

Railroad Days 1996

By Gordon Wollesen

Portola's 1996 Railroad Days has come and gone. This year was the 14th annual Railroad Days event and was the 50th anniversary of the incorporation of the City of Portola.

The FRRS prep work started several months ago. Norm and Steve represented the FRRS on the Railroad Days Committee. As the big weekend got closer, our work became more intense. The "Big Push" began the week before the event. The Restoration Department put the final touches on the 2001; the Mechanical Department put 2001 in operating condition and set up our three F7's for operation. 805A (dead) was the controlling unit with the 925C and 921D providing the power. The Operating Department switched out and set our VIA coaches and lounge cars for the second train. During this time, all hands assisted, as available, in setting up the house for the model railroad displays and general cleaning. By 7:00 PM (Friday, August 18, 1996) everything was just about ready. The final touches would be taken care of Saturday morning.

Day 1 started with a pancake breakfast beginning at 6:30 AM for the working crews (the public breakfast started at 7:00 AM). Crew Call was 7:30 AM and the first train out at 9:00 AM. The Train Crew assignments were made; the Mechanical Department went to work getting the locomotives running and working properly. All the final touches were taken care of as crew members were available. By 9:00 AM all was ready and the first train pulled out on the advertised. The train rides were set up for a train to depart every 20 minutes. Each train made 12 trips (a total of 24 train rides each day). As the morning progressed, more and more people arrived on the property to join in our festivities. The community Railroad Days parade started at 11:00 AM and ended about noon. After the conclusion of the parade, a mass of humanity converged on the museum. Most trains were nearly filled to capacity on every run. The last train ran at 5:02 PM. After the day's operations were finished, 2001 and 805A were spotted (side by side) for a photo session. What a sight! The afternoon sun was perfect. Both units glowed like GOD. EMD and Western Pacific intended.

About 3:00 PM, Brigadier General Chuck Yeager (USAF Retired) visited the museum. General Yeager had been invited to visit us and to run the A-B-A set of F7's. The original plan was to let him run at 5:30 PM, (after operations) but a change of his plans required us to change our plans. No problem. General Yeager ran the light engine move (under the expert instruction of Steve Habeck) around the balloon back to the passenger train. He then rode the engine (805A) on the next scheduled trip to observe the operation of the train. As General Yeager prepared to leave, I asked him what he thought about operating a railroad locomotive. He said, "These things are big and heavy, impressive." General Yeager thanked us for letting him do this. As he started to leave, General Yeager turned to me and briefly told me about the changes that have taken place in the Air Force (mainly Germany). Note: General Yeager and I served in the 12th Air Force (Germany) at the same time. He was the commander of the 417th Interceptor Wing at Hahn and I served in the 86th Interceptor Wing at Landstuhl (40 miles away).

Day 2 started out the same as day 1. All was ready for the first train departure at 9:00 AM. The day's ridership was a little less than the first day. Again, train operations ended with the last train at 5:02 PM. The units were again spotted for a Vic Neves photo session. After the photo session, the rental locomotives were spotted for the next day. All other switching was deferred to Monday because all operating personnel were at the threshold of being unsafe.

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Feather River Railroad Days No. 14

By Norm Holmes

The fourteenth annual Feather River Railroad Days is history. Due to the leadership of Betty Heck from the Eastern Plumas Chamber of Commerce, this year's event was back on track with a larger attendance than was experienced the previous year. Train ride tickets, a weathervane of attendance, brought in \$1760 compared to \$1153 last year.

Saturday's parade lasted nearly an hour; our M60A3 tank won first place in the Novelty class! The tank flattened the competition - so to speak. Bruce Cooper was the driver and Sue Cooper the navigator. A number of museum members' children rode on the tank.

At the museum everything was ready. Clyde Lippincott constructed 3 8x10 units, 12" high with railings for use as a stage. This was placed on the dock area. Four office space dividers that we obtained from government surplus were placed at the rear of the stage to provide a "shell." A camouflage net was placed over the area to provide a little shade. On Saturday afternoon Dorothy Patterson, who at one time had a piano bar east of Portola called the Mouse Trap, played piano accompanied by Raleigh Fish on drums. On Sunday afternoon two performances of a puppet show entertained the visitors. Both entertainers enjoyed the new location. Previous years entertainment was on a flat car in the shop building, however the acoustics in the building are terrible, hence the decision to relocate.

A group of seven Buffalo Soldiers camped overnight at our picnic area and a train robbery was enacted on Sunday. The Portola Rotary Club had a booth selling burritos and drinks and several other groups sold drinks, ice cream and snow cones. This took some of the load off of the Beanery. Jack Hathaway came down from Butte, MT to run the Auxiliary Gift Shop while Ken Hitch helped Barbara Holmes in the Gift Shop.

Three model railroad clubs and a small layout by Jim Druckmiller filled the shop building. Operation Life Saver had a booth informing the public about railroad safety. A pancake breakfast was served Saturday and Sunday and the regular lunch fare was available both days.

