



# THE TRAIN SHEET

News from the Feather River Rail Society



## Preserving "THE FEATHER RIVER ROUTE"

Issue - 200

January/February/March 2024

### President's Pin

- Greg Elems

Here we are, in the middle of March already. We had some snow accumulation at the museum in late February and early March, as you can see on the Around the Museum 2024 Gallery web page. The warm temperatures have started to melt the snow. Work has started on the SP 2873 again with it getting a test run on Saint Patrick's Day. The 2873 was warmed up and ran for over 90 minutes. Then adjustments to the fuel injectors were made and I was told that it sounds better and has very little smoke now. So kudos to the crew doing the mechanical work.



We have some events coming our way with the "Celebration of Life for Norman and Barbra Holmes" on May 25, 2024. I'm hoping we can get some volunteers to help with the cleanup of the museum grounds and shop area. I'm also hoping we have a good turn out to celebrate Norm and Barbra's work and dedication to the museum. We'll be making a list of things to do and hope to have that completed before the end of March.

Thinking about the year ahead, work on the WP 165 is going to start this April. With luck, Roger Stabler will be able to have 165 steaming for July. Steam means more opportunities for Special steam RALs and steam powered caboose trains. Sound of the steam whistle echoing of the mountains is an exciting proposition and has been missed. Again, more help for Roger and museum is greatly needed.

Come by the museum this summer, say hi, and enjoy the memories of the WP.

### Open Up Those Cabs!

- Nicholas Manos

I remember when I used to bring my kids to the museum. They loved the place. It was so special in that they were free to board any locomotive they wanted.... No ropes, no barricades and not a single 'do not touch' sign in sight. They were always especially eager to enter the cabs, which at that time were almost always open. A brief scuffle might ensue over who got there first to sit in the engineer's seat.

As many of you know, the museum had to lock the cabs up some years back due to increasing vandalism. As well built as these locomotives were, they were never intended to be abused from the operator's seat. The decision to secure the cabs is understandable, but it hasn't been popular. We've had quite a bit of feedback from both the public and the membership requesting more cab access.



We believe we have a solution, but we need your help to make it happen.

An 'open cab days' event has been planned. We are looking to display a number of the popular locomotives up front and prominent in the east yard on June 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup>. The idea is to have the cabs open 10 AM to 5 PM on both days. The event will be used to draw visitors to the museum and promote the Run-A-Locomotive (RAL) program. Caboose trains will also run, so those visitors who want to explore the cab in operation will have an opportunity to do so.

*(continued on page 10 ...)*

**-THE TRAIN SHEET-**

Issue 200 - January/February/March 2024  
 Published April 1, 2024  
 News from the Feather River Rail Society and the  
 Western Pacific Railroad Museum at Portola

Editor - Paul Finnegan  
 Email: trainsheet@wplives.org

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 September and December.

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**FEATHER RIVER RAIL SOCIETY  
 WESTERN PACIFIC RAILROAD  
 MUSEUM at PORTOLA**

PO BOX 608, Portola, CA 96122-0608

Museum Phone: (530) 832-4131  
 Fax: (530) 832-1854

2024 Hours starting 5/2/24:  
 Thursdays & Fridays Noon - 4 PM  
 Saturdays & Sundays 10 AM - 5 PM

If you wish to visit during the closure period, it is  
 advisable to call in advance  
 and find out if the museum will be open.

Entrance to the museum for members is free. Non-  
 members are required to pay an admission fee.

The Feather River Rail Society, a tax-exempt public  
 benefit California corporation, is the historical society for  
 the Western Pacific Railroad and operator of the Western  
 Pacific Railroad Museum in Portola, California.

**The FRRS is not associated with the Union Pacific  
 Railroad.**

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 Member of the Heritage Rail Alliance



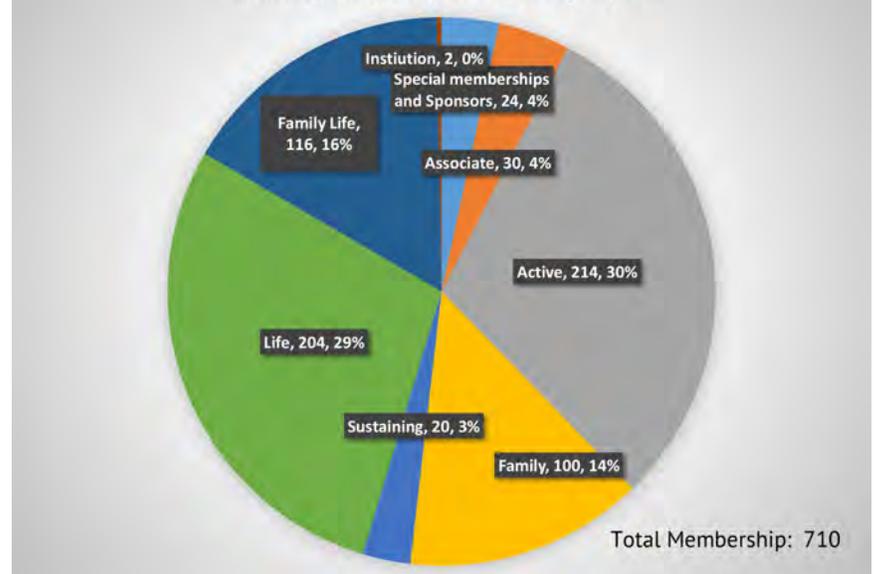
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**Membership Report as of 3/28/24**



**- WEB PAGES of INTEREST -**

FRRS Official Site	www.WPLives.org
CZ Virtual Museum	calzephyr.railfan.net
California Zephyr	californiazephyr.org
Western Pacific Pages	www.WPLives.com
WP Virtual Museum	wpmuseum.railfan.net
Tidewater Southern Pages	www.TidewaterSouthern.com
Central California Traction	www.trainweb.org/tractionco



## FRRS Receives Capital Support Grants in 2023

- Eugene Vicknair

In 2023, the Feather River Rail Society was awarded three grants, including a major award dedicated to the construction on the long-planned Whitman Building. This grant is still in the release process, with financial reporting and project projections being refined and submitted to the Department of Agriculture.

