

UP "Challenger" Comes to PRM

- Eugene John Vicknair

The world's largest operating steam locomotive, Union Pacific's 4-6-6-4 "Challenger" 3985, was a special guest at the Portola Railroad Museum from August 31-September 2. The 3985 and her support train were on a six state, 2800 mile tour of the northwest dubbed the "Western Heritage Tour" and Portola was the second public display stop after leaving homebase at Cheyenne, WY.

While in Portola, 3985 was displayed on the west pass near the UP crew office, near the entrance gate to the museum. The train arrived in Portola later than expected when it was delayed by a rangeland fire near Elko. Since the train was carrying extra tanks of water, the crew stopped, pulled out their hoses and gave the fire teams an assist, spawning a few jokes about having the world's largest steam powered fire truck!

The train also had a special guest for the voyage from Cheyenne to Portola. Rod McClure and Steve Habeck had been asked to run a hospital train to Cheyenne consisting of equipment that the museum had been storing for the UP. Our newly repainted caboos, Western Pacific 484, went along to guard the rear, leaving Portola on August 14. The UP had promised to ferry the caboos back to us and they certainly did it in style! WP 484 was positioned right behind the auxiliary water tenders, ahead of the passenger cars. Our little red caboose proved to be quite a draw when the train stopped in Ogden. An estimated 2000 toured the 484 in a single day.

The 3985 left Portola on September 2, accompanied by UP 1983, the Western Pacific heritage unit, heading for display in Roseville.



- photo by Kerry Cochran

Challenger Facts

Union Pacific's 3985, an articulated locomotive with a "hinged" frame to allow it to negotiate curves, is 122 feet long. It weighs more than one million pounds, has six-foot diameter drive wheels and can reach a top speed of 70 miles per hour. The 3985 was built in 1943 for fast freight service and was retired in 1959. In 1981, it was restored to running condition by UP employee volunteers for special service.



Our mighty volunteers are ready for the 3985's visit

Recent Donations to the FRRS

As a member supported organization, the FRRS relies on your donations to enable us to restore and preserve our large collection. Thank you to the following members and businesses for their gifts to the Society in the last 2 months:

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There are many projects we hope to accomplish in 2006, including further restoration on our WWII Pullman Troop Sleeper, returning WP SW1 501 to service and hopefully repainting more rolling stock. Watch for the Fundraising Campaign flyer in your mail soon!