As usual, a lot of work was done prior to the event with several members spending anywhere from a few days to a week helping. The "locals" just cannot do all the work to get our facility in shape for an event such as this and we really need and appreciate any and all help from other members.



Engineer Steve Habeck is backing out the passenger train with A-B-A set of locomotives lead by FP-7 WP 805A on Railroad Days 1996. Photo by Norm Holmes.

Conclusion of Railroad Days 1996 By Gordon Wollesen

Overall, Railroad Days 1996 was a good and safe event. Everyone in the Operating and Mechanical Departments performed in a professional manner. Well Done!

The Operating and Mechanical Departments:

Engineers: Hank Stiles, Steve Habeck, Norm Holmes, Jack Palmer, Vic Neves.

Firemen: Jack Palmer, Tom Graham, Steve Habeck, Kerry Cochran, Gordon Wollesen.

Conductors: Don Borden, Terry Decottignies, Dave Bergman.

Brakemen: Dave Bergman, Ken Iverson, Don Borden.

Car Attendants: Judy McGrath, Melissa McGrath, Don Clark, Art Young, Jeff Palmer, Ed Powell, Zahra Anise-Lavine, Paul Finnegan, Gary Mackay.

Switch Tenders: Tom Clabaugh, Bob Carr, Bob Lindley.

Crossing Guards: Clyde Lippincott, Dick Woods, Tom Andrews.

Train Tickets: Judy Whitaker, John Whitaker.

Special Helpers: Jordan and Zahra Anise-Lavine.

Mechanical Department: (Black shirts) Hank Stiles, Tom Graham, Peter Lyman, Jeff Palmer, Ed Powell, Doug Morgan.

Police Department: Jim Malkson and friends.

Supervisors: Kerry Cochran, Gordon Wollesen.

Gift Shop: Ken Hitch, Barbara Holmes. Jack Hathaway ran the Gift Shop Annex (baggage car).

Beanery: Skip Englert, David Dewey, Linda Dewey, Janis Peterson, Lolli Bryan, Edna Ede and others.

Special note: Every time a mechanical problem occurred, a radio call to Hank Stiles resulted in an immediate swarm of "Black Shirts" attacking the problem. A mechanical problem didn't stand a chance. A very impressive sight. I think the public was impressed with our expertise.

A big thank you goes to all who put Railroad Days together and made it happen. If I forgot to mention your name, or forgot your name, please forgive me.

Thanks for making my job easier.

Railroad Days Grand Marshall Brigadier General Chuck Yeager



Brigadier General Chuck Yeager is shown at the Museum standing next to WP 805A talking to Gordon Wollesen with Skip Englert in the background. Photo by Norm Holmes.

Railroad Days Related Story

Lolli Bryan, the FRRS Archivist/WPRRHS Conservator, opened our UP 105 business car during Railroad Days 1996 for public viewing from 3-5 PM. She had a beautiful display of Western Pacific and California Zephyr memorabilia for all the visitors to enjoy, topped off with a fresh carnation on the table. She had California Zephyr place settings, a full WP service, and WP awards for years of service, 5-year, 10-year, etc.

Also on display was a golden hammer that had been used to drive the final spike at the joining of the rails of the WP at Spanish Creek Trestle (Keddie Wye). Also there were assorted WP pictures for the visitors to enjoy.

Jerry Gervais had on display his conductor's cap from the California Zephyr, as well as his ticket punch and his passenger service lantern.

Along with Lolli, in the UP 105 business car was Mary Lou (Woodward) Zasso, who had been a CZ Zephyrette in 1953. She answered visitors' questions about the California Zephyr. A Zephyrette was a lady that was on each California Zephyr train to assist passengers, such as helping mothers who may have needed help with an infant, or to help passengers who needed first aid.

Jerry Gervais drove his Model A in the Railroad Days parade. He even had a fresh carnation in his boutonniere.

Lolli issues a special thank you to Gordon Wollesen for providing power to the 105 car for lights. During Railroad Day, she will again have the UP 105 car open with CZ and WP memorabilia on display.

A Real Friend

By Gordon Wollesen

To get the museum entrance road and parking lot ready for Railroad Days, Tobe Smith was hired to water the road and parking lot Friday evening (dust control). Friday evening Tobe brought his water truck and started the job. Suddenly, the water truck stopped moving. Tobe determined that the rear end had seized up and refused to move. Now what to do. The only other water truck in town was out of service (driver fatigue). Tom Graham to the rescue. Using the backhoe, Tom pulled the water truck while Tobe steered and pumped water. The job got done.

Tom Graham (the real friend of this article) came to the rescue. Tom had a complete rear end for an International truck of this vintage. Tom told Tobe that he would give (free) the rear end to him. All Tobe had to do was go to the Santa Rosa area and pick it up. It was his. Tobe and Ken Iverson went to Tom's on Tuesday and brought the rear end to Portola. Tobe used our shop building to perform the necessary repairs. Thursday (8-22) Tobe finished the repairs and again the truck moved under its own power.

I'm sure that Tobe is very grateful to Tom for his generous gift.

On behalf of the FRRS, I will say to Tom, YOU ARE A REAL FRIEND. Thanks, Tom.