



## THE MANIFEST

NEWSLETTER OF THE SOUTHERN OREGON CHAPTER, NRHS – MARCH 2008

**MEMO FROM THE PRESIDENT** John Powell, our activities coordinator, is working on putting together a mini rail convention with railroad clubs located in Coos Bay and Yaquina Bay. This activity is tentatively scheduled for late April or early May. John has been in contact with both clubs and they are excited about getting together to share ideas and showcase their restorations. We will be meeting in Coos Bay so this will be a great opportunity to work in that “trip to the coast” we have all been putting off. This trip will be a great kickoff to the other summer activities that are in the planning stage. This should be a great trip and we should have a firm date by the time we print the April newsletter.

We will be contacting all of our club members in our quest for docents this year. With the addition of our maintenance of way and handcar interpretive display we will require ten docents at the park on run days to have a full staff. If everyone will sign up for just a couple off shifts over the season it would be a great help and turn a terrific burden for a few into an modest effort for many.

By the time this newsletter is released we will have already started work on our new archives/library building. I am grateful to everyone that has helped turn this project into a reality and I know it will become a valuable asset to our park operation. We will be moving ahead fairly quickly on this project and we hope to have it complete early this season.

**GET WELL CARD** Those who know David Turner were grieved to learn that David is not doing well. Many years ago David received a kidney transplant but during the end of February he was hospitalized in Portland because his liver was not working properly. His liver was attacked by a virus associated with the common "Cold Sore" virus. His doctor said that apparently 80% of all of us carry this common virus even though we may not be affected by it. Because of the anti-rejection drugs that David has to take because of his kidney transplant, and possibly because of a recent change in those drugs, his weakened immune system was unable to fight off this virus. David's dad, Art Turner said that David had tubes coming out of every part of his body. Art also said that the doctors are hopeful that with treatment that David will improve but that he is by no means out-of-the-woods.

David is a chapter member, along with his father Art. Art is our chapter's Chief Mechanical Officer. Please keep young David in your prayers.

**MEMBERSHIP NEWS** Last month's reminder to renew your memberships for 2008 was successful. Last month Membership Director Nancy Aubin sent me a list of renewing memberships who have donated extra money above their annual dues. I thought the list was rather small, but I published the list anyway in last month's newsletter. I thought I may have missed an earlier message until Nancy sent me the following message.



**(LEFT)** It's 11:00 am on March 4, 2008. Ric Walch is being interviewed by a television reporter about the exciting groundbreaking day for our chapter's archive and museum building, honoring the late Mack Walch, Ric's son. - Ric Aubin photo

**(RIGHT)** On hand for the ground breaking ceremony were around forty people representing the five park Railroad Park clubs, plus family and fiends. Two local television stations covered the event which was held on a nice warm day. Sarah Walch was interviewed by both television stations about this museum that will honor her late husband Mack - Ric Aubin photo



**(LEFT)** The museum-archive building site had already be scraped and leveled before the day began. Ric did a little bit of earth moving first, then the cameras rolled as a load of shale was dumped on the site. - Ric Aubin photo

**(RIGHT)** After the shale was dumped, a bulldozer then quickly spread and leveled the site, and then a load of 3/4 minus rock was laid on top and leveled. Because of the newsletter deadline, next month we'll list the names of all those companies and individuals who donated their time and resources. - Ric Aubin photo



“Regarding donations to the club, I blew it when I gave you that list...BIG TIME! I shouldn't have done that after just getting out of the hospital. Listed below are the rest of the donations received to date. You can put something in the next newsletter about the STUPID membership director blowing it and my apologies to all concerned, including you Tony. Once again, my apologies to you all. I'll do better next time.”

In her defense, Nancy was in the hospital for a few days as the result of a bad reaction to her prescription drugs. In alphabetical order are the rest of the names of chapter members who together have donated a total of over \$500.00 above their dues.

- Frank Anderson
- Tom Baldwin
- Lee Hawbecker
- Tony Johnson
- Doug Kirkpatrick
- Jim Lekas
- Walter Michaels
- Gordon Nunnally
- Loren Otto
- David Sell
- Paul Sheedy
- John Sipple
- Claude Sorensen
- Fred Phillips
- Dale Edwards
- Larry Tuttle

**PARK NEWS** Our chapter's oldest piece of railroad rolling stock is perhaps the most overlooked by park visitors simply because it looks ordinary to them, but its history is not. I'm talking about our 1899-built Pacific & Eastern Railroad two-bay hopper ore car #74735.