The other two awards we received, while smaller in amount, are very welcome help with our museum needs. We received \$7,500 from the Union Pacific Foundation for Americans with Disabilities Act improvements and \$10,000 from Plumas County for improvements to the drainage system on the north side of the Diesel Shop. Work related to both project specific grants will be occurring in 2024 and is currently in the planning stages.

As for 2024, the FRRS is pursuing several other grants that are applicable to various projects around the museum, ranging from small, sub \$10,000 amounts to almost half a million. As with any substantive grant, they are all highly competitive with no guarantee the FRRS will obtain them. But as the saying goes, "If you never try, you'll never know."

While very beneficial to our programs, grants are almost always tied to specific projects and expenditures and have specific limitations. The large grant for the Whitman Building, for instance, can only be used for expenses related to that project and its construction. With grant

limitations, it is very important that the FRRS continue to build other types of income. For example, we are currently reviewing improvements to the RAL program, exploring new income opportunities, and considering how best to promote the 2024 season to bring in more visitors and members.

As always, you, the members of the FRRS, are the backbone. Your membership dues, donations and store purchases help fund equipment restorations, archive improvements and repairs to the facility. In the upcoming weeks, you will be receiving the Spring 2024 FRRS fundraising letter in the mail, which will also include a request to reach out to non-member WP fans asking them to join. Your support is vital to keeping the WP alive and helping us expand the work of the museum. So help spread the word and continue to support the Feather River Rail Society.

Please consider donating, volunteering and / or signing up a new member today. Every bit is vital!

*To donate online, visit the online WP store at <https://westernpacificstore.mybigcommerce.com/donations/> or the main website at:*

*<https://donate.wplives.org>*

*You can also donate by mail. Send your check made out to the FRRS to:*

*Feather River Rail Society*

*Fundraising*

*P O Box 608*

*Portola, CA 96122*

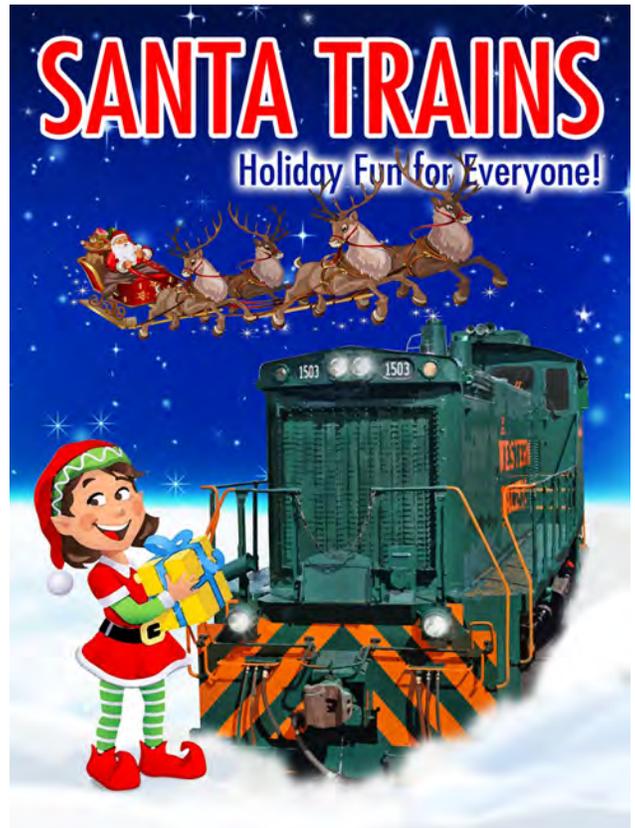
# SANTA TRAINS 2023

- Eugene Vicknair

Once again we hosted our annual Santa Trains and got some good visitor ship for the event. Our first night was Saturday, December 9. Duane Vander Veen took on Santa duties that night, but the surprise guest was Bob Danner, brother of Patty Clawson of Big Fish Creations, who roamed the trains as Santasquatch. The kids had a field day getting candy canes from a Sasquatch wearing Santa's hat and beard.

The following two weekends, with trains running Fridays and Saturdays on December 15-16 and 22-23 just saw attendance build. The cookie crew of Ali Doty and Mary and Jackie Habeck kept things moving in the baggage car, with homemade cookies provided by Ron Berriesford and his wife, Mary Ann Vicknair, Eugene Vicknair and Louise Dunbar. Ann Cary and Breckyn Shirley took turns handling the Museum Store, with an assist from Eugene Vicknair on the first Saturday. Bryn Shirley and Olivia Simone took money at the front gate. Decorations for the museum were put up by Steve Habeck and family, Ethan Doty and others.

Trains operations were covered by Charlie Spikes, Duane Vander Veen, Brian Waller, Ethan Doty, Greg Elems, Eugene Vicknair, Kevin Errecart, Nicholas Manos, Steve Habeck, Fred Elenbaas, Matt Elems, Janet Steeper and David Elems. Visitors got to enjoy the sight and sound of WP SW1500 1503 and SP GP9 2873 operating in multiple. A look at the numbers shows nice crowds even on the usually "quiet" Friday evenings. Our first night, Saturday December 2, the crew operated 7 caboose train runs and over half the runs carried more than 30 riders. The next weekend, Friday, December 8 saw 8 runs occur with each carrying 20 to 30 or more riders. On Saturday, December 9, there was only 7 runs, but 6 of them carried more than 30 riders. The final weekend was the biggest, with 8 runs each night. Friday, December 15 saw over half the runs carrying over 30 riders, while Saturday, December 16 was the big blow out, with an estimated 500 people visiting the museum and filling each caboose run.



Matt and Elizabeth Cruse took over as Santa and Mrs. Claus for the two weekends, with Bob Danner making some repeat appearances as Santasquatch on the Saturdays. Thank you to Patty and Michael Clawson for taking pictures and helping with promotions, which included radio spots, Facebook postings and a poster designed by Eugene Vicknair.

We have been building bigger and bigger crowds each event since returning from the COVID pause. Please consider joining us for Santa Train next year, either as a volunteer or just coming to check it out!



