

TRAIN Convention Held In Sacramento

The annual TRAIN* convention was held in Sacramento, California November 1 to 6. The California State Railroad Museum sponsored the event and set a standard of excellence that will be impossible to duplicate. Seminars on air brakes, maintenance of way, restoration, organizational development, utilizing volunteers and more were held on Friday and Saturday. FRRS member Dave McClain was asked to conduct a seminar on diesel maintenance. He had only a few days to prepare, but did a fine job.

Norm Holmes and Wayne Monger attended the banquet in the CSRM's "roundhouse". The keynote speaker was Mr. James Sherwood who owns the Simplon/Orient Express Co. He told of his efforts to save and operate this famous train between Paris and Istanbul. He also has a second train in Great Britain. Plans are underway to operate a third train between Singapore and Bangkok using equipment from New Zealand. He may also take over operation of the Blue Train in South Africa. He sees a future for luxury tourist trains in this country.

Our Rail Society had a table in the exhibit hall where we had our special cups, WP Lives bumper stickers and other items for sale. Barbara Holmes, Robin and Shannon Smith were at the table talking with conventioners and answering questions about our museum. Over 100 member organizations were represented by over 300 attendees. FRRS members attending, in addition to those mentioned above, were: Larry Hanlon, Dan Robirds, John Ryczkowski and Hank Stiles. The 1989 convention will be held in Denver during the second week of November.

Radio Controlled Railfanning

by Dave Waters

One of the often asked questions around the museum during the operating season is "What is the frequency for the UP?". Many people enjoy listening to various types of radios to "listen in" on the railroad's day-to-day activity. You need not be trackside to enjoy a little railfanning! Some of us use radios to help plan our viewing, photos and videos of the railroad. There are several types of radios in common use today that you can use. Some of the "tunable" radios, that include the standard AM and FM broadcast bands may be adequate for your use. Their main drawback is lack of accurate tuning. You will have to 'search' to find the desired frequency. The most common radio to use is the 'scanner'. It is very accurate and requires either 'crystals' (small inexpensive modules that tune one particular channel) or programming of a digital scanner. The programmable scanner is usually more expensive than the crystal type, but has the advantage of never having to buy anything more. They can be had for as little as \$120 with a little shopping around. These radios are capable of receiving many other services beside railroads, so they can serve dual purpose at home.

So now you've chosen a radio, now what? The book that came with it goes into intricate detail on how to program 'frequencies' into it. Frequencies are like channels on a TV - they pertain to an exact location in the radio band that someone is licensed to operate on. There are many sources for these frequencies: books at radio stores and magazines are a good start. Most railfans are happy to provide the local railroad's frequency if you're traveling in an unfamiliar area.

If you're visiting Portola and the Sierras, there are several frequencies to listen to. They are:

160.74	Union Pacific Road
161.475	Union Pacific Road Repeater
161.55	Southern Pacific Road
160.89	SP Radiotelephone (Reno)

If you don't have a radio, consider it! They are fun to listen to, can help your trainwatching, and even hear news as it happens. There is far too much information to be published here about scanners, but I hope this will pique your interest in radio. Please feel free to contact me via the FRRS if you have specific questions or want more information about any aspect of radio.

A Near Miss - A True Tale of The Rails

by Norman Holmes

While heading west one night on the WPV, following another train, Engineer Jim Boynton was on an eastbound in the siding at Gerlach (Nevada). As all meets are controlled with signals activated by a dispatcher in Sacramento, Jim did not know there was a second train coming. The rule is if train length permits, when on a siding to meet another train, the engines should stop at least 400 feet from the leaving signal. In anticipation of leaving, after the first train had passed, Jim pulled ahead. When the signal did not clear, and he observed the headlight of my train, for some reason Jim backed his train to comply with the 400 foot rule. I went by him at 60 mph, however, unknown to me the boom on a piece of farm machinery had got loose and was sticking out from the side of the car. The boom struck a signal post sending it flying. It landed where Jim's engine had stood a few minutes before.



by Wayne I. Monger
N.T.M.C. Chairman

Visitors arriving in Portola on the morning of August 13th probably noticed that on this Saturday morning, there was something different about it. As they drove down the streets of Greater Metropolitan Portola and past the local businesses, everywhere were posters proclaiming of the upcoming races. Many of the usual sounds of our museum were missing this day - there

* Tourist Railway Association Incorporated

was no low rumble of idling diesel locomotives. Instead there was a slight blue haze hovering over the museum grounds, the occasional "zing" of small steel wheels on steel rails and everywhere a peculiar "putt-putt-putt" sound. There was an air of excitement with both old and new friends getting together to share ideas and compete against each other on a 300-meter stretch of railroad. The Fifth Annual National Track Motorcar Championship Races had arrived at Portola, California!