Our hopper car was built originally for the Great Northern Railway in 1899 by the Pressed Steel Car Company (formerly Shoen Pressed Steel Company) of Pittsburgh, PA. The Great Northern purchased 50 Pressed Steel Car (PSC) ore cars in 1899 and another 450 in 1900, numbered 742001-75199, odd numbers only. Studies of surviving cars strongly suggest that cars numbered below 75000 remained with GN and those above belonged to GN's subsidiary, Eastern Minnesota Railway. The cars were originally painted dark (Pullman?) green and stenciled at 100,000 lbs. In 1913, GN began a general renumbering of all freight equipment and the ore cars became 85289-85777 (including the absorbed EMRY in 1902) and painted box car red.

The cars looked like coal hoppers and in 1899 PSC offered its first all-steel car designed specifically for the ore trade: 22', 40 ton or 50 ton (depending on trucks) cars. Like the hopper cars they had a fish belly side sill but unlike the paired double hoppers the sloped sheets were tapered down to two hoppers in the center of the car. Since a center sill was not possible, a box frame surrounded the hoppers, connected to the body bolsters. All cars used New York air brakes and PCS diamond arch bar trucks were standard equipment. A feature of most of these cars was knock holes on the sides of the cars, matched by holes in the hopper. The interior holes were covered by flaps. As the name suggests, poles were shoved into the holes to knock the packed ore loose so it would flow. In winter, steam lines were inserted to thaw the ore. Generally, cars came with two holes. Later Great Northern cut an additional three more holes in its cars.

It appears that GN #74785 was acquired by Pacific & Eastern sometime prior to 1913 since it retains the 75000 series number. In fact, it was known to have been in service between Medford and Butte Falls during 1910. After the Pacific & Eastern Railway lost interest in their proposed plan to link

Medford with Klamath Falls (they did extend the line from Eagle Point to Butte Falls), each time a new owner or company took over the line, our former P&E hopper was included in the sale. Here is the timeline.

- **PACIFIC & EASTERN RAILWAY (1907-1922)**
- **BROWNEE-OLDS LUMBER COMPANY (1922-1924)**
- **OWEN-OREGON LUMBER COMPANY (1924-1932)**
- **MEDFORD CORPORATION (1932-1962)**

The hopper car was found by Medco many years after being abandoned after it rolled into a ditch from the siding where it was parked. It was brought to the Medco mill and stored there for many years. There is damage at one end, but it's not the result of its earlier derailment into the ditch. At some point in time an employee at the mill got tired of the hopper being somewhat in his way, so he rammed it out of the way using a big log loader. The P&E hopper was one of the first pieces of chapter rolling brought to the Railroad Park and is the last known surviving piece of Pacific and Eastern equipment

Before the chapter started restoration work, discussions were held and an agreement clarified the techniques and processes we will use to continue the project. We will end up with an ore car that is protected (as well as we can) from further deterioration, a car that looks great after our cosmetic restoration and will in large part retain the structural integrity that may be used if the car is in service in the future.

During last summer, Steve Bruff came up with a plan for a cosmetic renovation of our ore. It was during late fall of last year the board approved the plan and forecasted expenditures to complete this work. Basically, this car needs replacement and/or straightening of bent and broken steel parts, replacement of the wooden walkway located along one side and both ends of the car, and a pleasing and protective paint job.

Many parts, such as grab irons, steps, walkway brackets and cut lever brackets were bent and/or broken from years of service. One of the corner support posts including adjacent parts was severely damaged prior to the car being moved to the park. For all of these parts a program of replacement of those parts too damaged for straightening and a concurrent program of repair/straightening of the other damaged parts began on February 22.

This renovation plan does not include an attempt to straighten the bowed-out walls of the car or some localized dents.....this type of work is beyond the scope of the plan and in any event would be too expensive to undertake. Ric Walch, Jerry Hellinga, Art Turner, Tony Johnson and Landon Humphrey collaborated on the plan during February. From previous experience Jerry provided sound advice on the best paint to use on the car.

