



THE MANIFEST

NEWSLETTER OF THE SOUTHERN OREGON CHAPTER, NRHS – JANUARY 2008

MEMO FROM THE PRESIDENT If you have ten people assigned a given task Murphy's Law guarantees you will have ten different solutions to complete that task, hence nothing ever gets accomplished. Since everyone wants to lead instead of follow directions, your project is usually doomed from the start.

The last two weekends of December our club came together to dismantle, transport and store the old Howard house and we were quite successful. Yes, we had an occasional debate on the best way to accomplish this task, but for the most part our club members stepped forward recognized the great opportunity, the limited time frame, pulled together and got the job done. Everyone worked extremely hard and I dare say even had some **FUN** pulling this rabbit out of our hat. Some of our "Type A" personalities yielded to different ideas and some of our less confrontational members let fly on some good ideas (remember the best leaders are the listeners, not the talkers). Working together can be rewarding, and when we do we can get a lot accomplished.

This concept is one that I guarantee we will continue and I will be sure to promote as our membership increases and we take on even bigger more extensive projects. Everyone should be forewarned so long as you keep electing me president I only have one goal. That goal is to be the largest, most dynamic, public interactive, and enjoyable NRHS chapter in the country. (Sorry I guess that's four goals.) Hands on history are the future, the groups that recognize this will survive. The ones that don't will not.

ANOTHER LOSS FROM OUR RANKS The last three months of 2007 have been very sad months indeed. In October we lost Gary Nelson and in November we lost Mack Walch. On December 13th we lost long time member Harold "Ken" Turner of Medford at age 80. Ken had been in poor health for the last several years and was recently residing in a nursing home in Ashland.

Ken was born on May 18, 1927, in Ft. Supply, Oklahoma. His wife, Nancy Nichols, who he married in 1949 in Portland, preceded him in death.

Ken served on the *U.S.S. ALMAACK* – an attack cargo ship – in Subic Bay with the U.S. Navy during World War II. He received the Asiatic Pacific Campaign Medal and the Philippine Liberation Medal. He moved to Medford in 1968.

Ken was the Southern Oregon Apprenticeship Training Coordinator for the State of Oregon. Besides being a member of our chapter Ken was a member of the Eagles, the Southern Oregon Live Steamers, Disabled American Veterans, V.F.W., and American Legion. His hobbies included fishing and railroading.

Survivors include three daughters, two sisters, five grandchildren, and several great-grandchildren. In addition to his wife of 52 years, Nancy, he was preceded in death by a son-in-law Bruce Jones; a brother; and his parents.

Ken was soft spoken, always had kind words and a smile on his face. Ken served as this chapter's president for ten years, from 1987 to 1996. For many years after that Ken also served as chapter National Director until poor health limited his chapter activities. Whenever he could Ken would attend railroad conventions and ride the many special train excursions across the country.

Ken was a fan of “anything railroads” and this editor and Ken had quite a few long discussions about many railroad topics. Ken was also on hand assisting members when our chapter first began the restoration of our Medco No. 4 steam locomotive. When Ken could no longer make chapter meetings, every so often I would make Ken a videotape showing our chapter’s restoration progress or the running of our Medford No. 8 diesel locomotive. Ken loved watching railroad videos and over the last few years he donated over sixty professional videotapes to this chapter. When this chapter has our own building to store its collection of railroad artifacts, we could open a wing with just Ken’s collection.

He was a wonderful friend and we’ll miss him dearly.

THE ELECTION OF OFFICERS As required in chapter by-laws we held an election for the five elected officer positions. At the December 11th meeting Steve Bruff withdrew his nomination for the position of Vice-President. Being there were no new nominations from the floor the five elected positions for 2007 will again serve in the same capacity for 2008. They are:

- **President – Rick Walch**
- **Vice-President – E. Don Pettit**
- **Secretary – Rick Aubin**
- **Treasurer – Jerry Hellinga**
- **National Director – Bruce McGarvey**

As required in our by-laws these people will assume these positions at the general membership meeting in January, which will be on Tuesday, January 8th. Upon resuming these positions the officers will next look at filling the appointed positions of Director of Public Relations, Chief Mechanical Officer, Activities Director, Membership Director, and Newsletter Editor/Historian.

After the election we discussed several topics and concluded the evening by watching the new DVD on Southern Pacific’s cab forward steam locomotives.

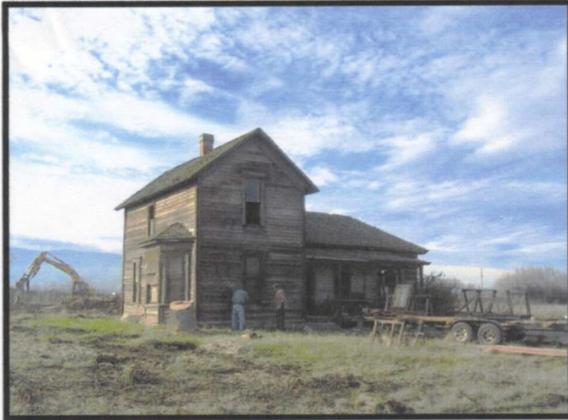
For the evening’s entertainment at the upcoming January 8 general membership meeting we’ll watch one of the videotapes donated by John Bergman to the chapter last month. The tape is *Tales From the Desert: The Great Desert Railroad*. This 51-minute film recounts the battle between rail tycoons William Andrews Clark (Las Vegas & Tonopah RR) and Francis Marion Smith (Tonopah & Tidewater RR) as they began building their railroads across parts of California & Nevada in 1905.