Photos by Patty Clawson, Michael Clawson and Greg Elems

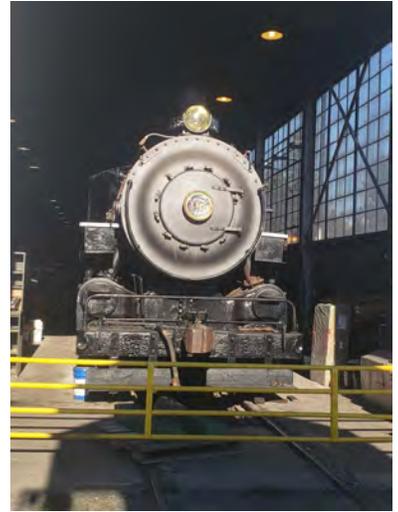
**WP 165 Update Fall 2023**

- Roger Stabler  
Steam CMO

I spent two weeks working on the WP 165 in late September. Many people have asked why the WP165 did not run in 2023. Our plan was to have the engine running for an event on May 18, 2023. I went up to the museum in the middle of April to begin prepping the 165 for its annual test and inspection. The other members of the steam crew were busy this year with major projects that did not allow them to take time off to help at the museum. Since I was primarily working alone I could only complete one task at a time to get the engine ready. On the day scheduled for our hydro static test with the FRA present all went well until we were above 100 psi. Our turret valve was bypassing forcing all the valves in the cab to be included in the hydro test. This created leaks that put water on the boiler and made it difficult to inspect the boiler for leaks. Our throttle also leaked which is not unusual in small amounts. There were a couple of superheater elements leaking at the header which again put water in a place that made inspection difficult. We had several new studs that were leaking above the normal water line that will need to be reset. The hydro test and inspection were cancelled on the basis that the repairs would take more time to complete than was available before the event that was scheduled. While I was there I was able to overhaul the left-rear axle housing and make numerous other repairs to the museum's backhoe so that it is a reliable machine at the museum.

We took the turret valve apart to grind the valve and found that the threads on the body and bonnet of the valve are worn-out. We are making a tap for the body and a new bonnet and lead screw for the valve. Cost of material for this one repair is \$1,300. All of the super-heating elements were taken loose from the header, lapped in and reset, so we should not have any more leaks in the front end. We will need to purchase new tubing for the elements, they are starting to fail and I had to patch a couple of them while I had them loose. I have not

researched the cost of new tubes yet. I reset the studs that were leaking on the top of the boiler and I have started to install the jacket in the cab. I hope to have the jacket done in the cab by spring and if our next hydro shows that all is well I will jacket the exterior of the engine. I spent the rest of my time in September helping David Elems work on the radiator project on the SP 2873, and prepping the 165 for winter. We have a need for a new hydro pump and a circulatory pump for doing our test and inspections. Total cost for the pumps is around \$1,500.



*WP 165 catching the last sunshine Sunday with cloudy skies forecast for the next few days.*  
- Greg Elems 10/8/23

**Museum Sponsors**

The Western Pacific played a major role in developing the economy of Plumas County and the surrounding region. The Western Pacific Railroad Museum is proud to be a part of that heritage and to hold a position in supporting the ongoing economic health of our community. We welcome the support of that community in return. We ask our members and visitors to support our business sponsors, companies who have generously contributed to the museum and its mission to preserve the Western Pacific family.



**H & R Block - David Hansen**

2850 Main St Ste 7, Susanville, CA 96130  
Tel: 530-257-9339



If you have an e-mail address or an address change for the FRRS and WPRM we would like to have it for multiple reasons including news announcements, elections, Train Sheet delivery by e-mail and more. You may update your contact information here on the Membership page on the society website, [WPLives.org](http://WPLives.org). These are used exclusively for the FRRS and WPRM and will not be sold or given out.

### January, February, March 2024 Election Update

The 2024 Nominations were open from January 1, 2024, through January 31, 2024. Nominations were submitted to the 2024 Election Committee in writing as required and all processes and procedures were followed per the new FRRS Election Policy.

The FRRS 2024 Election nominations were closed and there were three (3) qualified incumbents, and a "White Ballot" was declared. They are current FRRS Board Members **Matt Elems (I)**, **Steve Habeck (I)**, and **Eugene Vicknair (I)**. There were no other nominations received. Postcards were not sent to the FRRS Membership due to the new Election Policy. The incumbent Nominees will be sworn into office in July 2024.

The Election Committee is also looking into possibly using a third-party online vendor to hold future Board Elections via this process. This is only preliminary now but the potential to save money and countless hours is present. Much additional research needs to be done though and many questions need to be asked and answered. If any members have any suggestions, please e-mail us with them to [election@wplives.org](mailto:election@wplives.org) for review.

Please be sure to read the Election Policy for additional details if you might be interested in running for the FRRS Board in the 2025 please refer to these on the FRRS website. If you have any questions about the election process, please feel free to address the Elections Committee at [election@wplives.org](mailto:election@wplives.org).

At this time, I would like to thank our Webmaster Paul Finnegan and the other Election Committee Members for their continued assistance in the election process. Please stay healthy and well.

*"Your 2024 Election Committee thanks you and is Proud to Serve the FRRS & WPRM."*

Sincerely,

Matthew S. Shuman - FL 1948 - Chair

Ann Morningstar - L 1967 - Co-Chair

Debbie Shuman - FL 1948 - Clerk/Catering Facilitator to the Election Committee

## Catch the Early Train!

*Get your Train Sheet by email and you will get it before the post office even receives it and it is in COLOR!  
(and you save the FRRS money too!)*

*Send an email requesting email delivery to [membership@wplives.org](mailto:membership@wplives.org) with your name and email address.*



## How I Joined the Operating Department

- Nicholas Manos

For some years, I had read about the Operating Department and thought about signing up to work the trains. I kept putting it off because I didn't think I had enough time to dedicate to it. I had read the service requirements, seen how many active people were already in the department and calculated that I might get the opportunity to be qualified in about 38 years. Thirty-five if I got lucky.



Then I left the 9 to 5 world. I had more freedom to direct my days at the same time I started to see the more frequent appeals for volunteers. I even heard there were some weekends the train didn't run at all due to lack of crew. I thought of the people who had run the trains for my family to ride all those years and knew I had a debt to repay. I signed up and scheduled myself for crew training, not really knowing what to expect.

Training day arrived and we met in the dining car. Training was led by Greg Elems, with the indoor component mostly reviewing safety procedures. I introduced myself to the gentleman sitting next to me, and he responded with his introduction as 'Steve Lee'. I immediately recognized the name as the operator of UP 844. I've chased that locomotive every time it came to California, what a coincidence I would end up seated next to the man who waved at us on his way through the crossing.