Steve was lucky to have the services of Dave Mihevc on this effort. Dave, who lives in Myrtle Creek, has been a long term member and is highly proficient in steel work and welding along with all his other skills. Dave has agreed to come down on an occasional weekend to apply his talents to this grand old ore car. Dave's first efforts on February 22 with help from Rick Aubin and John Powell resulted in removing most of the damaged steel and a start on straightening other steel parts.

Future work sessions will complete the straightening process, replacement of other steel parts, cleaning, prep and painting and then lettering to the original "Pacific & Eastern Railway". As best we can tell the original color of the car was black. Medford Fabrication, through Ric Walch, will make a number of replacement brackets and parts. Steve's goal is to have the project largely completed by opening "Run Day" at the park on the second Sunday in April.

**MORE HOPPER HISTORY** Prior to my introduction to our P&E hopper car, I'm not sure if I had ever heard of the car's builder, the Pressed Steel Company. Ten or so years ago I did some research to



**(LEFT)** Our chapter's oldest piece of railroad rolling stock is this beat up hopper car built in 1899 for the Great Northern Railroad. It eventually became the property of the Pacific & Eastern Railroad, and finally the Medford Logging RR. It is the only surviving piece of equipment from the Pacific & Eastern and is worthy of a facelift. Last month Dave Michev, John Powell and Steve Bruff started work on the car. — *Rick Aubin photo*

**(RIGHT)** Dave Michev came down from his home in Myrtle Creek to spend a weekend on the hopper car. There is damage at one end that needs replacement, plus nearly every ladder rung or handrail is bent after over eighty years of service. Here is Dave wielding a cutting torch on one of the car's two end ladders. — *Rick Aubin photo*



**(LEFT)** Now it's John Powell's turn to use the torch on one of the rungs. This particular rung only needs a little straightening, so while John heats the rung, Dave applies hammer force from behind. *Rick Aubin photo*



**(RIGHT)** From this angle you can see how severely bent some of the rungs are. Those that can be straightened are done in place, while those too crooked are cut off and new rungs will be fabricated instead. — *Rick Aubin photo*



help me create a photo display board for visitors to read at the Medford Railroad Park. Then last month Roger Phillips of the Southern Oregon Live Steamers found some additional information about the history of this car company. In addition I went to the Internet and found additional information to go along with what Roger sent. So, for you history buffs, here's a short version of the Pressed Steel Company.

The Pressed Steel Car Company was incorporated in January 1899 in New Jersey, with an authorized capitalization of \$25 million, for the stated purpose of “[manufacturing] passenger, freight and street railway cars and to make trucks, wheels, and other parts of cars.” The incorporators were Adrian H. Larkin, Arthur H. Van Brunt and Francis L. Patton Jr. of Jersey City. News reports of the time suggested that Andrew Carnegie might be one of the largest stockholders. They also indicated that “those interested in it have built a number of cars, and some of them are now in use on the Pennsylvania railroad.” Within days it was announced that the new company had a contract to build 5,000 cars for the Baltimore & Ohio.

The Pressed Steel Car Company of Pittsburgh came into existence February 17, 1899, News reports said the company was organized in New York, and that the Schoen (Schoen Pressed Steel Company) and Fox (Fox Pressed Steel Equipment Company) interests were merged into the new corporation. The very next day it was announced that a contract had been signed between the Pressed Steel Car Company and the Carnegie interests whereby the Pressed Steel Car Company would buy all its steel from the Carnegie mills, and the Carnegie interests would withdraw from the car building business.

Production of the consolidated companies — Fox Pressed Steel Equipment Company, with works in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, and Joliet, Illinois, and the Schoen Pressed Steel Company, with works in Pittsburgh — was projected by the following July to be 24,000 steel freight cars, 300,000 bolsters and 180,000 truck frames per year “besides pressed-steel specialties.”

Within a few days, another contract was announced for 1,000 more steel cars to be produced by Pressed Steel for the Pennsylvania Railroad. And on 19 May it was announced that the former Fox Pressed Steel plant at Joliet, Illinois, would soon be enlarged to four times its then-present size at a cost of \$500,000, giving employment to 2,000 men and increasing the plant's capacity to more than 100 cars a day.

The Pressed Steel Car Company's application for listing the on the Stock Exchange indicated the company had three plants — “Woods Run, at Allegheny, Penn. [Schoen], consisting of eighteen acres, of which seven acres are covered with new steel buildings of the most improved modern design, and machinery and equipment specially designed, most of which is covered by basic patents.

