

DIRECTOR REPORT – WP 1503 PAINTING

–Tom Carter, Director

I have had a lot of questions recently about the status of the paint job on WP 1503. Hopefully, this report will clear up where we currently stand on it.

Immediately upon 1503 arriving on the property, Rod asked me if I would be willing to paint it. I had never painted anything bigger than an old Army Jeep at the time, and had never used an air sprayer bigger than an airbrush on a G Scale model at that point. I had always had an interest in learning to paint, but, no experience. When I informed Rod, he asked me if I thought I could do it if I had the proper instruction by experienced professionals. I felt I could, so I said “No problem”. I was really looking forward to learning to paint so that in the future, we could eliminate the large expense of hiring painters. As a volunteer at the museum, I’m pretty cheap (but not easy!)

Rod and I had set it up a little over a year ago to have Henry Krenning, formerly of the UP Steam Crew in Cheyenne Wyoming come out to Portola and work with me on the 1503 paint, during a visit by Henry and Steve Lee to the museum. Henry had previously painted UP 3985 and UP 844 a couple of times, as well as the 6936 Centennial, the E9’s, the shop switcher, and the auxiliary water tenders for the steam engines. The 4 of us went over the 1503 very methodically where Steve and Henry pointed out various techniques and issues that will need to be dealt with as well as answering the many questions Rod and I had regarding painting. Henry planned to return this Spring to get the 1503 done. Unfortunately, a sudden tragedy in his family a couple of days before his trip prevented him from coming out with Steve. Fortunately for us though, Steve delivered a nice surprise; a high volume, low pressure turbine painting system, complete with brand new spray gun, courtesy of Henry. This equipment was donated specifically to paint 1503, and then whatever we want to paint in the future, with the understanding that I would be mentored by Henry on the 1503 to get us started.

I understand that many folks are excited about the prospect of having another locomotive

painted, especially Rod’s engine; I am too. Personally, I can’t wait. However, I felt an explanation is in order to you, the membership as to why it hasn’t happened yet. The bottom line is that I don’t want to just jump in and get in over my head with this. The fact of the matter is, if I tried to just “wing it”, that is exactly what I fear would happen and having been entrusted with a very important artifact by a very close personal friend, on an engine VERY near and dear to him, I take that trust and responsibility VERY profoundly. It is one thing to get into a mess over ones head when painting something like a model, but this is 100 tons of trouble if ill prepared. What kind of paint will we use? What are the PPE requirements for it? What are the shop requirements and how will we schedule it around visitorship? (we will undoubtedly have to close up the shop while the painting takes place). And when is Henry available to come back out to Portola to work with us on it? If not Henry, is there someone else that can mentor me to do it?

These are important considerations that I felt prudent to get squared away first for the good of this important artifact. This is a huge project; one that will be done RIGHT if I am to attempt it. I only want what’s best for the pieces in our collection and am confident that I will be a great painter and am willing to do whatever it takes to learn everything I can to be as good a painter as the best in the rail restoration business. In the mean time, I ask for your continued patience and assistance if you can help. I would like to give a BIG heartfelt thank you to recent donors John Ryczkowski and Larry Hanlon for their significant donations, Henry Krenning for the paint system and related equipment and for all of his assistance so far, to Steve Lee for transporting it and making the arrangements, as well as technical expertise, and to each and every donor and supporter for all of your financial contributions and encouragement, and above all, patience.

We’ll get there. I just want to make sure we do once I am prepared to do it RIGHT. It’s a promise I made to my friend to return “his engine” to its former glory and a commitment to you, the stewards of this treasure of the Western Pacific.