



THE TRAIN SHEET

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Preserving "THE FEATHER RIVER ROUTE"

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2019 Western Pacific Historical / Pacific Coast Region Joint Convention

Recap

by Eugene Vicknair



May 2-5, 2019 saw the second joint convention between the FRRS and the Pacific Coast Region of the NMRA. The first was 2016's Modesto convention. Dubbed "Diamond Rails Forever", the event was held at the McClellan Conference Center in Sacramento. It jointly celebrated the 75th anniversary of the Pacific Coast Region and the 70th anniversary of the *California Zephyr*, which started operation on March 20, 1949.

As a result of the Zephyr celebration, many of the WP / FRRS convention presentations were focused on this storied train and related topics. Perhaps the most exciting aspect was the presence of nine former Zephyrettes who held their reunion at the convention. They were:

- Fran Ryan Tanti
- Cathy Moran von Ibsch
- Merrilee Harter Mitchell
- Katie Storrs Pittman
- Linda Hein
- Joy Eldridge Parker
- Helen Justin Webb

Organized by Cathy Moran von Ibsch, the ladies held several meet and greet sessions where they shared information and stories with convention goers. Many expressed how much they appreciated the thank you and attention they received from the convention attendees, with many stating that they "felt like rock stars". In addition to the meet and greets, the Zephyrettes participated in various presentations and a *California Zephyr* roundtable that was held on Saturday, following a presentation by Cathy von Ibsch on the history of the Zephyrettes. The

Zephyr roundtable also included CZ conductor Ernie von Ibsch, noted photographer and Zephyr historian Ted Benson, author of the *California Zephyr* mystery books Janet Dawson, and CZ engineer Jim Atkins. Ted Benson, joined by Tom Taylor, also presented a show on their photographic adventures with the Western Pacific, while Janet Dawson also did a program on her books and the research she has done to recreate the Zephyr in fiction form.

Other WP-centric presentations included:

- Kerry Cochran with the third in his series on modeling WP MOW Equipment
- A look at the last years on the Tidewater Southern before the UP takeover by Greg Elems
- A history of the Quincy Railroad by Eugene Vicknair
- A photo tour of the WP's First Subdivision by Ken Rattenne
- Jeff Moore's history of the McCloud River Railway and its related logging lines,
- Jeff Asay's "How To Make A Small Fortune" which explored George J. Gould's role in financing the Western Pacific
- A history of WP's Dining Car service ware by Loren Dunlap
- Warren Haack sharing *California Zephyr* films including interviews with former employees
- Two shows by Mark Williams, with one covering the history of the

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(Convention...continued from front cover)

California Zephyr and the other looking at the “Zephyrette” Rail Diesel Cars.

- A showing of Virgil Staff Films from the FRRS archives focusing on the California Zephyr

Janet Dawson and Jeff Asay also held book signings at the WPRM Museum Store table. Janet’s Zephyr mysteries and Jeff’s book “*The Iron Feather*” were big sellers, along with a special 70th Anniversary CZ publication reprinting material from long out of print *Headlights 17* and *18*. This was put together in time for the convention by Paul Finnegan and the archives department volunteers with special thanks to Frank Brehm.

Several of the modeling and photography presentations also paid homage to the Western Pacific, including Neil Fernbaugh, whose Hands-On Weathering clinic featured photos of WP prototypes for inspiration. The modeling contest featured some amazing work that showcased the breadth of both subject matter and capability found in the modeling world. There were many vendors on hand as well, in addition to the WP Museum Store, sharing a large hall with three model layouts that were on hand for display.

The closing banquet featured great food, the door prize raffle and an entertaining keynote speech by Charlie Getz, outgoing NMRA President. Door prizes were donated by:

- Bowser
- Kadee Quality Products
- Kalmbach Publishing
- White River Publications
- Catenary Video
- WPRM Museum Store
- Marc Desobeau, Railroad Artist
- Bob’s Trains and Toys
- David Adams
- Jere Ingram

Even a month later, many positive comments about the convention itself, the quality of programs and the special guests are still being received. Everyone felt that the blending of PCR

and WP focus worked well and both groups complemented each other, a fact also shown in the high number of attendees who hold joint membership in both organizations. At final count, about 265 people registered to attend.

I want to thank Steve and Mary Habeck, Greg Elems, Kerry Cochran, Scott McAllister, Jim Collins, Cathy Von Ibsch, Paul Finnegan, Frank Brehm and all the PCR folks who helped make the convention happen. Thanks to Eric McKay for good food and moral support. And huge thanks to all the presenters! Everyone did fantastic jobs on their shows.

I have decided that this will be the final convention I coordinate as there are several other projects on the horizon that will demand my attention, so let me take this opportunity to thank everyone who has helped me with planning and execution of the WP conventions since 2013.

- 2013 - Sacramento, CA (with co-coordinator Scott McAllister)
- 2014 - Fairfield, CA
- 2015 - Elko, NV
- 2016 - Modesto, CA – joint with PCR-NMRA
- 2017 - Reno, NV
- 2018 - Salt Lake City, UT
- 2019 - Sacramento, CA – joint with PCR-NMRA

There are photos and other material from the 2019 convention on the society website at www.WPLives.org/news_items/2019_Convention_News.html.

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