McCandless Avenue plant, at Pittsburgh, Penn. [Fox]. It has three acres of ground covered with steel and stone buildings of an improved type. The plant is completely equipped with machinery, protected to a large extent by patents, which it is believed are basic.

“Joliet plant, at Joliet, Ill. [Fox] It has two and one-half acres of ground covered with improved, well-constructed buildings of brick and steel. The plant is completely equipped with machinery, largely covered by patents which are believed to be fundamental.

It was announced that the Fox plant at Joliet would be enlarged to four times its present size at a cost of \$500,000, give employment to 2,000 men, and increase the plant's capacity to more than 100 cars per day. In addition, another plant was constructed on 180 acres at McKees Rocks, a few miles northwest of Pittsburgh, and 4,000 employees were added to the payroll.

The Washington Post for 14 May 1899 contained an article headlined “CAR OF PRESSED STEEL -- First Made in 1897, Now the Demand Is Enormous.” The following are snippets from that article —

*“The youngest of all the great manufacturing establishments of this city [Pittsburgh], the Pressed Steel Car Company, is perhaps the most flourishing of Pittsburgh enterprise. It is, and all this year has been, running full time and to its utmost capacity, one hundred completed cars a day, on orders that were booked before the present year began. It had made and sold to various railroads up to the beginning of this year more than 12,500 of its pressed steel freight cars, mostly of the gondola type. These cars . . . are constructed entirely of steel, all the parts except the sheets that make up the sides, ends, and flooring being forced into shape directly from the unformed sheets of steel by hydraulic presses of great power.*

*“Among the advantages of the pressed steel car which have tended to popularize it with practical and progressive railroad men is its light weight, as compared with the wooden car, when the relative carrying capacity of the two is considered. The standard wooden car weighs 30,000 pounds, and has a carrying capacity of thirty tons, or 60,000 pounds. When loaded, the ratio of the load or paying freight, to the total weight of the car and cargo, is 66.67 per cent. Pressed steel cars carrying fifty tons, or 100,000 pounds, weigh 34,000 pounds. When loaded, the ratio of the load, or paying freight, to the total weight of the car and cargo, is 74.60. In the fifty-five-ton pressed steel cars the ratio of the load, or paying freight, to the weight of the car and cargo, varies from 75 to 75.60 per cent. This difference in the ratio of paying load to total weight of car when loaded may easily be the difference between the success or the failure of a road.*

Shortly after this article was published, it was announced that the former Fox Pressed Steel plant at Joliet, Illinois, would be enlarged to four times its then-present capacity, at an expenditure of \$500,000; giving it a capacity of more than 100 cars a day. This announcement may never have come to fruition, however, as just 19 months later this same property was “nearly destroyed by fire.” An estimated \$100,000 worth of machinery was lost, and the estimated cost of replacing the burned building was \$25,000. Hardly a ½ million dollar operation!

1914 - At the outbreak of World War I, in 1914, industry needed to provide materials to improve transportation. Pressed Steel had to produce equipment for rail lines within war zones. The company also provided Russia with 12,000 cars, including gondolas, box cars, flatcars, and passenger cars.

1915 - The firm, principally a steam road car builder, also manufactured street and interurban cars, among them some of the earliest all-steel designs. Outstanding among its interurbans were 24 all-steel cars built in 1915 for high speed service over Pacific Electric’s premiere San Bernardino line.

1916 - Pressed Steel had the largest car plant in the United States, producing a new car every five minutes.

In 1920s two plants, Allegheny and McKees Rocks, Pennsylvania, boasted total annual capacity of 750 steam and street railway passenger cars and 45,000 freight cars.

1930s - Faced bankruptcy and never fully recovered. Probably saved by the 2nd World War.

In 1940, during World War II, Pressed Steel started to produce large quantities of M-4 armored tanks and allied war materials for the war effort. Pressed Steel Car Company received an award for their excellent job in producing tanks on September 10, 1942.

In 1950, Pressed Steel announced its newest invention: a WOODEN CAR! Called Unicel, it was a combination freight-refrigerator car without a frame, built with an absolute minimum of steel. The new car was molded of plywood, using heat and special resins much the way fiberglass boats are made now. The car would be much lighter than steel cars of similar capacity, far stronger than steel, require less time to build and the clincher for railroad operators: be cheaper! It would also be airtight, a major plus for keeping a refrigerator car cold.

