

Carter, David Epling, Bart Hansen, Norm & Barbara Holmes, Matt Parker, Ed Powell, Craig Simmons, Charlie Spikes, Bruce Veilleux, & John Walker. There was a special appearance by Rod McClure and Reed Jackson of the Union Pacific Railroad's Steam Program with the Union Pacific's Mini-Train.

On December 8, a film crew used our newly arrived PFE reefer as a set for part of an independent film now in production. We're hoping to attract more such work to the museum.

The physical grounds are in good shape, most of my to

do list was completed, what was not completed was the Volunteer Deck between the Edenwold and the Shower Car.

With all that said, We managed to get a lot of work done with minimal staffing. Our train crews have done an outstanding job this year as well, a lot of students and a lot of promotions.

So as we focus on the closing months of the 2008 season, We will slowly begin the winter shutdown process and I am hoping to have a catalog of what is available in the gift shift.

---

## OPS DEPARTMENT PROMOTIONS

We had a lot of promotions recently in the Ops Department. Below is a list of those who have met their qualifications.

Spencer Walker - Conductor  
 Rick Gruninger - Fireman  
 Russ Johnson - Fireman  
 David Epling - Passenger Engineer  
 George Sousa - Brakeman  
 Fred Elenbass - Brakeman  
 Bart Hansen - Fireman  
 Bill Parker - Passenger Engineer  
 Charlie "Golden" Spikes - Passenger Engineer  
 Craig Simmons - Yard Engineer / RAL Instructor  
 David "Dynamite" Epling - RAL Instructor  
 Rick Gruninger - Conductor  
 Kevin "Inferno" Caldwell - Brakeman  
 Tim Carter - Brakeman  
 Ethan "Quickdraw" Doty - Brakeman  
 David "Bart" Hansen - Qualified Brakeman

We also picked up a new Ops Volunteer! Bruce Bowman has started as a Student Brakeman.

Our Ops volunteers have been working their butts off to keep the operating department running smoothly this summer.

Congratulations to all of you. If we have left anyone out, it is not intentional.

Great job, guys!

If you would like to join the Operations Crew, contact Loren Ross or one of our Ops Supervisors and attend the training day on Saturday, April 25, 2009!

## MEMBER APPRECIATION DAY

- Tom Carter

In late 2007, I was given a new challenge as a member of the FRRS: Members Appreciation Day 2008. Of course, this immediately led to many questions, not the least of which was: What do I DO? Quickly followed by: What does this entail? What kinds of activities do we plan for? What is our budget? How many people show up for these things?

You guessed it, I had never planned anything more than an adolescent house party prior to my significant other Alicia and I taking on this task. Luckily, we had some great help; otherwise we would have had a couple of kegs of beer and an obnoxious selection of music played above the level of ear pain!

Planning started in November of 2007 with a breakfast meeting between Alicia, Wayne Monger, Matt Parker and myself prior to the Board of Directors meeting that afternoon in Lathrop. At that point, I walked away from the meeting with a better understanding and idea of what was required and expected: An event to make the membership of the Feather River Rail Society feel welcome at their museum and to showcase the hard work of the men and women keeping the Western Pacific alive in Portola

With the assistance of Russ & Cheri Johnson, the Epling and family, Linda Knudson, Eugene Vicknair, Tim and Dustin Carter, Gail McClure, Wayne Monger, and Matt and Stephanie Parker, we set out to balance children's activities & games, activities for the adults, a delicious barbeque dinner and a relaxed atmosphere in conjunction with the annual elections announcement and membership meeting. Alicia and I were pleasantly surprised with the turnout, as it was our goal to meet as many new faces in the membership as possible and to show them that their decision to join the Feather

