



THE MANIFEST

NEWSLETTER OF THE SOUTHERN OREGON CHAPTER, NRHS – APRIL 2008
PO BOX 622 MEDFORD, OR. 97501

MEMO FROM THE PRESIDENT We are two weeks away from the park opening and we still need to fill some slots for this year's docents. Anyone that has not been contacted or would like to volunteer for some additional slots, please contact Don Pettit at 541-601-4772.

If we do not have adequate volunteers we will end up opening some of the displays on a limited or rotating basis. This year we are going to emphasize operation of our concession stand, rail operations (handcar/maintenance of way vehicle) and our visitor center (CB&Q). This Means the flanger and caboose 1107 may open as static displays with limited access.

One addition that we want to work on this year is a static display orator (ala California State Railway Museum). These are normally tripped by electric eye that initiates a recording in the static display that will give a pre-recorded history etc. Anyone that might be interested in setting this up for the flanger, and possibly Caboose 1107, contact Tony Johnson.

I am personally excited about our opening this year as our new exhibits and programs that are in place will provide us the opportunity to take our in-park program to a new interactive level with the public and provide a new avenue for our club to continue to expand and grow.

APOLOGY FROM THE EDITOR It's very likely you're wondering why this issue is a week late in reaching you, so I'll explain. Back on October 17th my father, Yvon Johnson, suffered a stroke which temporarily paralyzed his right side. After months of therapy and rehab he was released. He wanted to return to his nice apartment inside a Medford retirement complex called Anna Maria Creekside. He was not well enough to take care of himself so I moved in with him back on January 5. In spite of continuing physical improvement he suffered a fatal stroke on March 21.

Because of the time needed to prepare a gravesite internment at the V.A. cemetery at Eagle Point, a memorial for his friends at Anna Maria Creekside, as well as spending time with visiting relatives from out of state, there wasn't enough time for me to work on this newsletter. Now that my life is beginning to return to normal I will again have time to work at the Railroad Park and this newsletter.

I do wish to say a few words about my dad. He was my hero. Born in Vichy, France on March 24, 1920, he was an extremely intelligent man who never spoke down to anyone. He served in the U.S. Navy during WWII as an Aviation Chief Radio Technician. It was while serving in the navy he met his future wife, Jeannette Lafaurie. She passed away in July 2003 after over 60 years of marriage.

My Dad retired from the San Francisco Unified School District in 1980, but in reality, never retired. He took many positions as an administrator, treasurer, or controller for many health organizations. He always said he wanted to remain mentally challenged.

The best tribute for my Dad came on March 25 at the V.A. cemetery. My family hoped we would be able to have an honor guard at the ceremony, but our country did more than that. In addition to the five-man honor guard (complete with three volleys from their rifles), there were four active duty military people on hand – two from the Air Force, one Army bugler, and one Navy Wave officer. The American flag was folded and presented to me, salutes were given and then the bugler played “Taps.”

I was crying when the Navy Wave (a Lieutenant, Junior Grade) presented the American flag to me, and when she spoke those words, “On behalf of the President of the United States, and a grateful country....” I felt so proud of my Dad that all I could say was, “On behalf of my family, and speaking for myself as a navy veteran during Vietnam, and my father who served in the Navy during WWII, and his father before him who served in the Army artillery in France during WWI, we consider it a honor and a privileged to have served our country.”

At that moment of extreme loss I never felt so proud in all my life.

Now please excuse me while I indulge in one more bit of sad news. About sixteen years ago I met Paul DeRouen of Elk Grove, CA. We had a mutual fondness for the Southern Pacific Railroad, and while I was the editor of *FLIMSIES* and *SP REVIEW* magazines in the 1990s, Paul continually sent me a flood of newsworthy information about the Southern Pacific that I could use. We also traded photos and videotapes of train action that we took. He occasionally sent me historical information that I’ve used in past issues of our MANIFEST newsletter. Every month I made sure he got a copy of the MANIFEST.

Several decades ago Paul lost a leg (and nearly his life) in the line of duty as a Sacramento County Deputy Sheriff. He didn’t let that stop him from doing what he loved. His humor, like mine, was warped. I don’t think I could ever think of half the funny stuff that he did.