Unicel was given extensive testing and accepted by the American Association of Railroads. And 70 of them were sold to the Saudi Arabian national railroad. But most railroads' mechanical officers voted against allowing interchange rights, without which the concept was doomed. The most obvious concern was the ability of railroad repair shops to handle repairs to cars of this unique, non-metal construction (just the reverse of the case with metal cars a half-century earlier). A further concern was for the long-term integrity of the "glue" joints; remember, this was 1950, before anyone had much experience with plastic resins. And the final concern, and likely the killer for anything railroad-wise: it was NEW!

1954 - Diversified into non-railway products and in 1954 changed name to U.S. Industries

1956 - Bought by U.S. Steel after it went out of business and closed. U.S. Steel used the property as a supply warehouse and the site then was occupied by a number of small businesses.

**March General Meeting!** Our next General Membership meeting at the model railroad clubhouse will be at 7:00PM on Tuesday, March 11. We hope you will be there for an evening of entertainment, fellowship and fun.

**Your Chapter Officers for 2008**

Ric Walch, President 541-772-6255

E. Don Pettit, Vice President 541-601-4772

Jerry Hellinga, Treasurer 541-772-6432

Steve Bruff, Dir. Of Public Relations – 541-261-5741

John Powell, Activities Director – 541-826-1992

Bruce McGarvey, National Director – 541-779-8145

Art Turner, Chief Mechanical Officer – 541-826-6291

Rickie Aubin, Secretary - 541-779-4259

Tony Johnson, Newsletter Editor/Historian – 541-944-9176

Nancy Aubin, Membership Director – 541-779-4259

**GOOD OLD DAYS OF RAILROADING** We continue where we left off last month with more old tales from the late Tommy Beall. Tommy was promoted to Engineer on 9/26/1946. He retired on 5/6/1980 with 39 years of service. Tommy passed away at Eugene, OR on 8/29/2004 at 84 years of age.

**FUN and GAMES as a LOCOMOTIVE ENGINEER (Part 2) –By T.W. (Tommy) Beall [as told to Steve Coons].** I'm sure Bob Law and Steve Woodson will agree with me, most Engineers had one or two bad experiences, but I think I had some worst than most! I learned something by it, anyway.

My favorite SP locomotives? I would say that would be the 4294. They were the last of the cab-ahead Malleys. (SP4275 through 4294.) I think they were in the class AC-12. By the time they came out, I think the builder (Baldwin) had figured everything out, they ran so smoothly, and rode so nicely. Those last 20 engines were the best I ever worked on.

My other favorite locomotives? Like Bob Law, I loved those 5000s! They were decapods, with an extra axle on the leading truck. These engines had a third cylinder in the middle. It was offset, and drove the second axle, which had a crank on it so the middle rod would go around with it. It had a stuttering exhaust and that's why they called them, "Stuttering Decks". They were fine engines, except in the mountains they slipped too much, and they had such a long wheelbase they were hard on the track. However, on level going they were fine engines. The later classes of 4200s and 5000s were far and away my favorite engines.

Bob Law and Steve Woodson were talking about what they called the "Hog" engines; those little engines (2-8-0), some of them were terrible to run! During WWII, they used them as helpers out of Portland to Woodburn, to get up Hito Hill. I had caught a job out of Portland one time. Our engine was in back in the train, ahead of the cabooses. The Engineer was Jack Howell. The "Hog" we were using was extremely rough riding, and had very dim cab lights – about 15- or 25-watt bulbs. They had just dragged it out of what they called the "Boneyard" at Brooklyn Shops. It hadn't been operated for a long time, but they were so pressed for motive power during the war that they were using old junkers. They hadn't serviced this one correctly, didn't go over it and lubricate it properly, and it was a terrible riding engine!

The man on the Road (Lead) Engine was an extremely fast-running engineer that was always crowding the speed limit. Back on that rough-riding "Hog", Jack and I couldn't even keep our shoe laces tied. We



flew through Oregon City and Coalca, and came up on a red train order signal at Canby. Jack was just a little short guy. He reached out, snagged the orders, unfolded them and tried to read them. Well, good luck! The engine was bouncing up and down, the cab light was so dim, the lagging on the boiler was loose, and pieces of asbestos were blowin' all around. All that crud in our faces, Jack's glasses kept jiggling down to the end of his nose, and as hard as he tried, he could not read the orders!