The film producer includes never before seen railroad footage, still photographs, and accurate steam train re-enactments. Until viewing this video this editor never thought he would ever see historic film footage of the Tonopah & Tidewater and Death Valley Railroad’s “Baby Gauge Railroad”, but this video has it. We hope you can make the meeting for an evening on fellowship and fun.

MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL INFORMATION Just a reminder that if you have not paid your 2008 membership renewals, they are now due. Everyone should have received a notice from NRHS by this time and if you have not paid your dues, you will be receiving another reminder notice around the middle of January (according to NRHS). Your help in getting everyone paid and current is appreciated. If you have any questions please contact me at 779-4259 or 890-2546, or you can e-mail me at NancyJ1209@charter.net – Nancy Aubin

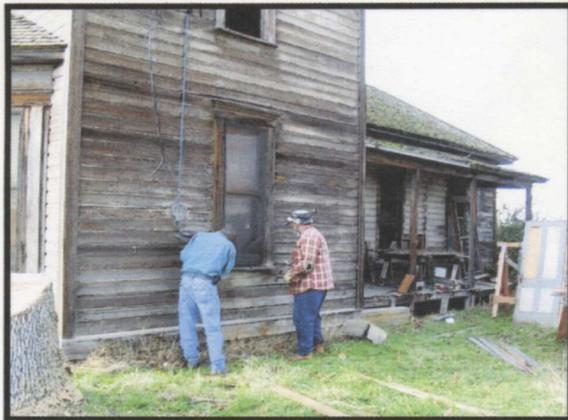
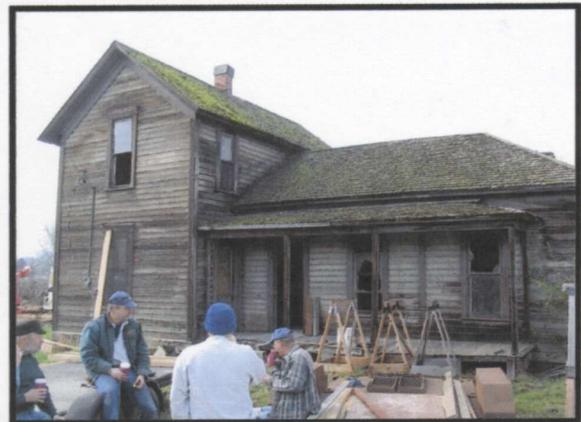
THIS OLD HOUSE No, this is not referring to the popular television show, but to an old house in Medford. This chapter has several future restoration projects that will involve the need of many, many board feet of lumber. A few of these projects will be best served if we are able to find a nice supply of old tongue and groove boards, wainscoting, window frames, door frames, exterior siding and more. For several years the old Howard house on Ross Lane in Medford has been unoccupied and the property sold to developers. During the last year or so Bruce McGarvey, Steve Bruff, Jerry Hellinga, Rick Aubin and Ric Walch have examined the 117-year old house to see if any of the old wood could meet our needs. They agreed there was a lot there that would be of value to the chapter.

Our drive over the last two years to obtain old, authentic materials for the purpose of helping to restore our 1941 Great Northern Railway caboos, to help restore the 1880’s Woodville (later, town of Rogue River) railroad depot and restoration of the cab wood parts on our Willamette side-g geared locomotive has resulted in our collecting wood from our obtaining the existing parts of the depot, from



Located near the intersection of Ross Lane and Rossanley Drive is the old Howard House. Built in 1890 it has been empty for several years and the property sold to developers. In this view you are looking at the front and one side of the structure.

Before we get serious and dive into the project we first dive into coffee and donuts. From left is Jerry Hellinga, Mike Benke, Tony Johnson (back to camera) and Steve Bruff. The bedroom floors upstairs provided us an excellent selection of very long tongue & groove wood.



Bruce McGarvery (left) and John Powell (right) are removing the frame around one of the front windows. A few moments later they will begin removing the exterior wall siding that we will later use in restoring the old Woodville depot.

Dan Wilkinson (left) and Art Turner (right) are shown here removing one of the long boards holding the wall siding. Some of the siding has already been removed and soon another layer of scaffolding will allow them to reach to the roof.



salvaging siding from an old house in White City (two months ago thanks to Rick Korner) and extensive salvage of a good portion of the Howard House in Medford this month.

