed Friday morning just in time for Railroad Days.

I would also like to thank everyone (I don't remember everyone that was out there but we had a lot of volunteers helping) that helped me with traffic and pedestrian control on the two days that the Challenger was in town. Sam Herschbein, aka Charlie Hustle (watch out Pete Rose), was all over the place doing a myriad of things to help me set up the barriers and caution tape in the UP parking lot. It seemed to work really well to have the cars park in our lot and for people to walk down the see the Challenger. We set up a couple of spaces just east of our front gate to assist those people with handicapped tags on their car.

Finally, I understand through the rumor mill that Rod and Steve felt that they promised big things about the Challenger visit but that they didn't deliver after all of the effort the volunteers made to get the museum in tip-top shape. My personal opinion is that you did indeed deliver! The Challenger arrived for a nice visit in Portola and we had a lot of visitors. Yes, it would have been nice to have everything on museum property as planned but even the best laid plans sometimes go astray. The mere fact that the Challenger visited Portola tells me that you delivered. You, of course, had no idea that UP trackage would not safely hold the big Challenger. But, you did deliver and the Challenger was in Portola. As it turned out, I think we made a very favorable impression with the UP folks when we took over the crowd control and made everything flow smoothly for the people who came to see the Challenger. Who knows, we may get another visit sometime in the future from the Challenger and maybe this time we can have the UP folks fix their tracks ahead of time so that we can display it on our property. I don't think any of the volunteers who spent a lot of time and sweat getting ready for the Challenger visit have any serious regrets (disappointment, maybe) and feel that their work went for nothing. After all, most of that work needed to be done anyway!