So soon, he just reached over and cut-in his brake valve, and drew off about 20 pounds of air! Very soon we came to... oh, what a stop we made. We came to a shuttering halt, and when we stopped, we hit so hard that the cover on the oil tank flew up, and that black gooey oil sloshed out and splattered all over the cab deck. Oh, it was a mess! The Conductor came up from the caboose, climbed into the cab, and said, "*What's the matter, Jack. Something wrong with the orders?*"

Jack looked at the Conductor and said, "*You go to the head-end and tell that idiot (actually, he used a stronger word) that I hired out to railroad, not to commit suicide! And tell him not to exceed the speed limit from here to Woodburn again!*" So, we had to sit there about twenty minutes while they walked the length of the train and told the Road Engineer what was the matter. Oh, that was a HORRIBLE ride!

One time I worked with Engineer Frank Riedel on the Passenger train to Marshfield (Coos Bay). That was on Trains #333-334, the *Coos Bay Passenger*. Unfortunately, we got this "Hog" engine, the #2807... and it was a brutal ride all the way from Eugene to Marshfield. And ever after that, Frank told me that was far and away the roughest ride he ever took in all the years he worked on the railroad. I didn't care for those old worn-out engines. They were worn-out before WWII came in, and they used them during the whole war, worn out or not!

It was a real pleasure to get a good-riding engine and have a good trip. I was going from Crescent Lake to Klamath Falls one time, on one of the old four-thousands [2-8-8-2s]. They were the original cab-in-front engines. They were smaller than the 4100 and 4200s articulateds, had fifty-seven inch drivers instead of sixty-three inch, and they were hard riding. We left Chemult and drifted down to Diamond Lake, and the engine started bouncing! It bounced so high that I do not know why we did not derail. We bounced something terrible. Finally, the window in front of me goes "Crack!" It just broke out and there was glass all over the cab, and it is below-zero outside! I had to go the rest of the way to Klamath Falls with no window, and I do not know yet why it bounced.

All the rest of the way to Klamath Falls the Engineer had to keep the speed cut way down because he couldn't take a chance on it anymore. But during the war we used to get engines like that. They just pull them out of any old deadline and put them to work, and some were in TERRIBLE shape!

Bill Pirie [father of SOC chapter member Scott Pirie] told me about working out of Eugene during the war. One day he saw the switch engine dragging one of the old 4-6-6-2s into the Eugene Shops. It was one of the old cab-aheads built about 1911. I think they were first numbered in the 4200s. [Class MM-2, 2-6-6-2, later rebuilt to 4-6-6-2, simplified and reclassified AM-2 in the 1930s.] Bill said all there was left of the engine was the boiler, cab and wheels; everything else had been removed to keep the other AM's running. Bill said in a month or so the engine came out with everything put back on, given a fresh coat of paint and renumbered to a 3900. They worked them on the flat track in the Willamette Valley, although they did show up on the "Hill" once in a while.

L.P. Hopkins was quite a guy. I heard he started out sweeping the floors of the Sacramento Shops, way back then. I guess he was one of those fellows who came up the ladder the hard way. However, when he was the Portland Division Superintendent, every time I saw him, he was chewing me out for some reason!

One year, I think about the late 1940s/early 50s, the railroad had many mudslides down on the Coos Bay Branch, with the Main Line blocked. I was called for the Work Train, and was heading down there

with a lot of empty dump cars: Westerns and K&Js. Hopkins was heading down there, too, and they coupled his official business car on the rear end. So, I got to thinking that with all those empty cars, Hopkins would be getting a lot slack action on some of those up-and-down spots. So, I tried to run the train “stretched” as much as I could, and I know I went over the speed limit. We stopped for “beans” at Lakeside. Here came Hopkins with steam coming out of his ears, and started chewing on me for exceeding the speed limit. When he paused for breath, I said, “*Mr. Hopkins, we’ve got all those empty cars and that big heavy car on the rear end, and I was trying not to bang you around.*” Hopkins growled, “*I’ll worry about that. You keep your speed down!*”

I remember a story about Hopkins that Bob Law told at one of our Liars Club meetings. Bob was firing on the “Downtown Job” switcher, and they had to put Hopkins’ business car on a passenger train. Well, they saw they were going to have to set the business car over and run around it to get the engine on the right end of the car to make the “joint.” Hopkins came out and asked the Switch Foreman what he was doing. When the Foreman told him they would have to run around his car, he just said, “*Th’ hell with that! Drop ‘Er!*” Then he got down on the steps, gave the hoghead a “pin” sign for the drop, cut the car loose, climbed up and handled the hand brake to the “joint.”