He raised a wonderful family and was very active in model railroading. Paul passed away at age 50 after a sudden and brief illness shortly after the death of my Dad. I offer my sincere condolences to Paul’s wife Michele, daughter Lisa and his son David.

Now for some uplifting news. Last month we reported chapter member Art Turner’s son David was experiencing kidney rejection and liver problems in a Portland hospital. Since that report David improved, then fell back a bit, but as last report had improved considerably to the point where he may be sent home in a few weeks. Please keep the Turner family in your prayers.

APRIL CHAPTER TRIP TO COOS BAY It’s official! Our NRHS Southern Oregon Chapter and the NRHS Oregon Coast Chapter will get together for a day of fun at Coos Bay, Oregon. Our club will be going on a one-day road trip to Coos Bay on Saturday, April 19 to visit our friends of the Oregon Coast Chapter, NRHS. This is everyone’s opportunity to make that first trip to the coast this year and meet and swap stories with another club. All of you crossover persons please let your other Medford Railroad Park clubs know that everyone is welcome to come regardless of club affiliation.

At Coos Bay we’ll tour the Oregon Coast Chapter’s collection of locomotives and rolling stock, plus see what else they are doing. It is our understanding that some members of the Yaquina Pacific Chapter, NRHS chapter will also be there.

How to get there Richard Jamsgard, President of the Coos Bay Chapter sent us directions, along with listing the local motels and phone numbers in case some folks may want to take off for home the next morning, or arrive there on the night before.

Directions: go north on I-5 to Winston. Then go west to Myrtle Point; north to Coquille and Coos Bay. We are on the East side of Highway 101, across from McDonalds in Coos Bay. The old story that you cannot miss us is true.

This next sentence from Richard Jamsgard is the important part! "For lunch our guys recommend a take out or go to Subway two blocks away. We also have Wendy's, Arby's, Burger King and, of course, McDonald's."

There are some folks that may want to carpool, so if that being the case then we'll probably meet at the Railroad Park probably about 6:15-6:30am and leave for Coos Bay at 7:00am. That should get us there round about 10:30 am "including" pit stops; so figure 3 to 3¼ hrs drive

If you wish to arrive in Coos Bay the night before (Friday, April 18), or stay overnight afterwards, here are the main hotels.

Coos Bay

- Holiday Motel: ½ mile north on Hwy. 101 Phone: 800-228-8655
- Edgewater Inn: 3 blocks south of our facility behind Fred Meyer and Safeway Phone: 541-267-0423
- Motel 6 - one mile north of our place on Highway 101 - phone:541-267-7171
- Red Lion (right before Motel 6) on Highway 101 North phone: 541-267-4141
- The Timber Inn is closed (bankrupt)

In North Bend

- Mill Casino Highway 101 - two miles north of us. Phone: 541-756-8800
- Pony Village Motor Lodge. Phone: 541-756-9091 Food service available in Pony Village restaurant.
- Bay Bridge Motel - just on the north end of North Bend Bridge. Economy no food - Hilltop restaurant across and north a ¼- mile or less for dinner and bar. Phone: 541-756-3151.

In Charleston

- Captain John's Motel in the boat moorage area. Phone: 541-888-4941 (approximately a 10 mile drive from Coos Bay.)

PARK OPENING COMING UP This 2008 year will be the 27th year that our Medford Railroad Park has been open to the public free of charge. Poorer than normal winter weather conditions pushed aside our scheduled preparations for opening day, but we're sure the park will at least be presentable. We'll begin by cleaning up the debris left lying around at various restoration and constructions sites. The grass needs to be cut, garbage cans need to be emptied, and we need to clean our various displays.

In preparation for first run day chapter member Tom Baldwin began the process by cleaning and dusting the interior and windows of Southern Pacific caboose #1107. Thank you, Tom.



