

and I, giving us many useful tips and a lot of information about restoring and caring for the passenger cars in our fleet. Several of the steam team mechanics inspected the boiler of the 165, helping the restoration of our steamer tremendously. UP Steam Boss Steve Lee and his lovely Boss, Lynn, held court in the Board room for hours visiting with FRRS members, answering questions and telling stories of his experiences with the UP Steam team. A great time was had by all.

On Tuesday, May 5th, we left Portola with the 844, running solo, headed for Winnemucca, Nevada with yet another trainload of gracious donors on a stretch of trackage that most folks never get to see. After some

long, slow running due to a signal issue, the 844 really stretched her legs, reaching speeds of 70 miles per hour in some stretches. After a brief stop in Elko, we set out for the last leg of our trip, Winnemucca, where our journey with the 844 came to a close.

The Feather River Rail Society would like to extend a big thank you to the Union Pacific Railroad Steam Department for their hospitality and generosity. This was a huge shot in the arm for the FRRS and we had a great time on a trip none of us will likely forget. Also, a huge thank you to all our volunteers who took the time to work the train, clean the museum and perform all the other tasks that were needed to make our end of these fantastic trips possible.

## OCTOBER TRACKWORK

- Wayne Monger, Assistant Roadmaster

The FRRS volunteer track crew (Bill, Bill, Dwayne, Rick, Slim, Seth, Matt, others and myself - I left the crew list at the museum the other day) gathered at Portola on Sat Oct 3 and Sun Oct 4 for 2 days of track repair work on the Balloon Loop track between Milward Switch and Malfunction Jct.

After 1 PM on Sunday, we were working with intermittent snow flurries falling. Starting at Milward Switch and working from there, we only made it approx. 1/4 around the track to where the "yard limit" sign is located. Any rapid inspection and repair work is seriously hampered by the track structure itself being sunk down into and stuck in the (currently dry) mud and clay plus covered with a heavy thick layer of the fine ballast that we dumped out on that track within the past 10 years but never tamped under the ties - all cemented together by that 1/3 car of gypsum that was dumped around the balloon loop a few years before we took over the Portola site. We were having to hand shovel the fine ballast off of the top of the ties to reduce the weight when jacking the rails/ties up out of the (currently dry) mud.

Without shoveling off the overbearing ballast, rails were coming off of the ties or the ties were breaking when the track was in the process of being very slowly jacked upward. I was placing all of the ballast we were shoveling off of the track in a pile in the wide area at the apex of the balloon loop curve as we will need to use this to reballast and tamp the track when we are finished. As I feared, around 1 of every 3 ties we found as we jacked the track up high enough to inspect and work on (including tamping ballast underneath ties)

have failed/rotted under the center or on the outer end under the high stress outside rail of the balloon loop track. We replaced 8 ties at strategic locations under rail joints, as this seems to be the primary locations where ties have failed under high stress. Many others that were still somewhat strong enough to support the outer rail, we pulled the old spikes, plugged the holes and respiked with new spikes. There are sections I found as long as 20 feet where there are no whole spikes remaining against the outer rail, as they have either been sheared off by the rail or worked out of the ties and only gravity and 1 or 2 gauge bars are holding the track together.

It should be noted that I showed all members of the track work party the existing surveyed centerline (steel rebar) markers (from the 1987-88 track survey by original FRRS Roadmaster/Chief Engineer Roger Hepkema and myself) that are placed about every 75 to 100 feet around the Balloon Loop track. At one location where the track had straightened out over the years, the marker showed the track has moved sideways about 5 inches, so we used the back-hoe to pull 3 inches out of that and bring the track back into a smooth curve (but still not exactly centered).

Another track work party weekend has been scheduled for Sat Oct 24 and Sun Oct 25. We will continue from where we stopped on Sunday. The next section we work on from the yard limit sign to the end of the fence at the apex of the curve will be the worst, as this is where the most clay/soil from the sidehill plus the access road has washed down and infiltrated into the track structure, causing wood rot and tie failure. Once we get past the end of the fence out onto the fill over to Malfunction Jct, we should not be finding as many rotted ties sunk down and stuck in dried clay/mud, and thus it should be easier to jack the track

up through the overbearing layer of ballast so we can inspect/replace ties/gauge/repair/retamp it. We will also continue to put back in the 2 inch superelevation into the Balloon Loop track to help reduce the outward stresses on the outer rail.

If you have any questions, let me know. Until Later!



Some views from the Oct 24 - 25 track session. Our hardworking crews jack, align and reballast the balloon loop, aided by some of our locos and heavy machinery.  
-Wayne Monger photos



## THE MINI ZEPHYR

- Eugene Vicknair, Zephyr Project Manager

For the 100th anniversary of the completion of the Western Pacific mainline, a very special train was operated with assistance from the FRRS. Dubbed the "Mini Zephyr", three authentic *California Zephyr* cars now used in charter service ran a special routing tracing the path of the original CZ from Oakland, California to the museum at Portola via the Feather River Canyon.

On October 30, an Amtrak engine pulled into Jack London Square Depot in Oakland, just blocks from the now abandoned WP route on Third Street and the still standing WP Oakland Depot. The train consisted of Chicago, Burlington and Quincy dome-coach "Silver Lariat", Pennsylvania Railroad CZ sleeper "Silver Rapids" and CBQ dome-observation "Silver Solarium". From the looks, even non-train riders walking by sensed this small consist was something unusual. As we rolled down the short stretch of SP line to reach "home" rails at Niles Junction, scores of people stood at crossings and Amtrak platforms waving to our 21st century salute to the "Silver Lady".

From the time we crossed over at Niles, we rode WP rails all the way to Portola except for a brief detour around the now abandoned section through Stockton. The ride through the Feather River Canyon was absolutely amazing, with beautiful sunlight dancing off the canyon walls and a small cadre of fans enthusiastically following us the whole way. I had been asked to ride as the on-board representative of the FRRS, answering questions about the Society, the WPRM and WPRRHS, and the CZ and WP in general. It turned out to be a very pleasurable job as the passengers were all very engaging and interested riders, asking many detailed questions about our current operations and the historical aspects of this train and our route.

Reaching Portola during an excellent dinner (actually, all the food was top notch), we found the volunteers had pulled out all the stops. Waiting for us in the yard was an A-B-A set of Western Pacific F-units, led by the queen of the fleet herself, WP 805-A. As detailed later in this article, two teams of volunteers had spent two weekends making sure she was in her finest look and the engine positively glowed. Just