The history of the NTMC races begins with the 1984 Feather River Railroad Days. During that well patronized August weekend, one of the events dreamed up for the entertainment of visitors and members alike was a race of restored track motorcars ("speeders") owned by various members of the Feather River Rail Society. The format for our race was taken directly from the highly popular U.S. National Handcar Races held each year at the California State Railroad Museum at Old Sacramento, who in turn had used the idea and format from the World Handcar Championships in Port Moody, British Columbia, Canada. That first year at Portola, there were 9 participants, and in spite of the Sunday morning schedule for the races, there was a good crowd of spectators. The tradition of giving free rides to spectators following the races was born this year.

August 1985 found the motorcar races given their official name and status as a legitimate part of the FRRS annual calendar of events. That year's races had 13 entrants on the Sunday of Railroad Days and gained fame as a feature of the Pentrex video tape "Best of 1985". Wayne Monger took over the leadership of putting on this event during 1985, and has continued to organize the races each year except 1987. During and after the 1985 races, problems with mixing motorcars with regular museum passenger trains became more evident. The races extended past times that museum trains were to operate and motorcar owners were disappointed at not being able to operate enough to balance the time and expense to travel hundreds of miles to attend and participate.

In 1986, the National Track Motorcar Championships were finally separated from the Railroad Days weekend, and scheduled for the first weekend of that month. There were once again 13 participating motorcars. This year also saw a repeat domination of the "unlimited class" of motorcars by Dave Rangle with his giant A-8 motorcar (some dubbed it "the flying phonebooth") with times over the 300-meter (984 feet) track well under the "magic 30-second barrier" and seconds faster than any other motorcar. It was during 1986 that the start time for the races were pushed back to early afternoon to encourage a larger crowd of spectators but this resulted in many of the people bringing motorcars to race at Portola having to leave immediately after the races in order to reach home before midnight.

1987 brought yet more changes. Saturday afternoon became the new time to race, and both Dave Rangle and Ron Butler joined forces with Wayne Monger to run the show.

Preparations for the Fifth Annual races began in April 1988 when Wayne again took over as chairman of the races, while Ron Butler and his personal computer became vice-chairman, handling the advance paperwork. Norman Holmes also got into the early

preparations by enlisting the support of the local Coors beer distributor which contributed large "Finish" and "Welcome Race Fans" banners, plus 100 posters to advertise the event. For 1988, the races were moved to the second weekend of August, but keeping the Saturday afternoon start. The reason for this move was that both Wayne and constant participant Vic Neves were involved (as in dressed in tuxedos) in the wedding of WP historian and UP dispatcher Ken Meeker to Cheryl Collins in Stockton the first Saturday of August.

Ron and Wayne arrived in Portola two days prior to the races to prepare the museum grounds. Some of the work performed, with help from volunteers, were: switching the yard to clear the tracks for the motorcars, moving picnic tables and BBQ grills out to the picnic area, setting up the announcer's stand and PA system, preparation of the results board and many other details. Somehow both Wayne and Ron found time to also give their own motorcars a little attention also. By Friday afternoon, several motorcar operators had arrived and began to give their vehicles a pre-race workout. Except for some last minute paperwork, the races were ready to go!