Dave Mihevc is a man on a mission. Driving the long distance to Medford from his home in Myrtle Creek, Dave likes working with metal. On a cold March morning we see Dave securing the top of a new steel corner post that was fabricated by Ric Walch at Medford Fabrication. —Ric Aubin photo

A closer look shows how well the replacement post came out. Steve Bruff took the measurements and it came out perfect. It looks exactly like the other corner posts. When painted no one will notice the difference. —Ric Aubin photo



Here is the damaged end after installation of the new corner post. The circular item is a polling pocket, used in the old days to move a car on an adjacent track by the use of a long pole — and long ago outlawed. Above and to the side of the polling pocket we used carriage bolts instead of riveting as it was easy to do, it has the same look, and certainly much less noisy. —Ric Aubin photo



(LEFT) Any grab iron off the P&E hopper car not too badly bent out of shape was heated and pounded straight. We were able to save many of the grab irons in this manner. — *Ric Aubin photo*

(RIGHT) This photo shows a slightly bent, original grab iron in front of two newly fabricated ones. Medford Fabrication has consistently provided us with their expertise. — *Ric Aubin photo*



(LEFT) Dave Mihevc is about to create a new grab iron for the P&E hopper. Using the fabricated “feet” from Medford Fabrication and a steel rod created a near perfect facsimile. — *Ric Aubin photo*

(RIGHT) This photo has nothing to do with the hopper car. What this is, is photographic proof there were at least two workers in the Railroad Park who have never heard any of Ric Walch’s stories of heroism. That’s Ric on the left as they work on the foundation for the new archives building.— *Ric Aubin photo*



P&E HOPPER CAR REPORT During the month of March, work continued on the 1899 Pacific & Eastern Railroad hopper car. Steve Bruff completed detailed measurements of the damaged pretzel-twisted corner support steel piece; then completed a detailed not-to-scale drawing of the piece. Over at Medford Fabrication Ric Walch completed an engineering drawing of the piece suitable for manufacture of the piece on the company's plasma table. Dave Mihevc and Steve installed the corner piece and found it to be a real nice fit. Installation of this corner piece allows attachment of all the other grab irons, steps and brackets necessary to complete the restoration of the corner area. Other old, bent grab irons were removed.

During the month Ric Walch also supplied a number of fabricated grab iron "feet" from MedFab's plasma table. Using those feet and steel rod, Dave fabricated the first four replacement grab irons and later Steve fabricated another ten. A few of the old grab irons/step assemblies can be straightened and used again.

After installation of the new grab irons/steps there will be a noisy time of beating out the dents that are not so bad that they can't be beat out, installation of brackets holding the walkway around the car, straightening the brake wheel assembly and installing same, wash off the moss, etc. and ultimately painting the car. Steve anticipates a noise contest as he and Dave beat out dents in the hopper car, the crew building the archives building ramps up the hammering noises and surely someone at the same time will want to test the Purvis bell, just to make sure it will work for the upcoming season when the park will be open to the public.

STORAGE SHED Our new concession stand storage shed should be ready for the April 13 park opening day. Our original plan was to construct the shed indoors at Medford Fabrication and then transport it to its new location next to our chapter's concessions stand. However, like so many of our plans, it didn't work out like we wanted, so we constructed it on site instead.

Project coordinator Rick Aubin and his wife Nancy have done most of the work by themselves, although Ric Walch and Steve Bruff have also helped. The new shed is a few feet west of our concession stand. As of April 5th what is left to be done is the roofing (they do have the felt down). The door is cut, but will be framed on the inside. Also needed to be done are the two ends of siding on each end that goes up into the eave. The trim also needs to be done.

Rick is hopeful that by Opening Day the shed will be done except the painting. The last item will be to construct a deck between the concession stand and the storage shed. The storage shed measures 8x 8 and its 8 x 12 with the deck and porch.

The concession stand itself received a facelift last month. Last year we used a leftover eight-foot display case that was originally planned to go into our CB&Q Visitor Center caboose. Although nice as a display case it left too much wasted space when used as a countertop. It was too wide, so Rick removed the display case and constructed a new countertop with storage space underneath. He finished sealing off the vacated counter area with new sheetrock. The old display case will be useful later to display chapter artifacts when our new archive building nears completion.