One of the best stories I ever heard involved Steve Woodson, who was firing on Passenger Train No. 19 at Kirk, OR. It was a hot summer day, and the lady Operator was in shorts and a little halter top. When she went to hand the Orders up to Steve, her string (or strap, or whatever held that halter-top on), snapped! Of course, she dropped both hoops and made a two-handed grab to stop it from falling off! Naturally, Steve could not get the Orders. He hollered at the Engineer Fred Fredriksen and Fred shut-off and began to stop. The Operator was still standing there hanging on to that halter-top as the Conductor went by. Finally, she clamped one arm across her chest and bent down, grabbed the hoops and handed them up to the Rear Brakeman. She then took off at a high lope for the station to get herself repaired. Fred worried all the time that he was going to get in trouble. Steve said, “*What am I going to tell them about the delay? Tell them the Operator’s halter string broke, and she couldn’t hand up the Orders!*”

“*Oh, Lord. I can’t tell them that,*” said Fred. “*You better not tell them that I missed the Orders*”, said Steve. Steve said that as he went back to get the Orders, the Rear Brakeman was bringing up the orders, and the Conductor was standing in the vestibule just doubled-over laughing, it tickled him so bad! However, I don’t think the Operator thought it was funny.

Another time I heard Steve tell a story, it was up at the station at Carter. The regular Operator had laid-off, so they sent a little young girl out, and she had to hand-up an Order. Well, she came out of the station with the Order all ready. She looked down the tracks at the big black Malley engine coming at her, belching fire and smoke, and at the last moment, she panicked, threw the order hoop in the air, and ran for her life! The hoop went sailing high, hit the side of the engine and bounced in the air and off into the weeds. By the time they stopped, Steve had to walk back about 75 cars to find the hoop!

Another one I heard that I thought was pretty good was Train #16 coming through Junction City. There were Orders for #16 to pick up, so the Fireman grabbed the hoop and handed it to Engineer Sam Carpenter. Sam took the Orders off the hoop, threw them out the window, and then sat there staring at the hoop! So, they had to stop so the Fireman could go back to the Conductor and find out what the Orders were! He said Sam looked real stupid, throwing the Orders out the window and sitting there staring at the hoop! You know, things like that were comical, but the guys that were involved never wanted to talk about it.

I have learned other things over the years. Quite a few years after I went to work, I noticed at some stations, they would occasionally would have a long-standing work order or speed restriction that they would put out day after day. Some of the old Operators would copy the Orders ahead of time by hand. I had not seen handwritten Orders, and I noticed that every time I’d see one of those, the handwriting would be beautiful! I mentioned to an old Engineer, “*Boy, some of these old guys sure have beautiful*

*handwriting!* He replied, “*When I first went to work there was no such thing as a typewriter, and there weren’t very many good jobs, so anybody with good handwriting would head right for the railroad and get an Operator’s job.*”

Back then, not only did they have to learn Morse code, all the Orders had to be hand-written. They had to be written clearly, because the railroad did not have any block signals, they did not have radios, so, you could easily have a head-on collision if someone didn’t read his orders correctly. Like the Rule states: “They must be brief and clear, in the prescribed forms when applicable, and without erasure, alteration or interlineations.”

Therefore, whoever wrote those Orders had to write them with very good handwriting. Because their handwriting was generally better, that is why many of the first jobs women got on the railroad were as Operators. I’ve wondered out load about that, and the old Engineer said, “*Back in those days, when you got an Order, you had to be able to read it! Many a boy got off the farm by having good handwriting, and went to work on the railroad.*” Some of those things we don’t think about now, really made a difference in those days.

One job I enjoyed was when deadheading down to Ashland to work a job there. I always liked that. I would catch Train #329 at Eugene, hunt up the Pullman Porter, slip him a dollar and get an empty berth! I’d get up around Glendale, go to the diner, and have a real good breakfast. When we stopped at Grants Pass, I’d go up and get on the engine. Doss Burgess would be the engineer and he would say to me, “*Take over here. Let’s see if you’ve learned anything.*” I’d take over and we would go right on into Ashland.