Two o'clock found 14 motorcars of various models ready for the start. All but one were products of Fairmont Motors of Fairmont, Minnesota. Build dates ranged from 1937 to 1981. As has been the case in past years, the races were divided into three classes of competition. They are: One-cylinder class, Two-Cylinder class and the Unlimited Class. The Unlimited class includes motorcars with traction devices (rubber tires, etc.) and/or have four or more cylinders. Also, as in past years, the One-cylinder class had the most participants and several first-timers did extremely well in the final

The One-cylinder class (consisting of Fairmont M-series cars) had eight participants. Overall, the times for this class over the course were seconds slower thanks to a strong headwind during the race. First place winner in this class was first time participant and SP Signal Maintainer John McIntyre of Visalia, California with a time of 33.16 seconds in his ex-AT&SF M-9. Second place went to another first-timer, Errol Spangler of Vintage Railway Equipment in Sunnyvale, California with a time of 36.00 seconds on his ex-Quincy Railroad M-9. Third place went to Norman Holmes on his 1937-vintage M-9 "Buttercup", turning in a time of 38.55 seconds. Fourth place was taken by Dale Wyant of the Ventura County Railway of Oxnard, California with a time of 41.52 seconds in his ex-AT&SF M-19. Fifth place went to Amtrak employee Steve Bush of Ophir, California with his ex-Sacramento Northern M-19 coming through with a time of 43.26 seconds. Brad Black, of Cudahy, Wisconsin claimed sixth place in his ex-WP M-9, posting a time of 43.87 seconds. This particular car has participated in previous races under the guidance of former owner Dale Wyant, and up until the time of the race had been stored at the Newhall Movie Ranch at Newhall, California. After having dominated the class for the first two years of the races, Steve Milward of Portuna, California slipped to seventh place this year with a time of 45.08 seconds. Wayne Monger held the anchor position in his former WP M-19 built in 1940, with a time of 46.73 seconds.

The Two-cylinder class had four competitors this year. First place was captured by race vice-Chairman Ron

Butler of Salinas, California, with a time of 30.55 seconds on his ex-Milwaukee Road MT-19. Second place was awarded to Tom Mounovan of Sebastopol, California with his well-traveled ex-WP M-19-AA, as he got across the finish line with a time of 33.64 seconds. Tom has competed in the National Track Motorcar Championships each year since it's start and has consistently placed highly. Coming in with third place was a big surprise, Vic Neves of San Leandro, California. Vic in the past has races his ex-WP M-9 with many problems at the time of the races, but this year he hedged his bet by purchasing (minutes before race time) an ex-SP MT-19 and placing with a time of 34.16 seconds. Fourth place fell to Gordon Bennett of Arroyo Grande, California, with a time of 36.94 seconds. This was an excellent time for the machine that Gordon was operating, the only non-Fairmont vehicle entered, and the oldest machine there. It was a small Sheffield (Fairbanks-Morse) car built in 1925 and used for many years on the Santa Maria Valley Railroad.

This year's Unlimited class had only two competitors, and was missing Dave Rangle of Fresno, and his "Flying Phonebooth". The fastest time of the day was turned in by Dudley Newman of Newman Machinery of Glendale, Arizona, with 25.79 easily placing him first. Dudley operated an MT-19 with rubber

tires on the drive wheels. Second place was given to William Kaminsky of Grand Terrace, California in his ex-CB&Q M-19-AA, which also had rubber tires, with a time of 29.01 seconds.

Following the end of the 1988 championships, there was a bring your own meat BBQ for all participants and friends at the new picnic area of the museum. A hearty Thanks! is extended to Linda Monger, Elaine Wyant and Tammy McIntyre for taking care of the food preparation for the BBQ. Before and after dinner until darkness fell, many motorcars were operated on the museum track for the enjoyment of all. To wrap up the day, everyone headed into the museum meeting room to watch home videos of motorcars in action. The next morning found motorcars being loaded and people heading home happy.

In spite of having the largest turnout of motorcars since the inception of the races, there were some notable exceptions this year. Besides Dave Rangle, FRRS members John Ryczkowski and his black M-14, Jim Atkins and his ex-AT&SF M-19, Robert Mahan and his S-2 from Oxnard, California, Greg Brahms and his ex-WP M-19 and Richard Brickell and his infamous Buda car did not show up for this year's races. We hope to see them in the future.

A tremendous amount of thanks is extended to several of the FRRS volunteers who help to make sure the 1988 NTMC races would run successfully. Thanks to Norm Holmes, Hap Manitt, Gordon Wollesen, Jim Ley, Cindy for their help. Special thanks goes to Sam Burton for taking care of the difficult job of announcing the races for the spectators. And once again, thanks to Ron Butler for taking the task of dealing with the paperwork that leads up to this event each year. Hope to see you all next year!



FRRS members Jim Ley and Vic Neves clear the tracks and the races begin! -Norman Holmes Photo