ARCHIVES BUILDING A combination of bad weather and a shortage of help have slowed work on our new archives/library building at the park. Ric Walch said that instead of pushing hard to get the basic structure of the building up by the park's April 13th opening day, he is more interested in making sure NRHS is ready for first run day.

As we go to press we can report that Jerry Hellinga is almost finished constructing the foundation concrete forms. Next on the list is to lay down a vapor barrier, then some more gravel, and finally wire mesh in the flat area and rebar in the perimeter. We have no doubt that progress will speed up after Opening Day and the arrival of warmer weather. I look forward to the day when we can display much of our chapter's collection, as well as having a central place to store our archives.



(LEFT) There is more to a Railroad Park than just locomotives, rolling stock and model trains. Over the past seven years our park has been transformed from a collection of railroad stuff, to a true park-like setting where the public can spend a nice afternoon together. Not to be overlooked are the many little changes that together make a visible difference. Rick Aubin changed the entrance pathway by replacing the ugly plastic safety fence with hog wire fencing. —Rick Aubin photo

(RIGHT) For a variety of reasons our plan didn't materialize to construct our new storage shed indoors at Medford Fabrication. All the work is being done outdoors and the building should be ready when the park opens. Storing the extra inventory during run days will allow room for more souvenirs and food at our concession stand next door. .—Rick Aubin photo



(LEFT) In this April 02 photo Rick Aubin paused to photograph the storage shed as the rafters are going up. Being located next to the concession stand will minimize any delay when a concession stand volunteer needs additional merchandise. .—Rick Aubin photo

(RIGHT) Here is another of those little details not overlooked by Rick and Nancy Aubin. The space between the ground and the bottom of the concession stand is now complete with new flower boxes that will make the area more pleasing to the eye. .—Rick Aubin photo



HANDCAR LOADING PLATFORM Yes. Even though the weather may not be great, Brian Frazier began his Eagle Project (handcar loading platform) project. Brian had sourced free of charge almost everything needed for this project. He has done an excellent job and demonstrated that he deserves to be inducted to the royal order of master scroungers.

Ric Walch said, “I thought I was the world’s greatest scrounger but I think Brian could give me a run for my money. It is also a pleasure to work with Brian on his Eagle project. The next generation of leaders could use a few more Eagle Scouts and young men of Brian’s caliber.”

As this letter goes to press the two loading and unloading ramps/platforms are nearly complete. (See photos.) All that’s left to do is to install the plastic handrails and give the wood a coat of paint. The painting can wait until the April 27 “Run Day”. In addition we need to put up a fence between the loading platform and the Live Steamers track to keep people at the loading platform from getting too close to passing trains.

Rick Aubin says, “The fence should be hog wire between the loading platform and the Live Steamers track. When the G-gauge club leaves for their new outdoor garden layout we will have to take down their fence and replace it with hog wire and get it moved over on line. Jerry and I looked at it the other day. Wire is easier and quicker and matches the other fence from the SP1107 caboose around to the beanery.”

Rick adds, “At the south end of the east deck we will need to fence it from the deck east to the cyclone fence. Jerry has a metal gate by the speeder shed that needs to be put in for access though there. We’ll use the extra post for that. Jerry needs to put some more rock between the east deck and the fence and some more rock needs to go on the West side of the new ramp and the Live Steamer’s track.”

The Southwest Oregon Large Scale Trains club has indicated that they want the public to go to the loading platform area by walking behind the Southern Pacific boxcar. This is a good idea as it will allow park visitors to walk around their club’s outdoor layout without having to pass people waiting to ride the handcar. For now this means we will need to put up an 'orange fence' barricade so that the public will not wander off into our storage yard. This can be pretty simple since we have plenty of steel fence posts and orange fencing. The gravel pile needs to be leveled behind the boxcar and a good entrance with signing needs to be done for the entrance for the motor car. We may need to buy some of the wire panels.

NEW PARK SIGN If there is a category for the “longest time to complete a project award”, it would be this one. Before the City of Medford and the State of Oregon decided to improve (if that’s the correct description) the Highway 99/62 intersection in downtown Medford, the route to our Railroad Park was pretty straightforward. That is, follow Table Rock Road until you find one of two green “Railroad Park – 500 feet ahead” signs on the sidewalk.

