

## IN MEMORY OF NICK PERUSINA

- Lisa N. Johnson

*FRRS member Nick Perusina passed away on September 20, 2007 at the age of 84. He was a devoted member of the organization and had worked many years as a steam engineer and railroad machinist. Nick served his Machinist apprenticeship in Chicago during the transition from steam to diesel. He taught his daughter, Lisa Johnson, much about railroading. About 8 years ago, they visited Portola and Norman Holmes checked Lisa out on one of the yard switchers in our "Run A Locomotive" program.*

*Thanks to Lisa, we can share with you this snapshot of Nick Perusina's life working for the railroad.*

My father, Nicholas S. Perusina was born and raised in Chicago, Illinois in 1921. He grew up there always wanting to get a job working for the railroad. During the late 1930's at the end of the depression railroad jobs were hard to come by and especially for such a young man. But he persisted in contacting the superintendent of the Chicago and Northwestern and was finally given a job where he eventually served his machinist apprenticeship becoming a Journeyman Machinist. He also earned his license in Steam Engineering. He did a tour of duty during WWII with the Navy as a Machinist mate. After his discharge from the service he returned to work for the Alton and the B&O. Eventually moving to the west coast and working for the Western Pacific in their Oakland roundhouse.

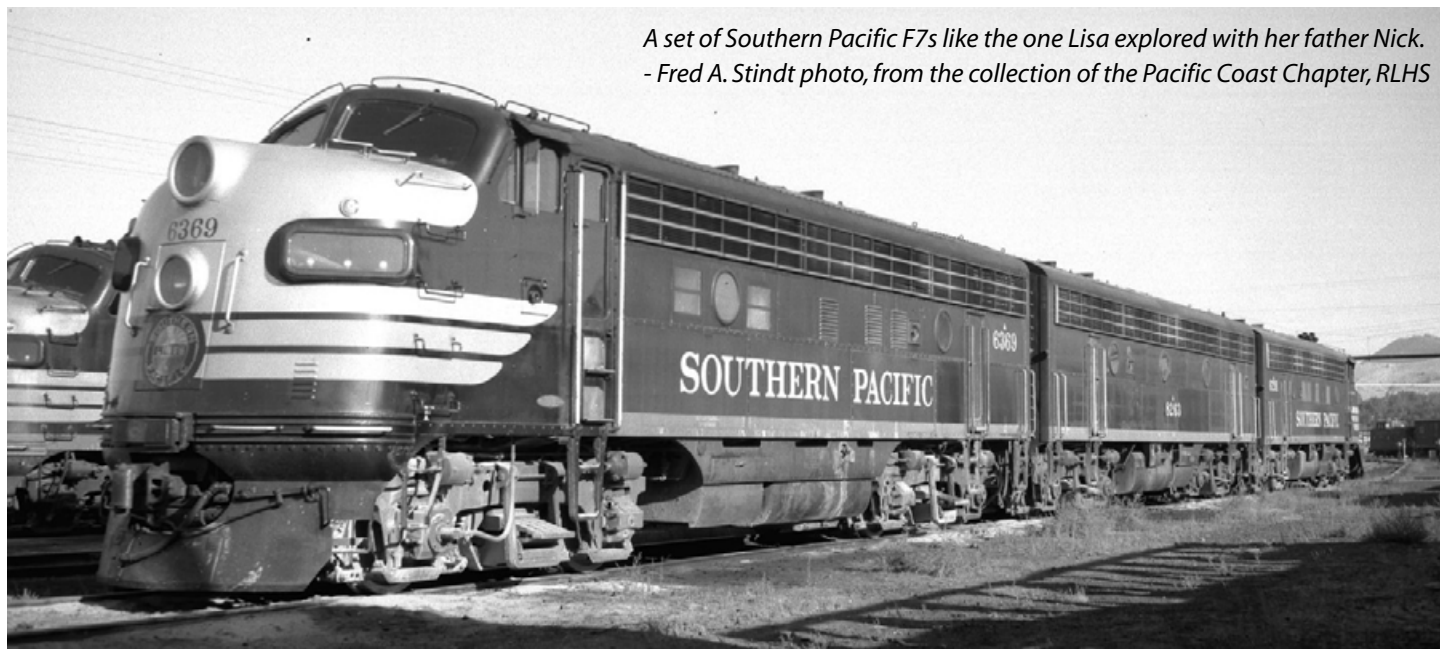
Railroading was always in my father's blood and I so remember his stories of "repairing fire brick in a hot

firebox," forge welding locomotive tie rods and changing "tires" on locomotive drive wheels. Whenever we could get around a steam engine he would always point out to me the different types of levers and "motions" that were specific to each type of engine. Then to his diesel experience how he and his coworkers would change pistons and liners and turn around a locomotive in one shift. He was such a wealth of railroad knowledge and I'm just sorry I didn't get more of it.

I remember one occasion I was about 8 years old and we took a drive to Stockton to the new SP repair facility. The superintendent at that time was a man by the name of "Scotty" Galt. My father worked with Scotty at the Oakland yard. Scotty let my father and I roam around the diesel shop. My father hoisted me up into the cab of an F-7 locomotive that was running. He opened the door to the engine room and I was afraid to follow him into this noisy and pounding environment. My father coaxed me to follow him and I was instantly captivated by the magnificence of this huge running engine. At that point I was hooked on motive power too and just can't get enough of the big power even today.

In his later years he and I would take drives that would eventually end up near a railroad yard and we would sit and marvel at the huge GE and EMD locomotives just idling there. But, we were always drawn back to Steam, truly Nick's railroad roots.

*Thank you, Nick, for your service to your country and the Western Pacific. Your memory lives on.*



*A set of Southern Pacific F7s like the one Lisa explored with her father Nick.  
- Fred A. Stindt photo, from the collection of the Pacific Coast Chapter, RLHS*