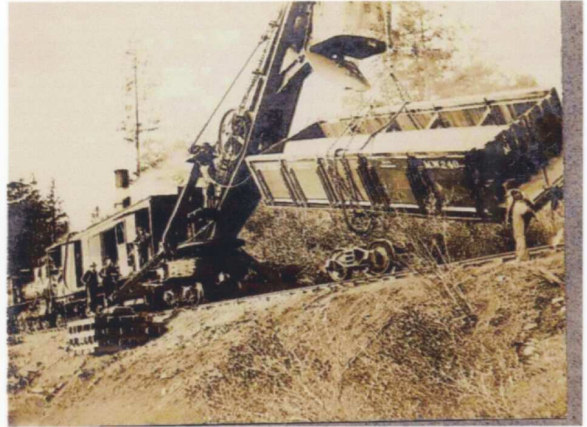
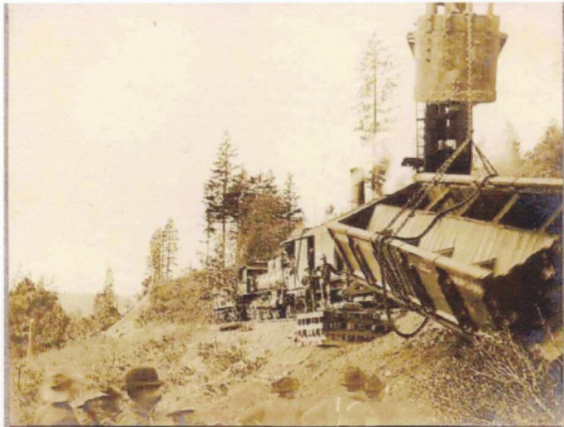
You know, working Trains #329-330 could sometimes be rough. You’d stop for quite a spell at Eugene and you’d begin to get sleepy. Then from Salem on up to Portland, the sun would be right in your eyes. We were on #330 once, and had made the station stop at Woodburn. I said to the Engineer, “*Man, it’s hard to stay awake!*” He replied, “*Don’t feel bad. My head has been between my knees since we left Salem!*”

Conductor Russell Hagg worked #329-330 often. Once, he let a suspended Brakeman ride, got caught doing it, and got in a lot of trouble over it. Well, this one time I got on #329 at Eugene, Russell was standing there. He says to me, “*Where’s your pass?*” So, I got it out and showed it to him. Russell was mumbling, “*B’God, ain’t nobody going to ride this train ‘less they got the fare or a Pass!*” A little Brakeman got on behind me, and again Russell says, “*Where’s your Pass?*” The Brakeman said, “*I don’t need any Pass. I’m bigger than you!*”

Bill Eddings once told me a story when he was the Fireman on a local freight switching at Phoenix, between Talent and Ashland. While switching they let a car get away going downgrade towards Medford. They took off after it and chased it through downtown Medford, with the Hoghead blasting his whistle all the way for the grade crossings. He said they sailed through Medford at about 40 MPH. They caught the car just west of Tolo, and since nobody got hurt – and no collisions – they thought they would say nothing and hush it up. However, the next day, the Medford Trainmaster picked up his paper on his front porch, opened it to the front page and the headline said, WILD CHASE THROUGH DOWNTOWN MEDFORD!!!



Here are a few more selections from the chapter archives. These six photos are part of a series of fourteen photos contained in a booklet published by the old Colestein Lodge along the Siskiyou Line near Hilt, CA. It appears these photos show reconstruction work near Siskiyou Summit circa 1905. Top left photo shows a train on the Whitepoint trestle before it was filled in. The Top Right photo shows a work train filling a trestle near Steinman, OR. The booklet is part of the collection of Rick Aubin.



The two upper photos proves mishaps can happen anywhere. A Maintenance of Way gondola has gone off the rails and Southern Pacific has brought in one of their big hooks to re-rail the car. Notice the "V" shape floor that allows rock to move to both sides for unloading. The bottom left photo looks under the Wall Creek trestle. In the distance between the two stumps is a second trestle on the same railroad line below near Steinman. The bottom right photo looks upward at the Wall Creek trestle from the vantage point of the lower trestle. Notice the wooden slides placed to divert the dumping of fill to the outer sections of the trestle bents.

