

2019 ROTARY RUN

*featuring historic rotary snowplow
Southern Pacific MW208*



- Eugene Vicknair

After being a topic of “what if” discussions for many years, March 22, 2019 saw a special event happen at the WPRM where our Southern Pacific rotary snowplow MW208 was fired up and plowed snow while lucky donors got a chance to ride in the rotary cab, locomotive SP GP9 2873 and caboose DRGW 01414.

A run of storms had dumped heavy snow on the museum in the weeks leading up to the March Board Meeting. During the storms, we were contacted by John Bartell of ABC10 television in Sacramento and asked if the rotary could plow snow and if he could come film the event. An idea was put forward based on the prior “what if” discussions to turn the event into a fundraiser and a hands on experience, giving people a chance to ride the rotary during a plow run. After a discussion of pros, cons and work required at the Board Meeting, the decision was made to hold the event on March 22, giving the volunteer crew a chance to ready the museum, rotary and the locomotive.

For the next 12 days, David Elems, Ethan Doty, Charlie Spikes, Bil Jackson, Steve Habeck, Greg Elems and others worked on prepping the grounds and the equipment. Full mechanical

checks were performed and switches and paths shoveled, while an operation plan was put together. While this was in progress, Eugene Vicknair, Paul Finnegan and Big Fish Creations worked on marketing and ticket sales, using the WPLives.org website, email blasts and various social media outlets for promotion. The coveted rotary cab seats were put up for auction on eBay while the other tickets were offered on EventBright. For the first run of the day, when the rotary would be plowing snow, six seats were offered in the rotary cab, four in the locomotive cab, four in the caboose cupola, and a ten-person photo line was offered. After the first run, general admission tickets were offered for those who wanted to explore the rotary and ride now-plow runs.

On Rotary Run day, the operations crew was joined by Matt Elems for operations, while our museum store staff of K.C. Dunn, Jean Danielson and Tajanae Yager sold merchandise and helped out the volunteers. Mary Ann Vicknair served hot coffee, hot cocoa and warm cinnamon rolls in the baggage car. Patty Clawson helped John Bartell and his camera operator in setting up to film the runs. Greg Elems also worked with the video people and the five gallery visitors, keeping everyone on the ground safe.

Thank you to all the volunteers who made this happen! And to the donors who contributed and came out to have such a unique experience.

In addition to raising funds for our preservation efforts, we received a massive following and response via social media and in print. The news of the event was shared far and wide and all the Plumas County newspapers ran a front page story in the run up to the event.

With this first one in the books, it is hoped that future runs can be done when and if Mother Nature cooperates with good snowfall, giving even more people a chance to see an operating rotary snowplow up close and personal.

For historical information on rotary SP MW208, please visit the WPLives.org website: https://www.wplives.org/mow_pages/spmw_208.html.



*Photos from 2019 Rotary Run
March 22, 2019 - photos by Greg Elems*