This year Ric Walch spent quite a bit of effort making contacts for permission to remove old wood, and during the December chapter meeting he announced that it looked like we had permission. However, we needed clarification of what was expected of the chapter before we would say yes. We needed answers to the following:

- Are we allowed to take only what we need? At one time we were hearing that we would have to take down the entire house; a situation we couldn't undertake.
- How much time do we have? If we have too little time, it might be difficult finding enough volunteers to get the job done.

The next day Ric learned we could take what we want and we didn't have to remove the whole structure. We had until December 27th to take what we wanted and whatever was left would be bulldozed. The developer wanted to have as much as possible gone by the end of the year because he wants to have the house off the tax rolls by then. We were allowed to continue working on it after the January 1st, except enough has to be gone by then to have it considered demolished.

The Howard house is a two-story, 1,116 sq ft house, built in 1890! Now that we had permission, we needed a plan of what we should try to salvage first. Steve came up with the following plan and outlined the potential use of the materials.

"We definitely want to get as much of the usable wood as possible within the time that we have. The 1x4 tongue and groove (T&G) clear vertical grain Douglas fir is what is needed for the Great Northern caboose and the OC&E caboose (interior). There is considerable 1x4 available. The second story of the house is two bedrooms; the floors of which are this material and the floor boards are in good shape. All rooms downstairs with the exception of the kitchen are also floored with the T&G. This T&G is predominately-long boards; just right for the sides of cabooses. However, the main living room floorboards are badly worn from 100 plus years of traffic and they will be considered for removal only as a last task if time permits. This building is now 117 years old. There are some 2x4's available as Rick pointed out...they are suitable for the depot.

"We want the siding from the north and east exterior walls. The south and west walls are so weather-beaten that the boards are useless. Ric, you and anyone else interested in the eventual erection of the Depot should look at the north and east wallboards to see if in fact they will be satisfactory. I do not consider myself the person who knows what quality is needed for the depot work. They are in "pretty good shape" but are weathered to a certain extent. If there is thought that boards used on the depot construction must be close to "new" or "very good shape", then these boards may not qualify. These boards are definitely in much better shape than the boards we got with the rest of the depot lumber from Rogue River.

"The third item to remove is 1x12 and 1x10 cedar boards that were used as wall underlayment in some of the rooms. (Some other rooms are the old lath and plaster, and have no value to us.) Some of these boards are clear; some are obviously No. 2 or No.3. All should be removed within boundaries of safety. The ceiling boards, also covered with rotting, old style wallpaper, are similar and would be subject to our removal depending on time available and safety.

"A fourth class of boards to remove is all of the boards which trim (inside) the windows and doors. These are 1x6 and 1x8 boards, painted, but obviously clear lumber. Easy to remove.

"A fifth class of materials is the extensive wainscoting which is around the large living room and around the kitchen. This is 1x4 tongue and groove as before, painted (but paint not thick), 36" high and in great shape. The very limited amount of wainscoting we got with the depot lumber is in tough shape and we will probably end up throwing it away. If our group considers the Howard house wainscoting as suitable for the depot, then removal will be easy. In any event, removal should be considered even if not used by us as is can be sold to others who are doing building restorations.

"The last class of materials to be considered is the window frames. Most of the glass is broken out. The frames are in fairly good shape (outside) and good shape (inside). They are not suitable or needed for the depot as far as I know. However, these window frames and doors may be items to sell on the market or perhaps sell to Morrow's used building materials.

"Between all of us we have the tools necessary to do this work. We have the available scaffolding for removing the upper exterior wall siding. As floors are removed we will have to put down temporary sub-



This view is of the floor in one of the upstairs bedrooms. After so many decades of use the tongue and groove boards are in wonderful condition. Due to time constraints the easiest method for removal was to use a chain saw to cut an edge along the wall and then remove the boards one at a time.

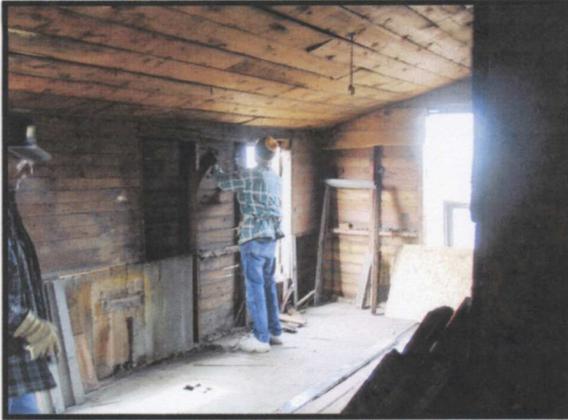
Jerry Hellinga is taking a short break after removing many of the long tongue and groove flooring. The floor joists underneath are full dimension lumber and in excellent shape. We removed all of these and, as you can see behind Jerry, quite a bit of the wall boards.



At first we weren't thinking of saving the well worn downstairs flooring, but the underside was like new and we can use it on our Great Northern caboose by having the good side facing outward. The small hole at the extreme left is over a brick-lined well.

This view shows how easily we were able to remove the flooring. All the boards were held in place with square nails and some were nearly 14 feet in length. We removed all nails from all the wood before sorting and stacking.