Once the indoor work was done, Greg directed us newbies outside for some ground work. The three of us were introduced to hand signals and coupling operations. We took several turns trying our luck while Ethan Doty patiently and safely ran the locomotive to support us. Greg was all business, as this was clearly his element. After observing my lack of technique for some time, he urged me to just relax. Perhaps he wasn't aware 130 tons of metal were rolling directly at me,

but I tried to at least *act* relaxed. We finished out the day learning how to board and exit the locomotive.

After training, I told my wife I had scheduled myself two weeks out. I would plan on once-a-month if it worked out, not really knowing what I had gotten myself into or whether it would be something I would enjoy. She said that was fine with her.

By the end of the season, I was working every weekend. My wife declared herself a train widow, or so I was told because I wasn't there to hear such complaints.

The oft-heard cliché is 'it gets in your blood'. I realized this hadn't just 'worked out', I was having a blast. My brother, a railroader who works for the UP, openly wondered if I had become a 'foamer'. I didn't care. The combination of the equipment, history, people and the continuous opportunity to learn is unbeatable.

I follow the viewpoint that hardship is disguised opportunity. The hardship, in this example, is the museum having fewer operations personnel than in years past. The opportunity is for those who wish to join operations, as you can now get just about all the student hours you would like to sign up for. I had plentiful opportunities for student hours and was able to qualify faster than I expected.

We welcome your help to keep these trains running. If you've been thinking about joining the Operating Department, now is the time to quit thinking about it and take the plunge. Don't worry if you have never worked in this environment before, as there are plenty of knowledgeable and helpful people here that want to see you succeed. The next crew training day is May 4<sup>th</sup>, 2024. Sign up at [https://wplives.org/register\\_for\\_crew\\_training.html](https://wplives.org/register_for_crew_training.html)

You just might end up enjoying the work as much as I do. If so, feel free to tell me in person. You'll be able to find me at the museum just about every weekend.

### 2024 Operating Department Crew Training

- Kerry Cochran  
General Superintendent

Crew training will be held on May 4<sup>th</sup>, 2024, starting at 10 a.m. at the museum. Please register for crew training and complete the online rules exam before attending the crew training day on the society's website. There may be another crew training day scheduled, if necessary, so please watch for any announcements.

I want to invite all FRRS members to become a member of the Operating Department and give us a hand operating the caboose trains at the museum for the general public. We also need crew year-round to move equipment at the museum for display and maintenance. Additionally we need crews for our Pumpkin Express and Santa Trains events.



I would also like to have all of the current Operating Department crew members check their calendars and see if they can volunteer at least one or two days a month during the 2024 operating season. "Many hands make light work" certainly applies to running our museum. By working together we can provide a safe, enjoyable experience for our guests and other members.

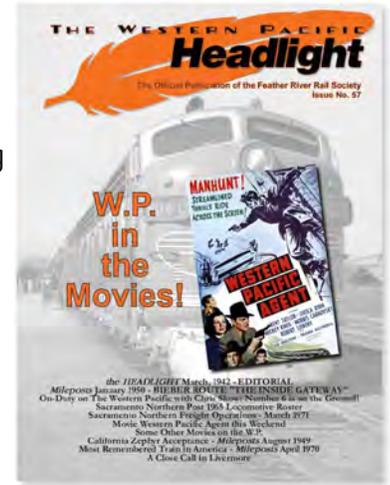
All of our time is valuable and I certainly appreciate all your help. However, we need to staff the caboose trains for our visiting public and we need to make sure that we can operate with a full crew each summer weekend.

There may be questions along the way so please send email to me at [operating\\_dept@wplives.org](mailto:operating_dept@wplives.org) and tell me what weekends you may be able to commit to volunteer. If you have any other comments, please tell me so I may be able to address them.

### THE WESTERN PACIFIC Headlight #57

- Paul Finnegan  
Acting Editor

Issue number 57 of THE WESTERN PACIFIC *Headlight* was released for printing and mailing on March 7, 2024. This issue is 44 pages long and has articles from Chris Skow, Eugene Vicknair, Jeff S. Asay, Darrol J. Stanley and Al Fonseca. It also has reprinted articles from the March 1942 issue of the *HEADLIGHT* and *Mileposts* from 1949, 1950 and 1970.



I want to highlight that there is a web page on the society website, [WPLives.org/headlight57](http://WPLives.org/headlight57), that has additional material on it related to the issue. In particular there is a link to a full-page view of the SN Train Sheet on page 16 of the issue that has very small print in the hard copy issue.

All FRRS members at active or above membership levels receive the publication by first-class mail. Additionally, back issues are available for purchase at the WPRM Museum Store, both at the museum and online.

New authors and material for our publication are always welcome. If you would like to join the "Willing People" that keep THE WESTERN PACIFIC *Headlight* on track don't hesitate to contact us by email at [headlight@WPLives.org](mailto:headlight@WPLives.org).



Shop at the Museum  
Store at the museum or  
online at:

[WPLives.org/shop](http://WPLives.org/shop)

(...**Open Up Those Cabs!** continued from page 1)

How many locomotives will be open? Well, that is up to you, the member volunteer. As mentioned earlier, we can't just open the cabs and hope for the best. We're looking for docents in every cab to interact with our visitors and answer their questions, as well as monitor the locomotives. You don't need to be in the Operating or Mechanical Department to participate. If you aren't familiar with a particular locomotive, we can provide the basic information (it's all there on the equipment roster.) We'd be thrilled to have your help both days, but extremely thankful for one if that works best for you.

We need to have three qualified Operating Department personnel to run the caboose train, but all volunteers beyond that can be locomotive docents. For example, if we have 5-7 additional volunteers, we can open at least five locomotives.



I know there are some kids out there, young and old alike, that would love to explore these locomotive cabs, taking turns imagining they were engineer in control of the train. Let's allow them more than just a look through the window.... I ask you to join me so we can open up those cabs!

If you are able to help, please email us at [volunteer@wplives.org](mailto:volunteer@wplives.org) with your name, which day(s) you can attend and a phone number so we can confirm your attendance prior to the event. Thank you so much for your consideration.