After the competition of the new highway interchange the City removed the one sign south of the park entrance. It’s very likely we lost many potential visitors because they didn’t know our Railroad Park was there. Finally last year the City replaced the missing sign they removed earlier. But with or without the two signs, there wasn’t a Railroad Park sign at the corner of Berrydale & Table Rock Road; only a wooden, hand-carved “Fire District Station” sign.

Over many years we tried to get the City of Medford to place a “Railroad Park” sign above, below or anywhere near the fire department sign on the corner so first time visitors would know there is a railroad park there. Unfortunately, the City dragged its feet while picking their collective noses, so then we asked for permission to place our own sign there. They gave us permission with the provision that it had to be similar in design to the fire department sign, about the same size, and not to block from view the fire station sign.



(LEFT) Is Bruce McGarvey looking for rain or divine intervention? Despite the bad weather in March, the work on the new loading platform for our handcar and motorcars picked up steam. Here Bruce is checking the level for each post so that everything added afterward will be perfect.—*Rick Aubin photo*

(RIGHT) Last year's temporary loading platform is a memory when compared to the new platform. The public will walk up the wheelchair accessible ramp and be able to board our cars from both sides with ease. Exit staircases on both sides will allow a quick exit and boarding so we can make more trips. —*Rick Aubin photo*



(LEFT) From this angle you see how close we are to the two mainline tracks of the Southern Oregon Live Steamers. Before our season opens on April 13th a fence will be installed to protect the public from wandering too close to moving trains of the Live Steamers. —*Rick Aubin photo*

(RIGHT) A little closer view shows how well project coordinator Brian Fraiser planned this ramp. He built this ramp as part of his Eagle Scout requirement for community service. New plastic handrails are now in place since this photo was taken. —*Rick Aubin photo*



Now it was our turn to pick our noses until a few years later chapter member Bruce McGarvey found a piece of redwood that was just the right size. Bruce said he would use a router to carve out "Railroad Park" and then mount it on top of the fire department sign. Several more years passed and still no sign. Occasionally we would pester Bruce about getting it done, but since no one else wanted to do it, nothing was done.

Well, guess what? It's done! On Friday, March 4, 2008 Bruce installed the new sign at the corner of Berrydale and Table Rock Road. Any first time visitor should now see signs announcing there is a special railroad park nearby. Thank you Bruce!

FUTURE ACTIVITIES AT THE PARK One date to look forward to is the weekend of June 6, 7 & 8, 2008. This is the annual "Espee in Oregon" meet where railroad enthusiasts from the West Coast go to celebrate their beloved Southern Pacific Railroad memories. Held in Klamath Falls last year, this year promises to be even bigger as we have a lot to offer.

While Final preparations are still in the works, it is planned for everyone to visit our Medford Railroad Park on the morning of June 7th. All five Railroad Park clubs will participate by operating their displays, and there will be a catered picnic around noon. Like a mini-version of the much larger Southern Pacific Historical & Technical Society's (SPH&TS) annual conventions, this Espee in Oregon meet is less formal and a lot of fun.

There will be photo presentations, a swap meet, and a tour or two. One likely tour will be at the famous Micro-Trains Line's facility in nearby Talent., OR. As I find out complete details I will post them in the May newsletter.

Speaking of the Southern Pacific Historical & Technical Society's annual convention, chapter member Tom Dill suckered me into being chairman for trying to get the SPH&TS convention to be held in Medford in 2010. Each year the SPH&TS rotates where the convention is held. One year it is in southern California, the next year in northern California, and the third year somewhere out of state. The 1994 SPH&TS convention was held in Eugene (Tom Dill was chairman for that one) and in 2000 it was held in Portland.

Last year I sent the SPH&TS board of directors an outline of what we have to offer in the way of activities – both for railfans and non-railfans, hotel convention accommodations, and so on. I expect to receive a yes or no answer later this year. Tom feels we've got a good shot at it because Portland does not want to do it in 2010, and Eugene has not much to offer anymore.