Mike Benke is busy removing boards from one of the upstairs bedrooms as Steve Bruff removes those boards already saved. Every room of the house provided us with a rich treasure of fine old wood we can use in our future restoration projects. — Rick Aubin photo

One thing we decided from the beginning was to carefully sort and stack the wood on our trailers for storage. Here is Steve Bruff placing siding on sawhorses to remove the nails before bringing them to the trailers. — Rick Aubin photo



Ric Walch carefully sorts and stacks the wood on the 25-foot long trailer lent to us by Medford Fabrication. The tall stack is the large supply of wainscoting we removed from along the kitchen walls. — Rick Aubin photo

This is how the house looked on the day after Christmas. Even though we removed so much of the internal structural integrity it took quite a bit of effort with Jerry's tractor to pull the house to the ground. Job complete and very successful. — Rick Aubin photo



flooring to stand on...we can use our available OSB, etc. The upstairs boards can be taken down and then slid out the upstairs windows to the ground. A work table at ground level can be used to remove nails.”

In addition to the above there was discussion about salvaging large dimensional lumber, such as 2x6's, 2x8's, and even 3x8's. Bruce and Steve discussed getting wall studs and perhaps floor joists and said we want as much of that material as can be had.

Concerning removal of studs, joists and rafters: “We felt that that will be on a case by case basis and the overall consideration will be safety. As you know, removing structural members such as joists, studs, etc., weakens a building, so, a case by case basis is the way to go.

Now that we had a workable plan, Ric Walch was granted permission from Medford Fabrication to use their long, 25-foot steel trailer to load and transport our wood from the job site to the Medford Railroad Park. This low trailer was perfect as it allowed us to stack and sort most of our wood separately for easy unloading with the chapter forklift. Any time you can eliminate extra unloading and sorting, you take advantage of it.

Phone calls and e-mail messages were sent and we quickly had pledges of help from Ric Walch, Steve Bruff, Rick and Nancy Aubin, Dan Wilkinson, Jerry Hellinga, Bruce McGarvey, Mike Benke, Tony Johnson, Art McKee, John Powell, Art Turner, Landon Humprey, Wayne Luckinbill, Suzie Turner, David Turner, and Bud Tripett. (I hope I didn't miss anyone.)

By 9:00am on December 14, five members – after coffee and donuts - began working on the cedar boards, wainscoting and tongue and groove flooring. A few more people showed up an hour later and by the end of the first day the flooring and cedar boards were removed from the two upstairs bedrooms, plus all the wainscoting from the kitchen, and other wallboards. We removed all the nails –and most of them were square nails - prior to stacking on the trailer.

By the end of the second day, the flooring was removed from one of the downstairs rooms and we removed the external wall siding on the East side. Most of the doors and doorframes also were removed. We were making great progress and the local media soon came on the scene.

On Monday, Dec17, we made the local news on Channel 10. The camera showed Bruce McGarvey and Steve Bruff removing exterior wall siding, and the reporter interviewed Ric Walch. He did great! The *MAIL TRIBUNE* ran a special article in the following Sunday paper.

During the following week chapter volunteers removed so much siding and dimensional lumber that by Christmas Day the house was ready for demolition. Despite the considerable amount of materials removed from the building, it took a fair amount of time using Jerry's tractor to pull out the underpinnings and bring the building to the ground. In the end we had a 25-foot trailer stacked high with salvaged wood, plus our chapter 5-ton flatbed truck and Jerry Hellinga's long steel trailer were also loaded.

These materials, plus other materials located in several places at Railroad Park, needed to be combined and an extensive sorting and de-nailing process completed to get all of the wood together and into palletized units for storage. The next obstacle was where and how are we going to store all the old wood.

Ric Walch obtained permission from the owner of the old Burrell lumber company in White City to store our wood under cover in one of the old dry kilns on the property. Ric also obtained permission from the owner of Medford Fabrication to use a large empty, heated building for a couple of days to complete this work. The industrious work of members Ric Walch, Jerry Hellinga, Rick Aubin, Mike Benke, Steve Bruff, Dan Wilkinson, John Powell, Wayne Luckinbill and Art Turner finished this extensive project by the end of Saturday. We now have a considerable supply of flooring, siding, dimension lumber, beams and planks for use on the planned projects in the future. This supply of period lumber amounts to many thousands of dollars worth of wood and, thanks to Ric, we were able to complete the sorting and palletizing work in a nice, warm building.

To sum it up, the time we spent removing the old wood will save us many thousands of dollars when we begin rebuilding the old Woodville depot, our Burlington Northern (ex-Great Northern) wooden caboose, and the interior of the cab to Medco No. 4. Great job, everybody.

INTERPRETIVE HANDCAR PROJECT Our chapter's new “Interpretive Handcar” received a lot of attention during the 30th Annual Rogue Valley Railroad Show on Thanksgiving weekend. The handcar is back on the handcar/motorcar track at the Railroad Park and stored for the winter. Brian Frasier – a

member of the Southern Oregon Live Steamers – needed a community project as part of his requirement in becoming an Eagle Scout and Ric suggested helping our chapter. Ric has been coaching Brian on how best to construct a new loading/unloading platform for the handcar and motorcar. We want to have it ready in time for opening day in April. It should be ready in time.

