

Membership Spotlight - Frank Brehm

- Frank Brehm

I have had a fascination with trains for as long as I can remember. My grandmother worked for the Southern Pacific in Bakersfield during World War II and my uncle worked for them during the fifties and sixties as a surveyor. As a youngster my mother was very understanding (i.e., put up with me!) when it came to my fascination with trains during my formative years and spent many hours sitting trackside while I watched trains do what trains do. More than once she pulled the car to the side of the road so I could watch a freight or passenger train pass by. My wife would swear to you that I have not outgrown that fascination.

My interest in railroads continues today with encouragement from my wife and sons who have supported me in my endeavors with railroad related activities. Without this support, these pages would not be here today. I chose firefighting as a profession with 30 years of service. Three years were as a resident firefighter at Citrus Heights and the remaining 27 years with DOD, most of which was at McClellan Air Force Base right up to its closure in 2001, at which time I retired as an Assistant Chief. I was also certified as a California Hazardous Materials Specialist with extra training on rail tank cars. I hold life membership #1073 in this great organization, the Feather River Rail Society.

In May 1996, after a trip through Feather River Canyon, my wife and I visited the museum during which we became family members of the FRRS. The next year I became a life member. Since that time, I have made many friendships and have participated in many activities associated with the museum and the society.

Over the years I have been a director, vice-president, editor of the *Train Sheet* and *The Headlight* and have also participated in many work weekends at the museum. Besides track work, track work and more track work, I remember fondly a few special events I helped with, they are; planning the Railfan Photographers Day 2003 with Gail McClure, assisting in the negotiation, planning and movement of equipment with Western Railway Museum culminating in May 2005 when the 917, 712 and other equipment came to



Frank driving the museum's SP-1 Fire Truck in the 2007 RR Days Parade.

- photo by Gail McClure



Portola, what a couple of weeks that was. I also participated in all of the off-campus trips to Truckee, Colfax, Reno and Dunsuir. Sadly one project I was involved came to a halt when the old WP hospital was destroyed by an arsonist on September 7, 2011. At the time plans were being formulated for rebuilding and preservation of the structure.

Although my time lately has been limited and visits to Portola have not been as frequent as I would like, I am still very much involved, specifically with the archives. Many hours have been spent scanning items for electronic storage and retrieval, cataloging items and assisting with planning of a computer system for use in the Arthur Walter Keddie Library when opened.