If we get the nod we can expect from 200-250 people attending the convention, which translates into additional publicity for our chapter and our Railroad Park, as well as lots of souvenir sales. So, keep your fingers crossed. (Oh, I suckered Tom Dill into being Co-Chairman.)

April General Meeting! On account of this newsletter being printed the day before our regular chapter membership meeting for April 8th, we'll just say that the May membership meeting will be on Tuesday, May 13 at the model railroad clubhouse. I will announce the evening's entertainment in the may MANIFEST.

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	Art Turner, Chief Mechanical Officer – 541-826-6291
Jerry Hellinga, Treasurer 541-772-6432	Rickie Aubin, Secretary - 541-779-4259
Steve Bruff, Dir. Of Public Relations – 541-261-5741	Tony Johnson, Newsletter Editor/Historian – 541-944-9176
John Powell, Activities Director – 541-826-1992	Nancy Aubin, Membership Director – 541-779-4259

GOOD OLD DAYS OF RAILROADING We have space for more old stories from veteran Southern Pacific engineers. The first story is not from a locomotive engineer, but a civil engineer. E.O. "Ed" Williams worked his way up from his days at water pumping stations for steam locomotives on the El Paso &

Southwestern Railroad in the 1920s, to Division Engineer on Southern Pacific's Rio Grande Division. E.O. Williams passed away in 1994 at age 91.

THE SLAG DRAG by E.O. Williams During my early days on the El Paso & Southwestern, I saw the large excavation in the earth near Tecolote, NM, where the ballast had been secured for the El Paso & Rock Island of Charles Eddy's railroad system.

About 1920 the EP&SW opened a ballast quarry at Gallinas, a few miles east of the Tecolote site. A semi-circular track of about 1000 ft. radius was constructed. A tower about 20 feet high mounted on freight car trucks was placed on that track and a heavy cable was strung between that tower and a similar one built stationary at the center of that semi-circle. A small steel car was hung from the cable for transportation of the rock mined within the circle to the crusher sitting near a side track. The crushed rock was placed in a bin so that ballast cars on a siding could be loaded.

Much of this material was used on the line between Tucumcari and El Paso on the Eastern Division of the EP&SW. At Steins on the SP, a quarry was set up to mine tufa rock for ballast. Tufa was used extensively between El Paso and Yuma.

In both these situations over the years it was found that both the limestone and tufa rock disintegrated and formed a concrete-like material in the track. The limestone formed pockets at each tie in some places that retained rain water and slush. I saw passenger engines come into Carrizozo plastered underneath with that slush material. In my early days as an instrument man staking tangent track where surfacing operations were being performed, we had to drive a steel pin through the solidified material to make a hole to receive the tack for the center line.

With a large smelter at El Paso and two at Douglas, a huge supply of blast furnace slag was accumulated. The SP began trying some of the crushed slag for ballast. It did very well. Slag did not deteriorate and track drainage was much better. In fact, in later years where slag ballast had become fouled by wind-borne material, a ballast cleaner was used to clean the ballast and put it back in the track.

When SP first started using slag it was mined by boring about a 30-inch tunnel back about 25 feet and forming a 'T' at the end. The 'T' was loaded with explosives, back-filled, and blasted. Since the slag was deposited in layers as the hot material was poured, it cooled in layers. Thus, the resulting material from the blast shattered very well into usable ballast.

There were, however, chunks and boulders as well. For years this material was shipped out to the various jobs and the boulders and large chunks discarded on site. This was not a satisfactory arrangement. Wasted labor disposing of the unwanted material and wasted transportation costs were incurred.

During my term as Division Engineer of the Rio Grande Division (1955-1967) we handled the ballast process where the smelters were located. Eventually we convinced management that it would be a savings to install a crusher in the slag pit at the Phelps Dodge smelter at Douglas. Also, we found we could put a D-8 tractor with a heavy ripper on top of the slag and plow it loose and shove it over to the shovel instead of blasting. With this arrangement we got ballast limited to 2 inch size, the "fines" were sifted, and the resulting material was 100% usable. Slag ballast became standard, more or less, from Yuma to Tucumcari.