River Rail Society was a smart choice. Members came from all over the country with one couple coming all the way from British Columbia Canada. The Operating Department graciously surrendered time with their families to run caboose trains all weekend to the delight of the children, and thanks to Gail, we not only had numerous games and activities for the children, each of them walked away with a prize and had a great time. The highlight was to be a "Rubber Chicken Launcher" made from two old high stand switch stands and surgical tubing. Though the launcher presented many logistical problems, folks had a lot of laughs trying their luck as we got it dialed in and working great on Sunday. A good time was had by all attempting to launch "fake fowl" all over the picnic area. Wayne put on a great spread in the diesel shop and after a day of coordinating fun and games, it was actually relaxing to spend the evening on the barbeque grill with Wayne cooking delicious tri-tip, chicken and hotdogs. Thanks again go to Gail for prepping the delicious food; I don't know what we would have done without her help and patience during numerous frantic phone calls to the McClure household leading up to the event.

To see the membership filling one end of the Diesel Shop and the Board of Directors standing before them was pretty rewarding, but the real treat was listening to these folks talk about the history of the museum, the connection with the Western Pacific and their plans for the future of our museum. I came away from the 2008 Members Appreciation Day with a renewed spirit of the future of the Feather River Rail Society and I sincerely hope the rest of the membership did as well.

The 2009 Members Appreciation Day is already in the planning stages and is going to be a two part event this year. The festivities kick off with a Barbecue and Membership Meeting on June 6th at 5:30pm, where the 2009 Board of Directors election results will be announced. September 26th will mark the return of "Railfan Photographer Day" in conjunction with Members Appreciation Day. This year, Railfan Photo Day will be open to members only. What that means to our non-member fans is that they are still welcome to attend and partake in the activities, however, they will need to purchase a membership to the FRRS. Activities and details will be announced in the near future on our website at: [www.wplives.org](http://www.wplives.org).

I encourage every member of the Feather River Rail Society to come on out for both membership events in 2009, Western Pacific Railroad's Centennial year, to enjoy YOUR museum. It promises to be a lot of fun and we look forward to meeting you.

## DEPARTURES

*Sadly, the last half of 2008 has proven to be a difficult one for many long-time members. After announcing the passing of two volunteers in the last issue, we now have the loss of two more, as well as the news, to be covered more in the next issue, of the passing of prominent Western Pacific historian and Society friend Virgil Staff.*

*To the family and friends of our departed members and volunteers, the FRRS family extends its deepest condolences.*

---

Director **Merrill Thurman** of Fulton, Missouri passed away at the age of 53 at the St. Mary's Hospital on Friday, November 14, 2008. He was born August 19, 1955, in Modesto, California, son of the late Gordon and Joyce (Hartliep) Thurman. On December 27, 1975, he was united in marriage to Rita (Hall) Thurman who survives at their home.

Merrill was a self-employed Computer Interface Analyst. He worked for the Community Health Systems of Nashville, Tennessee for many years. His passions were his grandchildren, umpiring fast pitch softball and modeling railroads. His home-grown HO pike was the "Missouri Western Pacific", a fictional midwestern division of his beloved WP. He enjoyed duck hunting, fly-fishing, goose hunting, working on his 18-wheeler, traveling, camping and was a Ham Radio Operator.

He was a Life member of the Feather River Rail Society and was appointed to the Board of Directors early in 2008. Despite living in Missouri, Merrill was a strong supporter and advocate of the Society, regularly attending the WPRRHS Conventions and coming to Portola to volunteer when work and family permitted. Merrill's father, Gordon Thurman, who passed away in May of this year, was a former Western Pacific engineer and inspired Merrill's love of the WP. The Z-Scale Western Pacific layout was saved and brought to the museum largely through his generosity. He was also an advocate for WP SW1 501, the railroad's first diesel, and set-up a fundraising effort on its behalf.

In addition to his wife of thirty-two years, he will be sadly missed and lovingly remembered by son Merrill Lee Thurman and his wife, Melissa, of Hillsboro, Missouri; daughter Victoria Christine Thurman of Fulton, Missouri; two grandchildren, Hayden Thurman and Baylee Hash; several aunts, uncles, cousins, nieces, nephews, and numerous friends. His parents and a twin brother, Edgar Lee Thurman, preceded him in death.