OTHER PARK NEWS Too often overlooked is the “behind the scenes” activity that takes place when the Railroad Park is closed to the public. By far the biggest project is trimming branches and gathering tons of leaves all around the park so our Railroad Park looks well maintained and attractive. For two decades, this work has been spotty at best until the last few years when more effort was needed. Last year Jerry Hellinga and I did the bulk of gathering leaves and trimming branches. The result was an estimated nine tons of debris hauled away in Jerry’s dump trailer.

Even though our Railroad Park is technically a city park, the City of Medford only maintains the parking lot and picnic area outside the main gate, as well as along the fence line paralleling the hiking path. There have been times when the City would vacuum leaves with one of their “Billy Goats” if we had them piled in an accessible location. One year they could not spare the personnel to help us with the leaves, but they did let us use one of their “Billy Goats” to vacuum the leaves into one of their trucks. Last year the City could not spare the equipment or the personnel, so Jerry and I had our work cut out as we resorted to loading with pitchforks and shovels.

Well, this year Jerry said enough is enough and purchased a very large leaf vacuum for use at his home (Jerry has a lot of leaves) and for use at the Park. Jerry’s “Billy Goat” is one powerful machine. I think it will suck up pets and small children! What a time saver his machine is to us. Jerry estimates it takes us about eight hours to hand shovel and tamp down leaves into his tall dump trailer. With piles of leaves ready to go to where Jerry can back up his trailer, it now takes about one hour to mulch and load the trailer – and it carries more now! There remain a few places around the park Jerry cannot reach with his machine however, already he has saved us about 80-100 hours of work. Thank you, Jerry!

NEWEST DONATIONS Our chapter’s collection of professionally produced videotapes grew larger because of the generous donation from my old friend John Bergman of Visalia, CA. John is a historian and author of several publications, including *History of the Sunset Railway*. Here is a list of what John donated in December. Thank you for your wonderful donation John.

- *A Great Railroad at Work – The New York, New Haven & Hartford Railroad* (Pentrex)
- *Workin’ on the Railroad* (Pentrex). A great video featuring new track laying machinery, undercutting machines that clean ballast, plus a Norfolk Southern dispatch center. (2 copies)
- *Movin’ On* (Pentrex) The story of building the first transcontinental railroad. (3 copies)
- *Riding the Pacific Electric to San Bernardino* (Pentrex)
- *California Electric Trilogy – Key System, Sacramento Northern & Pacific Electric* (Pentrex)
- *Steam Across America – Vol. II – The West* (Pentrex)
- *Railfanning Southern California in the 1950s*. (Pentrex) 2 copies
- *Gerald M. Best’s 1927 Steam Odyssey – Camelback Country* (Rail Premier Video) 2 copies
- *Love Those Trains* (National Geographic Video)
- *Last Run of a Cab Forward Over Donner Pass* (Video Rails)
- *Tales From the Desert: The Great Desert Railroad Race* (Cold Creek Films)
- *The Iron Road – The Story of America’s First Transcontinental Railroad* (The American Experience series)
- *Streamliners – America’s Lost Trains* (The American Experience series)
- *The Wonderful Interurban Films Time Machine*(Interurban Films)
- *Train Wrecks, Crashes & Disasters: Vol. I 1934-1955* (Pentrex)
- *This is My Railroad – Southern Pacific Diesel Version* (Pentrex)
- *Scenic Rail Journeys of the Americas: The Alaska Railroad* (Reader’s Digest Video)
- *Scenic Rail Journeys of the Americas: The Canadian Rockies & The Adirondack*
- *Scenic Rail Journeys of the Americas: The Copper Canyon & The Coast Starlight*
- *Fields of Gold* (California Dept. of Food and Agriculture)

SHARING THE WEALTH In addition to serving as a chapter officer, Bruce McGarvey is also the treasurer for the annual Rogue Valley Railroad Show. On December 30th Bruce announced the share of show earnings to each of the five Railroad Park clubs. Our chapter's total number of Railroad Show position hours worked came to 63; only the Rogue Valley Model Railroad Club had more hours. They beat us by one hour.

For the 63 hours we worked our chapter's share of the show earnings comes to \$2,417.00, or for each hour you volunteers worked equals about \$38.36 per hour. I'd say that's very good, wouldn't you? Our total share of job hours came to 24.3%. To all our members who helped make this year's show the most successful show ever, thank you very much!

December General Meeting! Our next General Membership meeting at the model railroad clubhouse will be at 7:00PM on Tuesday, January 8th. As required in our bylaws the five newly elected positions of President, Vice-President, Secretary, Treasurer and National Director will be sworn in.