*Photos by the author.*

## Train Schedule Changes

- Nicholas Manos

We've made some changes to the schedules for both the caboose trains and the Run-A-Locomotive (RAL) program.

### Caboose Trains

The caboose trains will continue to run on Memorial Day, Labor Day and each Saturday and Sunday during the 2024 operating season (May 25 through September 2).

There will be three changes made to the caboose train departure schedule.

First, departures will start one half hour earlier at 11:00. This is an effort to offer a more attractive time for the significant number of customers who arrive at or near museum opening.

Second, the caboose schedule will now be the same for every operating day. There will no longer be a different schedule for Saturdays, Sundays or holidays. This change will remove one departure from Saturday and add one departure to Sunday, so there will be no change in the overall total of scheduled departures. The new departure schedule is as follows:

**11:00, 11:30, 12:00, 13:00, 13:30, 14:00**

- Same schedule Saturday, Sunday and holidays
- Beans to be called at the completion of the 12:00 run

The third change is procedural and impacts the 12:00 run. This single run will always be push-pull, even if there is a full crew and 'full operations' are in effect. The purpose of this change is to allow the crew more time for lunch. Even though the current schedule allows 30 minutes for lunch, in practice this time is rarely available without pushing the next departure back since the crew must return from lunch early to assemble and test the train.

It is expected that running push-pull will reduce the 12:00 run by 5-10 minutes. Leaving the locomotive attached to the train during lunch will result in a quicker recovery for the 13:00 run, saving another 5-10 minutes over current opera-

(...**Train Schedule Changes** continued from previous page)

tions. Combined, these time savings should allow all crew members a full 30 minutes for lunch.

#### **RAL Schedule**

Changes focus on consolidation and improving the compatibility of the RAL and caboose train schedules.

The existing 10:15 appointment had high usage, but its end time of 11:15 could result in delays to the first caboose train departure. Analysis showed little usage of the 09:00 appointment. The new schedule replaces both with a 09:30 start time, which should be more attractive and allow for a 30 minute gap between the RAL and the first caboose train departure. Minor overruns in this RAL slot should not cascade into multiple delays.

With the exception of Memorial Day and Labor Day, RALs will no longer be advertised for Monday or Tuesday. This will allow for a full museum closure of two days each week and should provide reliable days off for most museum staff and crew.

#### The new RAL schedule is as follows:

2024 RAL Season: May 25 to October 12  
Wednesdays, Thursdays and Fridays, all season

Available Appointments (5):  
09:30-10:30, 10:45-11:45, 12:00-13:00,  
13:30-14:30, 14:45-15:45

Saturdays and Sundays, May 25 through September 1

Available Appointments (3):  
09:30-10:30, 14:45-15:45, 16:00-17:00  
(this schedule is also used for Memorial Day and Labor Day)

Saturdays and Sundays, September 7 through October 12

Available Appointments (6):  
09:30-10:30, 10:45-11:45, 12:00-13:00,  
13:30-14:30, 14:45-15:45, 16:00-17:00

## **My First Locomotive Inspection**

- Nicholas Manos

I spent most of the 2023 operating season attempting to convince the Chief Mechanical Officer (CMO), David Elems, that I did indeed know which end of the wrench to use as a hammer. Finally, toward the end of the season, he relented and asked if I wanted to assist with an inspection of the WP 1503. I'm not sure if he needed help or just needed me to stop bugging him, but the result is the same either way.... Success!

Step one - wash the locomotive. David made a strange concoction of soap like products in the wash bucket and directed me to the top of the locomotive. He handed me a stick with a scrub brush on one end and we began the long effort of removing oil residue from all surfaces. A few hours later, we had the entire locomotive resembling clean. Imagine scrubbing a small house exterior.

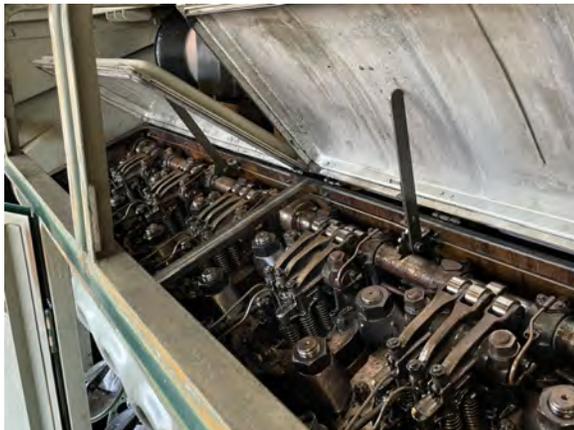
Next, we used the locomotive to do a bit of switching so we could place it in the shop over the pit. Once over the pit, we opened a number of hatches on the trucks and proceeded to inspect the traction motors, gearing and axles. We checked the supply cabling and the various oil routing hoses, along with the sanding system. Brakes were inspected all the way around. David added crater compound, a pre-sized pack of gear lubricant, to the motor-axle case before we replaced the hatches and finished the pit inspection.

We moved the locomotive out and performed some more switching to open up the other side of the shop, where we parked the locomotive. At this point, David brought out the vacuum and we proceeded to clean out the cab base of dirt and sand, along with several other portions of the locomotive. Once the vacuuming was complete, inspection was made of the cab electronics, where David found a damaged high voltage relay. Repairs were made and we moved onto the engine block.

Lots of cleaning was on tap for the engine block, too. We used solvents and rags to clean the ex-



terior of the block, as well as the interior surfaces of the air box. On a two-stroke supercharged diesel engine, the air intake is not just charged for compression, the pressure is also used to clear out the combustion gasses from the power stroke. This process isn't completely smooth, so some of those combustion products end up flowing back into the air box and it makes for quite a mess.



We then removed all the inspection covers in the engine block and opened up the top deck. Inspections were performed on camshaft lobes, rocker arms, valves, injectors, various bolt and nut torque, coolant pipes and connections, piston skirts, piston rings, connecting rods, oil passages, oil lines and various bearings. It was gearhead heaven, at least until it was time to replace all the covers and clean everything again.

We changed all the disposable air, fuel and oil filter elements on the locomotive. We topped off the oil, which was a new thing for me because I had never 'added' oil from a pallet of 55 gallon drums moved in by forklift. At full capacity, this beast requires 165 gallons of lube oil.

Inspections were conducted on the main and auxiliary generators to verify brush condition and wear transfer patterns. The batteries were serviced with water and then charged to capacity.

