

Rodney McClure

January 27, 1961 – June 11, 2016



Celebration of Life for Rod McClure will take place at the Western Pacific Railroad Museum Saturday July 9, 2016 at 5 pm. Bring your best stories and be prepared to celebrate life, just the way Rod would have wanted. All friends and family are welcome and encouraged to attend. Board meeting has been rescheduled for 1:00 that afternoon so we have time for his celebration.



It is with much sadness and heavy hearts that the Feather River Rail Society announces the passing of our brother, friend, leader and longtime FRRS President Rodney McClure, better known to us as “El Presidente” (“EP” for short). Rod was the devoted husband of FRRS Treasurer Gail McClure. He was 55 years old.

Rod started his “official” railroad career with the Western Pacific Railroad in 1979 as a trainman in San Francisco, eventually becoming a locomotive engineer. At the time of his passing, he was a regular in the Sparks pool (between Sparks, NV and Elko, NV) for Union Pacific. In his career, he operated over nearly all of the WP lines and the SP’s route from Oakland to Elko. Like many rails, Rod held other jobs when he was cut off or hanging on the extra board, including co-owning a deli and driving a tow truck in the roughest parts of San Francisco. But railroading was his life. Rod actually started his career “unofficially” at the age of seven, going to work with his Dad, the well-respected “Dirty Jack” McClure. Rod honed his skills at an early age running everything from lowly switch engines to high speed passenger power on the WP’s famous “California Zephyr”, all under “Dirty Jack’s” keen eye. Rod’s first paid workday with the WP was working with his Dad on WP SW1500 switch engine 1503, WP’s last acquired switcher and now part of our historic collection. Rod returned the favor by being on the crew for Jack’s last day on the railroad,

again on the 1503.

Rod had two sons, Aaron and Eric, both volunteers at the museum until they enlisted in the military. He was immensely proud of his boys and delighted in playing Grandpa to their kids. In 1989 he married the love of his life, the former Gail Parker, sister of longtime WPRM volunteer Matt Parker – introduced to each other at the Museum by Matt in 1987. Rod and Gail were an inseparable, matched set of humor, sarcasm, knowledge, and love. Most people consider Shakespeare's "Romeo & Juliet" as the ultimate love story, but Rod and Gail were more "Gomez & Morticia Adams", a far more special and quirky bond than the Bard's couple of boring old-fashioned characters. They could finish each others' sentences, were often involved in the same shenanigans with friends and family, and both had hearts of gold. On Rod's days off from the railroad, both could usually be found working in various tasks at and for the museum.



Rod's quick wit and mischievous sense of humor were ever on display. He had an adoration for the volunteers of the Western Pacific Railroad Museum and his connections in the museum world and the Union Pacific Railroad have been paramount to the growth and continued success of the FRRS as an organization. As a member of the Western Pacific family and a natural leader, Rod had earned the trust, admiration and respect of a large army of volunteers that he referred to as the "Willing People of the Western Pacific", just like those employees of the original WP.

Rod's boots are going to be impossible to fill, and he is already missed terribly by all of us that were blessed enough to know him. But in his spirit and legacy, the "Willing People" of the Western Pacific Railroad museum will carry on the traditions that he, Jack, their friends and fellow rails lived by. Rod would be very upset if we didn't. It won't be easy.

A celebration of Rod's life will take place at the museum on a soon to be determined date. In true "EP" fashion, expect it to be a loud, obnoxious party, with plenty of good food, Van Halen & AC/DC music, photos, stories, and his favorite things: his friends and family.

Rod wouldn't have it any other way.

We ask that you keep Gail, Aaron, Eric and their family in your thoughts and prayers during this difficult time.

The FRRS is accepting donations in Rod's (and his father Jack's) memory. In particular, Rod had devoted a lot of effort toward getting WP 0-6-0 165 to Portola and supporting its return to operation, as well as securing the donation of WP SW1500 1503, which he had been raising funds to repaint. We know he would have wanted to see those projects moved forward to completion.