During tie renewal and surfacing jobs I was able to eliminate all those "bad spots" on the El Paso-Tucumcari line. I had a surfacing job going east of Corona NM, and I kept ordering cars of slag for the job. It would arrive in El Paso yard by Douglas local, but the Operating Dept. kept delaying forwarding the cars. Eventually 99 ballast cars were being held and my surfacing job was hurting. A decision was finally made to run a 99 car ballast train to Carrizozo. A Road Foreman of Engines went along as they anticipated trouble with 99 one hundred ton cars in the train. They had trouble! They were not able to make the 144 miles in the allowable 16 hours! Eventually they got there though.

The Roadmaster of the Carrizozo District called a work train with all those cars. He placed a Jordan spreader in the middle of the train. When he got to the job he put 49 cars in the siding and with the spreader on the rear of the rest he started unloading ballast and plowing off with the spreader. He unloaded all 99 cars in one work day!

I got a call from the Asst. Engineer Maintenance of Way in San Francisco wanting to know what I was doing unloading 99 cars of slag at one time. When he learned the full story he seemed satisfied. 9900 tons of ballast in one day! We had been waiting weeks and preparing for it. It finally came.

* * * * *

Our second story is from longtime contributor Tom Weston. Tom began his long railroad career when he started as a callboy, then a clerk, fireman, and finally was promoted to locomotive Engineer. Tom started his career in Tracy in 1936 and retired in 1980 – forty-four years of Southern Pacific service in all.

MY BIG MOUTH by Tom Weston There are times when a person’s mouth can get him or her, into bad situations. Here is how it happened to me on time.

Engineer Valentine Graham and I were “first out” on the Pool Freight board in Fresno, CA. We knew we would be called soon, but we were not all that anxious because we had heard some of the crews in the hotel talking about the dense fog they had just worked through.

We were called for a train to Roseville and those enginemen had not exaggerated that fog one bit. It was so thick we could hardly find the engine at the roundhouse. It was a huge freight engine with a 2-10-2 wheel configuration. This arrangement was called a Santa Fe type, although SP men referred to them a “decks”, as in decapods, referring to the ten driving wheels.

When we finally found our way to the train and got ready to go, the head brakeman brought us our train orders. One of these orders said, “Dense for reported over engine Division. Run at reduced speed as necessary to ensure safety.” This was not very reassuring, and most of the freight trains had so many cars and were so heavy you could not make the maximum allowable speed anyway.

Now, when you had a big engine in a dense fog, the fireman’s visibility of anything to the right of the track, which was where the block signals were, was practically nil. This was because by the time you got close enough for anything, especially the block signals, to be seen in the fog, the fireman’s view would be blocked by the boiler of the locomotive. This, of course, made the engineer’s job more difficult because he was the only one who could see anything at all.

On this night, poor Val had to keep his head and neck out in the fog, like a turtle, for the entire trip. He could not look through his front window for more than a few seconds at a time because the fog would steam it up very quickly and there were no window wipers on the windows.

In those days, if there was a train on the track ahead of you, you would get one yellow block signal to warn you, and the next signal would be red. Because you knew that the train ahead of you could be sitting just beyond the red signal, you also knew that if you missed a yellow signal in the fog you would never be able to stop before passing the red signal. I am sure this thought must have gone through engineer Graham’s mind many times that night.

We finally made it to Akers, about 120 miles from Fresno and stopped for water. This is where I opened my big mouth and got into trouble. Val made a real good stop in the fog and although he got a few feet past the water spout, he had stopped with the train all stretched out so he just took a couple of feet of slack and he was right under the spout. I made some dumb remark about him missing the water tank, and man I got exactly what I deserved. He used every cuss word I had ever heard and a lot that I never heard before. He also reminded me that he had to keep his head out in the fog all night while his smart-mouthed fireman had sat there nice and warm with his window closed. As you can imagine, it was chillier inside than outside the engine for the remaining 60 miles to Roseville. But when we got through registering in and were walking to the hotel, Val looked at me and laughed so I knew everything was OK. We worked together many times after that and always got along fine.