There were several other inspections and tests performed, in addition to a number of runs to perform some tests under load, but that should provide a general idea of the amount of work that goes into a yearly inspection for these locomotives.

This process took us just over a week, which included a lot of explanation from David as he trained me on these tasks. We also made a number of repairs along the way, including adjustment of the rear cab door so it shuts without slamming, replacement of the sticking isolation switch and replacing the engine lube oil pressure gauge with a model that accurately indicates the oil pressure at all RPMs.

I used a few early mornings to troubleshoot an issue the locomotive had with its rear headlights. I know how to read electrical schematics, but I quickly found out that didn't mean I knew how to read railroad electrical schematics. After a few hours and some experimenting with the voltmeter I had things under reasonable control. The problems were identified, repair and replacement made and the headlights now burn your hat as you enter or exit the cab. I haven't timed the duration until actual hat combustion, but I believe it is well within factory specification.

I wasn't so fortunate at repairing the broken speed indicator. That system remains filled with mystery and will require some repeat visits. In addition, we still have a leaky but serviceable brake cylinder on the rear truck to rebuild and David found the cooling fan shaft bearing is... well the race seems to rotate more readily than the bearing itself. Not ideal. We have a few other small inspections and adjustments to perform that we weren't able to get to during our last session, but we will be back at it soon.

Things are looking good for the WP 1503.

Historical/Archive Department News - Q1 2024

- Kerry Cochran  
Archive Manager

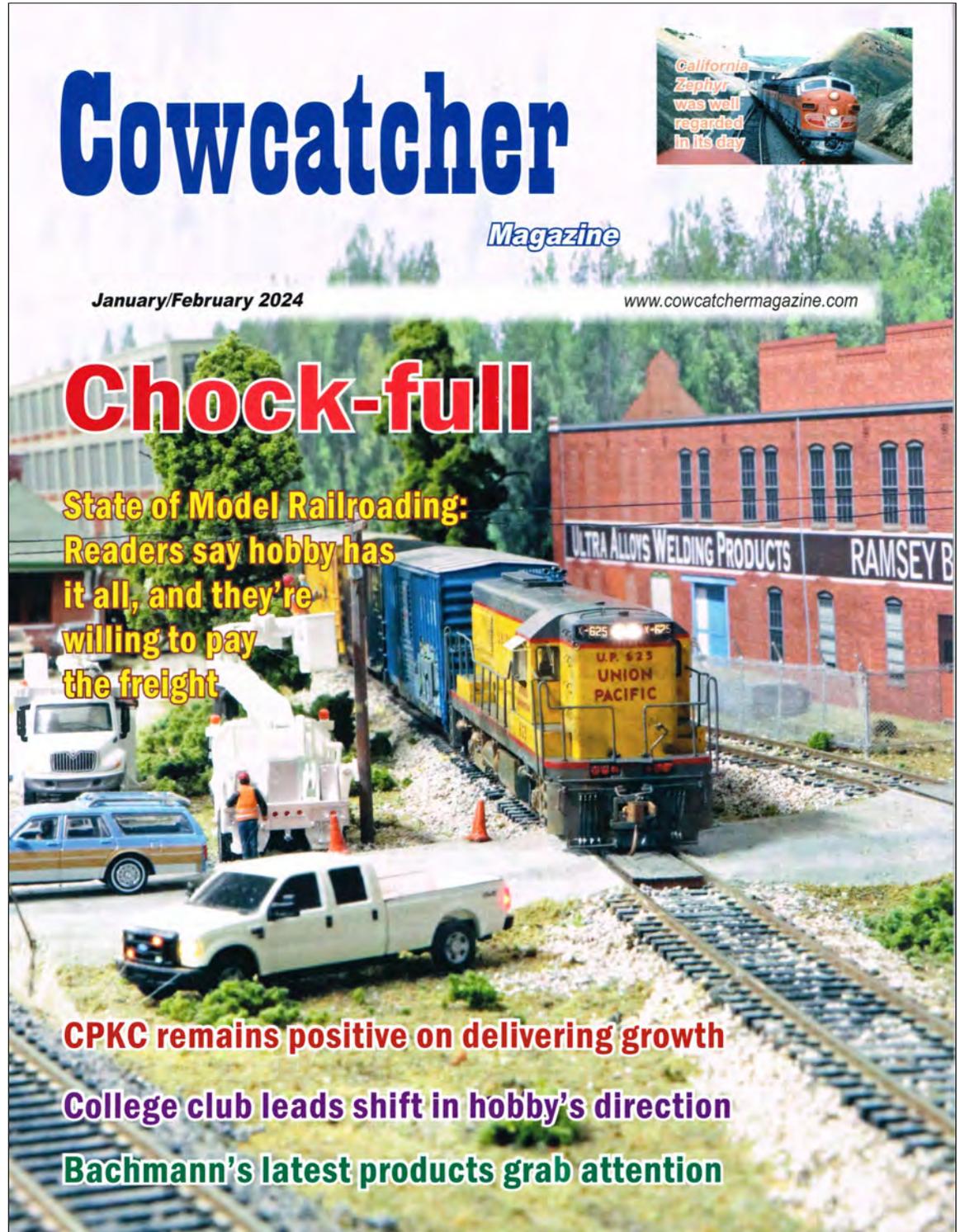
FRRS/WPRM Archives in action, the department helps out another magazine.

In mid-November 2023 the archive department was contacted by Patrick Hiatte of the Cowcatcher magazine on an upcoming article to feature the California Zephyr and specifically on the Western Pacific.

During our email exchanges he was looking for images to illustrate the article and those from John Endler's trip in 1953.

I pointed him to our website and the archive department section and the collection of photos we had. He came back to me with a selection of four photos that he felt would be good for the article and with our webmaster Paul Finnegan's help we set up a download of the photos for him.