Tentatively scheduled for the evening's entertainment will be one of the videotapes donated to us last month by John Bergman. The tape will be *Tales From the Desert: The Great Desert Railroad*. This 51-minute film recounts the battle between rail tycoons William Andrews Clark (Las Vegas & Tonopah RR) and Francis Marion Smith (Tonopah & Tidewater RR) as they began building their railroads across parts of California & Nevada in 1905.

Your Chapter Officers for 2008

Ric Walch, President 541-772-6255	Bruce McGarvey, National Director – 541-779-8145
E. Don Pettit, Vice President 541-601-4772	Steve Bruff, Chief Mechanical Officer – 541-261-5741
Jerry Hellinga, Treasurer 541-772-6432	Rickie Aubin, Secretary - 541-779-4259
John Powell, Dir. Of Public Relations – 541-826-1992	Tony Johnson, Newsletter Editor/Historian – 541-944-9176
“Stretch” Manley, Activities Director – 541-582-8175	Nancy Aubin, Membership Director – 541-779-4259

GOOD DAYS OF RAILROADING This month I'll begin this look at the personal side of railroading with a recollection of how sometimes management doesn't have a clue on how best to get the job done. This article is from personal recollections from my friend Topper, an experienced engineer now working for the Union Pacific. Several times this editor rode around with him in the locomotive cab while he and his crew assembled trains at Oakland, CA. If left alone they got their job finished.

This article goes back to the mid-1990s when Southern Pacific was near the end of retiring their old GP9, SD9, GP20 and GP35 model locomotives. At the time some of these were nearly forty years old and had been downgraded to switching service. Southern Pacific had perhaps the largest fleet of newer SW1500 and MP15 switchers in the nation, but like a pair of old shoes, Topper liked the feel of the comfortable older locomotive models. In this story Topper wanted to use GP35R SSW#4201, but his boss thought he knew best; however, he did not know Topper very well. This is Topper's tenth article for our newsletter.

CHOOSING ENGINES by Topper This one time our regular Yardmaster was on vacation so we had this replacement who was this ex-train dispatcher by the name of Furbee. He didn't have any local ties to Oakland so he didn't have to be nice to us. He was one of these guys who was convinced that he can get everything done... and then some!

The kind of policy that's been here is that the two afternoon switch engines are used to concentrate on what are called "focus trains." Those are the piggyback trains and things of that nature. It's to make sure that they get out on time. The rest of the switching normally is left to sit for the two midnight shifts. They to do a lot of the manifest switching and things of that nature. Mr. Furbee thinks we can get everything done in the afternoon, and as he found out in a week... he's wrong!

This one Tuesday night, the OAPTT [Oakland to Portland Trailers) didn't get switched at all because of a lot of delays. When the focus trains are late getting out of Oakland, Denver [back when Denver was in control] questions the Trainmaster (Mr. Caveny) and he sends it to the individual yardmasters, and the yardmasters have to come up with some sort of excuse. I'm sure Mr. Furbee's excuse is that the switch crews would not cooperate with him. That excuse soon begins to build up a pattern and eventually Denver will want to know why this guy can't get along with the crews.

Mr. Furbee had trouble learning the theory if I just go to the diesel shop and find an engine I want, it'll be much better for all concerned. He's been met with delays on account of me finding reportable FRA defects on the engines he's tried to give me. He found out a few things such as you can't use "tunnel

motors” for switching because the rear ends have ladders instead of steps. [So called “tunnel motors” are very large SD45T-2 and SD40T-2 model locomotives that were never designed for switching in a yard.] Things like that that he wasn’t aware of.

So, after going through several different engines on every afternoon, I’d end up with SSW4201, which, at that time was assigned to the work train working the new track construction due to the new Nimitz Freeway work. This is the engine he should have started me out with in the first place, but since you can’t tell this guy anything... well, that’s just how it goes.

This one time there were two switch engines at West Oakland - the 2532 and the 2623. Mr. Furbee would start out assigning me one of those, and it wouldn’t take me long to find reportable FRA [Federal Railroad Administration] defects. This one Monday I started out with the 2532. As I was walking inspecting the engine, I pulled the left rear cutting lever and the assembly came apart at the coupler bale. The coupler bale is a piece that’s bent in a half-moon shape and it is what the coupler pin is attached to.

When you pull the cutting lever, it lifts up on the coupler bale, which in turn lifts the pin. They have a tendency, if they are not maintained properly, to separate where the cutting lever meets the bale. So the left rear one kept separating on the 2532... and that’s a reportable defect because it can cause a personal injury if someone goes out there and gives a big ol’ yank. Instead of having say 10 pounds of resistance, you have absolutely no resistance. You can get injured on that.

So this was on a Monday and while Mr. Furbee hemmed-and-hawed about an hour over that, I just went over and got the work train engine and that solved that problem.

On Tuesday, he went and assigned the 2532 to me again. I went over and saw that somebody, probably the Roundhouse Foreman, had taken a sledgehammer and beaten the thing back into submission, but just looking at it I could tell I could get it out again by just sliding it over. So I kinda gave it a kick, and sure enough, I separated it. I pulled it and the whole thing came apart again. So that took care of it again on Tuesday, so we went back to the 4201.