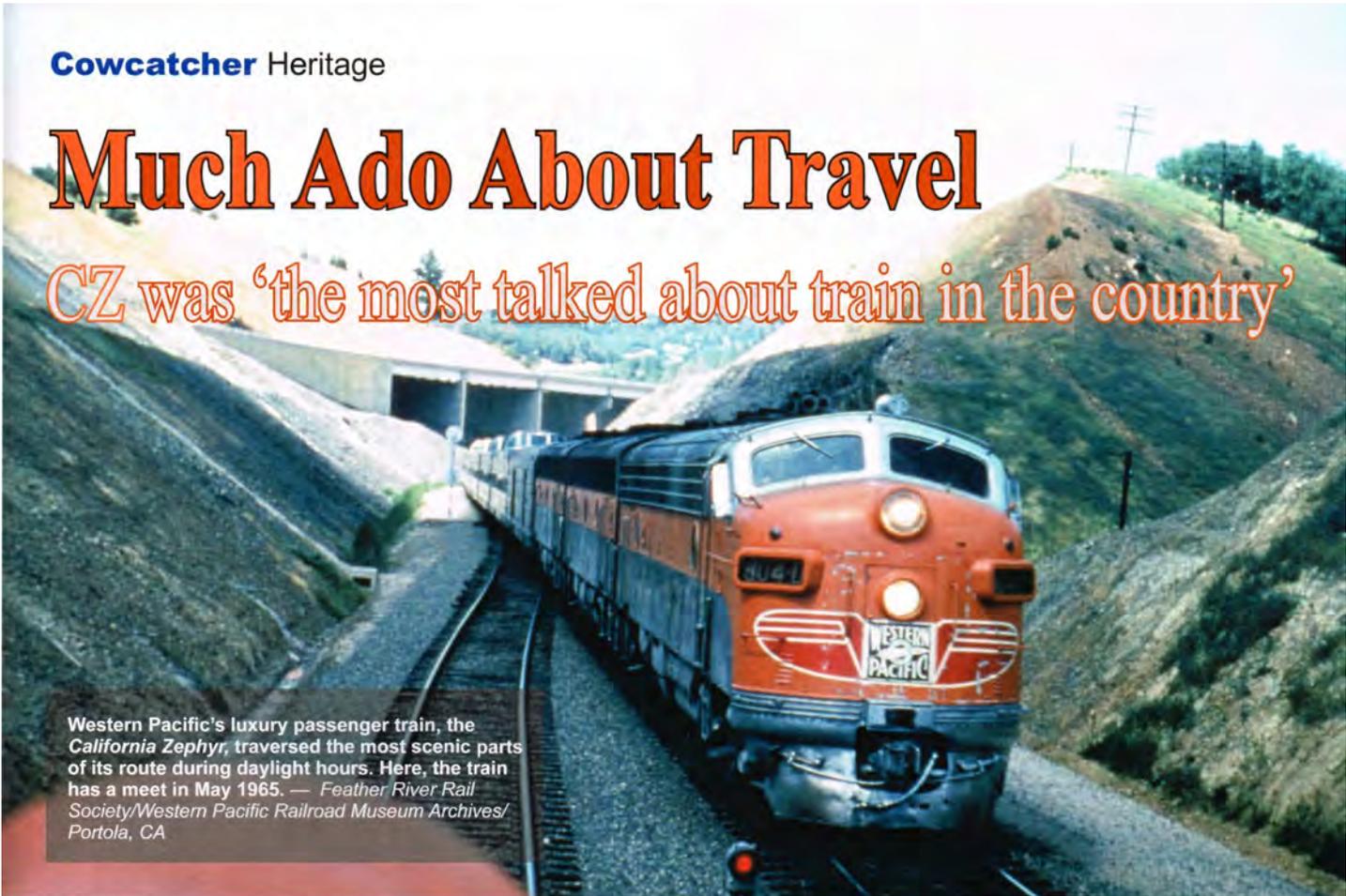
The results are in the January/February 2024 issue of the Cowcatcher magazine.



Cowcatcher Heritage

# Much Ado About Travel

*CZ was 'the most talked about train in the country'*



Western Pacific's luxury passenger train, the *California Zephyr*, traversed the most scenic parts of its route during daylight hours. Here, the train has a meet in May 1965. — Feather River Rail Society/Western Pacific Railroad Museum Archives/Portola, CA

By PAT HIATTE  
Cowcatcher Magazine

*Another in a series of journeys that Pat Hiatte is taking on famous trains during the heyday of passenger rail.*

Our next trip begins on salt water, from the historic, and aptly named, Ferry Building in downtown San Francisco aboard a Southern Pacific ferry for a 20-minute voyage to Oakland Pier. Awaiting us there are the 11 gleaming stainless-steel cars of the *California Zephyr*, according to its publicists “the most talked-about train in the country.”

There are quicker ways to get from San Francisco to Chicago (although we're only going as far as Salt Lake City): on the Santa Fe's *Grand Canyon* or the Southern Pacific/Union Pacific/Chicago & North Western's *City of San Francisco*. The *CZ*'s schedule, however, has been designed so the train traverses the most scenic parts of its route during daylight hours.

Pulled on the Western Pacific by an A-B-B set of F3 diesels, our train has its usual consist: a baggage-express car, three dome coaches, a diner and a dome buffet-

lounge, four sleepers and the icing on the cake, a dome observation-lounge. All cars bear the name *California Zephyr* on their letterboards, and smaller initials represent the three *CZ* partners: WP, Denver & Rio Grande Western and Burlington Route.

All space, including coaches, is reserved, although there's no extra fare. The 125 dome seats are not reserved and are available to all passengers, with the exception of the buffet-lounge and observation-lounge domes, which are for sleeping car passengers only. Around 80

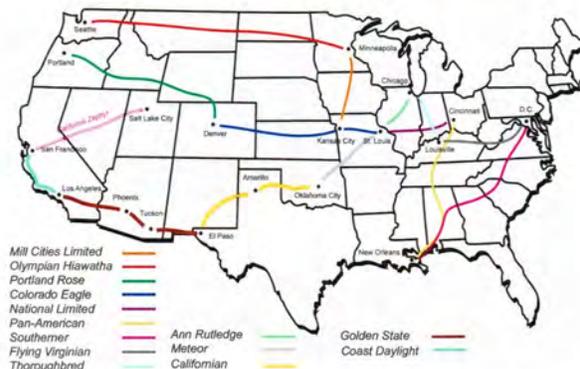
percent of the available space is reserved, although the train often sells out.

As befits a luxury cruise train, the Burlington warns sternly that “banana messenger, [livestock] caretaker and circus tickets not honored” on the *CZ*. We, however, have booked a snug roomette. The train also offers open sections, double bedrooms and one drawing room, as well as chair cars.