On Wednesday, he tried the 2623. It had come down from Roseville the previous week and I noticed it didn’t have bell on it. How it could have come out of Roseville with no bell is beyond me, but sure enough, it did! It wasn’t just the bell that was missing. Everything was gone, including the hanger for the bell, the clapper, the piston... everything was gone! The pipe was just there hanging loose. That should have been very obvious when the bell didn’t ring and it wasn’t there and that something was wrong, but sure enough, Roseville sent it down.

Anyway, by Wednesday they found a bell for it. When I saw the engine the previous week when I was walking around it, I found it had been in a minor derailment that had knocked off the left-rear sand nozzle and bent the right-rear sand nozzle. So, when I was assigned this thing on Wednesday, I went out and looked and sure enough, the sand nozzles are all goofed-up. The left rear one was completely inside the L-4 wheel. I kinda looked at it and thought that if I was in my prior mode of operations where I fixed things, it would be just a matter of yanking the whole nozzle and hose and tying in place with a couple of plastic ties straps. But since I have a new attitude now, I don’t do that anymore. So I called them and told them what was wrong, and that it was an FRA reportable violation.

Soon afterwards, after I walked over to the shanty, I look over at the engine and I see three people over there at the engine. It turned out to be two Road Foremen and the Trainmaster, and they’re out there looking at this thing. After about a half hour the phone rings and they say, “OK, your engine’s fixed now.” So I walk on down there and they’re still there.

One of the Road Foremen is Paul Schmidt, who was off the old Northwestern Pacific Railroad (NWP). He was the engineer on the last NWP train... a real nice guy and a good teacher who had been teaching a lot of the rules classes. He’s very effective at doing that, but at this time he was a Road Foreman at Oakland. Bob Walcott, the Road Foreman from San Jose was there, and Rich Caveny, the Trainmaster.

Schmidt was just covered with grease and sweat because he was apparently the one who had been underneath reattaching the sand hose. I thought they were going to yell and scream and chew my ass out. They didn’t! They all said they appreciated everything that I do and to keep up the good work. Hmmm?

So they fixed the sand hose on Wednesday. Then on Thursday, I was assigned the 2532 again. I went out and looked at coupler bale, and I guess what the mechanical people had done was taken the thing down to the “One Spot” and heated up the bale with a cutting torch and repaired it. This meant that I would have to go around and find something else wrong. As I climbed into the cab, the daylight

engineer had left a report saying the cab heater did not work and that the right front windshield wiper didn't work either. What had happened was the "push rod" on the windshield had come apart and that rendered the windshield wiper useless.

The cab heater fan motor apparently had fried itself so it didn't work at all. Believe it or not, those are both technically FRA violations. So I thought, "I'll play with this guy and see what he says."

So, we've got this 2532 with the two defects (heater and windshield wiper) and I call him up and tell him... and he just can't believe these are defects. It's 85 degree weather and there's not a cloud in the sky. I say, "Yep, they are!"

He tells me to go and sit in the shanty so about 10 minutes later the phone rings and it's Caveny. He asks me what's wrong and I tell him. I ask what did he tell you and he said you told him the cab heater and windshield wiper were broken. I tell him, "Yep, that's right!"

Caveny says, "Those are defects?"

I said, "Yeah," and he's in absolute shock about this kind of stuff.

He asked me, "How can we solve this," and I said you can instruct me to use the locomotive.

Caveny says, "OK, I'm instructing you to use it."

I says, "OK Fine!" and that was the end of that, but in the meantime here comes the work train with the 4201 so I just get on that and called Caveny telling him I'm going to use the 4201.

He says, "I told that guy to start you on the 4201 in the first place."

I said, "Well.... you know, what can I tell you?"

So on Friday, I guess Furbee caught on and we started out on the 4201. There were no delays and things of that nature, although I did put a mirror on it on Friday.

I told you earlier I put one on GP38-2 #4840. This 4201 didn't have a mirror. Its mate (the 4203) did, because I guess it had been worked on in Los Angeles. The 2532 had mirrors, but instead of being mounted where you could use them when facing forward, they mounted them just the opposite. You'd have to turn around and face backwards to use the mirrors, and that made absolutely no sense at all. But that was the typical mechanical department employee mentality by putting them on the wrong end of the engine.

So on Friday, since I had some time, I went over to the 2532 and took the mirror off the fireman's side and attached it to the engineer's side of the 4201. I now have a mirror after all these months of complaining about not having one.

Our next story is also about switch engines, although this goes back to the days of steam. In this story we learn that using a steam locomotive that was specifically designed for slow moving service switching cars in a yard will not work well out on the open road. This story is from our friend Tom Weston of Tracy, CA. This is the 26th Tom Weston article for our newsletter.