As we board, we're greeted by our Pullman porter and a welcoming Zephyrette, a combination nurse, social director, tour guide and all-purpose assistant to passengers and train crew alike. We're settling into our roomette as the train pulls out on time at 9:30 a.m.

The *CZ* continues a joint venture among the three railroads see WP, p. 47

The Golden Age of Passenger Travel



The routes of Pat Hiatte's Golden Age of Passenger Travel series, which has made 12 stops so far across the U.S.

**WP**

that began in 1939 with the *Exposition Flyer*, a heavyweight steam train that originated to tap the passenger traffic generated by the Golden Gate International Exposition in San Francisco. The train's scenic route proved so popular that it was continued after the exposition ended in 1940.

With the onset of the streamliner era after World War II, the *Exposition Flyer* partners ordered six train sets worth of equipment from the Budd Co. Included were 30 Vista-Domes, an amenity heavily promoted by the CZ partners before and after the new train made its debut with an eastbound run March 20, 1949.

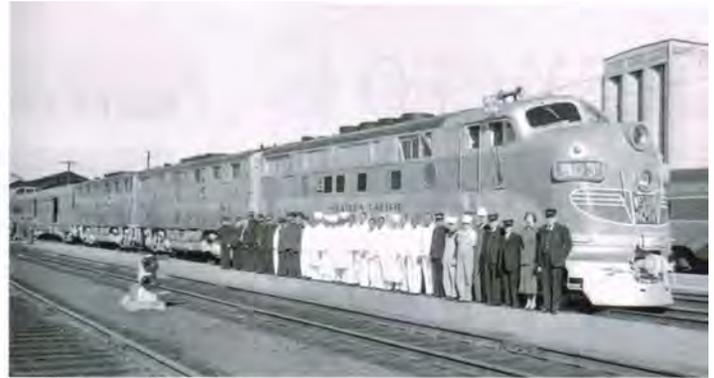
After stops at WP's main Oakland station at 3rd and Washington streets, and at Stockton, we're off nonstop through the flatlands of the San Joaquin and Sacramento valleys at a 70-mph clip. Enjoying lunch in the diner, we find ourselves sharing a table with a fellow traveler who's on the through

sleeper between Oakland and New York.

Meeting our westbound counterpart *California Zephyr* at South Sacramento (both trains are on time, of course), we pause at California's capital city and again at Marysville. Leaving Marysville, we make our way to one of the Vista-Dome seats for the scenic highlight of the Western Pacific, the Feather River Canyon.

Oroville, 200 miles east of Oakland, marks the western entrance to the canyon. A center not only of gold mining back in the day but also of agriculture, Oroville (Gold City in Spanish) is home to the "Mother Orange Tree," which, legend has it, grew from three seeds planted in 1856. All through the canyon we'll be climbing steadily, more than 4,600 feet by the time we reach Portola 118 miles away.

The scenery and engineering feats of the Feather River Canyon include some signature scenes. At Two Bridges near Tobin, the WP bridge towers high above the California Highway 70 bridge; locals say it's good luck if a train passes overhead while you're



**Crew on the California Zephyr's first run in March 1949 pose next to the train.** — Feather River Rail Society/Western Pacific Railroad Museum Archives/Portola, CA

crossing the highway bridge.

A few miles on, the famous Keddie Wye spans Spanish Creek. We emerge from a short tunnel and immediately cross onto a steel bridge. On the bridge a turnout on our left leads to WP's Inside Gateway line to Bieber, Calif., and a Great Northern Railway connection. The golden spike that completed the WP was driven on this bridge in 1909.

Fifteen miles beyond Keddie the WP crosses over itself on the Williams Loop, built to keep the eastbound grade to 1 percent. While not as well-known as the Tehachapi Loop farther south, Williams is arguably more scenic, surrounded by forests of pine and spruce and with Estray Creek running through the middle.

Our eyes are tired and we have long since run out of film by the time we reach the eastern end of the canyon at Portola, railroad division point and lumbering center, at 5:27 p.m. Our crossing of the summit of the Sierra Nevada at Chilcoot Tunnel under Beckwourth Pass finds us in the buffet-lounge enjoying a cocktail or two as we cross into Nevada before our 7 p.m. dinner seating.

Targeted at coach passengers, earlier seatings offer a full meal at the budget price of \$1.10; those, like the others for dinner, are reserved by the Zephyrette on one of her frequent passes through the train. Although we're seated at a table with others, the CZ has seen to it that they're also first-class (sleeping car) passengers.

Admiring the Colorado carnations gracing the table, we peruse the menu. The braised sweetbreads sound interesting, but we settle on a CZ specialty, the Native Rocky Mountain Trout, with Banana Blanc Mange

for dessert. Dinner sets us back \$3.30 but includes soup, entrée, vegetable, potatoes, dessert and beverage.

While at dinner, we meet the westbound *Royal Gorge*, WP's only other passenger train on this route. Although grandly named and designated Train No. 1, the *Royal Gorge* is another failed attempt by WP to field a secondary passenger train. Intended primarily to move company employees and supplies, the *Royal Gorge* lasted less than a year, replaced by a Budd Rail Diesel Car and renamed *Zephyrette*.

Comfortably full after dinner, we're soon back in a Vista-Dome for the 9:12 p.m. stop at Winnemucca. From Weso, four miles east, both WP and Southern Pacific eastbound trains use WP trackage, while westbound trains use the SP. It's just after midnight when we exit the paired trackage at Alazon, almost 180 miles east of Weso.

By that time we're sound asleep in our roomette, while our *Zephyr* breezes across the deserts of Nevada and Utah. Our porter wakes us at Garfield, Utah; just time to shave, dress and pack before we leave our train – and the Western Pacific – at Salt Lake City Union Depot, where we've arrived on time at 4:20 a.m. Pacific time.

As the brochure says, there was indeed "Something to See on the W.P."

*Editor's Note: Amtrak's California Zephyr still plies the rails between Chicago and San Francisco but uses former SP trackage west of Salt Lake City. Next, we begin our journey across the middle U.S. towards the East Coast.*

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*Nicholas Manos and David Elems giving WP 1503 a thorough cleaning during its annual inspection 9/8/23.*

*- Photo by Kerry Cochran*