0-8-0s MAKE LOUSY HELPERS by Tom Weston Many years ago someone once asked me where the SP used the 4500 series 0-8-0s. I had the 4506 as the regular engine on the "Sewer" Job in the old Tracy Yard. If I ever knew why it was called the Sewer Job, I have forgotten. It worked in the so-called "Hill Yard" where trains going and coming over the Altamont Pass line to Oakland, San Jose, and Bayshore, were made up and switched out.

These engines were very powerful because they were built with large cylinders. The Hill Yard was slightly up grade to the west toward Altamont. The 4506 would pull heavy cuts of cars up this grade with no trouble at all. And, it had very good brakes so all you had to do was give the pin-puller enough slack to uncouple the cars and slam on the brakes and usually the cars would roll into the respective tracks. Kind of like a hump yard.

At the time I ran the 4506 it had a 10,000-gallon Vanderbilt tender. It was very easy to change the brake shoes on these tenders and the SP had new brake shoes piled up at various places around the yard for the car inspectors to replace worn brake shoes on the boxcars. So whenever I felt ambitious (not too often) and had the time, I would put brand new shoes on the tender. This increased the braking power (or at least I thought it did) of the engine.

Changing brake shoes on the engine itself was more complicated and I think they were a different kind of shoe so I never tried that. Of course, changing brake shoes was not part of my job and I am sure the SP, and the roundhouse machinists, would have taken a dim view of my doing it.

I don't remember when I ran the 4506 but it had to be in the later-1940s or early 50s.

I am pretty sure that the 4500s had different numbers at the time I was calling crews (between 1936 and 1941). I want to say they were 1300s, but I would have to check with Guy Dunscomb or Joe Strapac to be sure. [Tom is correct – they were 1300s – Tony]

Anyway, one night when I was calling crews in the Old Yard at Tracy, the roundhouse did not have any road engines to help a train over the Altamont Pass. The only engine available was one of these old 0-8-0 switchers. The helper was only going to the summit of Altamont and right back to Tracy so the roundhouse and the Chief Train Dispatcher thought the 0-8-0 would be OK.

What they forgot, or maybe never knew, was that these engines had been made just for switching. The boilers were off old passenger engines that the SP had retired from service. They could not supply the steam needed for any sustained or continuous running because the cylinders were too large.

Everything was OK when the train pulled out of the yard at a slow speed because the fireman had a full head of steam and plenty of water in the boiler. When the train got out on the mainline and the engineer opened the throttle wide open to try to get a run at the 'Hill', things started to go bad.

By the time the engineer had the train up to speed the steam pressure was so low that he had to ease off on the throttle to give the poor fireman a chance to get some water in the boiler and try to build pressure back up. Of course, when he eased off the throttle the speed started to go down.

At that time, it was all open country to the west from Tracy Yard. And at night, if you stood near the Altamont mainline outside the yard office, you could see the fire shooting out of the side and bottom dampers as the trains struggled up the grade to Altamont. This night the fire and flames were particularly bright and lasted for a long time because all that poor fireman could do was give that 0-8-0 as much oil as it would burn and keep sanding the flues.

I don't remember if the train actually stalled or not but I know it took a long time getting to Altamont and I'll bet that dispatcher never used 0-8-0s as helpers again.

I have just enough space to include one more short story from Tom. This is one of those few Southern Pacific stories Tom didn't witness himself.

WATER TANK by Tom Weston I don't think I can get a story out of this because I don't have enough of the details, like the date it happened, the names of the engineer and fireman, the time of day, or the engine number. But I do know it really happened, so here goes.

One afternoon back when the SP was still running passenger trains, a Westbound passenger train, No. 55, made its usual stop at the old depot in downtown Tracy. The passenger trains always took water at Tracy so they would not have to take water again before reaching Oakland or Fresno. On this particular day, the engineer made his usual station stop at Tracy with his engine right at the water tank, which was just a few car-lengths West of the depot.

The fireman climbed up on the tender of the locomotive, took the long tank hook and pulled down the water spout and put it into the water compartment of the tender. When he pulled on the long chain that hung from the top of the water tank to turn on the water, the whole 50,000-gallon (at least) station water tank collapsed! Luckily, it just collapsed straight down and not on the locomotive so no one was injured, but I bet that fireman took water very carefully from then on!

The water ran east far enough to get into the depot, but I don't think it caused any damage.

SWITCH ENGINE CALL by Mario Rinaldo A young man had just hired out as fireman for the Southern Pacific in Oakland, CA. One evening, a few days after he had gone to work, he was called to go to Richmond to be fireman on a midnight switch engine. Being new to the area he got lost on the bus routes getting to Richmond, but finally made it about a half hour late.

He climbed up on the engine and said, "Are you fellows waiting for a fireman?" They told him they were, so they went to work. At daybreak he had noticed the writing on the side of his engine and, turning to the engineer said, "Is Southern Pacific borrowing engines from the Santa Fe?" The engineer said, "This is the Santa Fe!"

He reported back to SP and started to quit, but they sent him to a small town home terminal. He found a house to buy just across the street from the roundhouse where he couldn't get lost, and he spent the rest of his life working there. [Mario's story was sent by my friend Dave Martin of Mountain View, CA.]