

# The 1996 Operating Season Was a Big One

With the 4th of July being on a Thursday this year we had two extra days of passenger train operations.

A total of 2,744 combined hours of service was worked with crew members coming to Portola from as far away as Utah, Arizona, and Southern California.

Working in the Operating Department is not just running passenger trains on weekends. It's coming to the museum on weekdays and putting in long hours. It takes three to four days of switching to get ready for Railroad Days, and Railfan Day. After the events, all the equipment has to be switched back. A very special thank you goes to the crew members who stayed and worked in the pouring rain the day after Railfan Day. It took two weekends to get everything back in place for the winter.

A big thank you goes to the Mechanical Department for keeping the engines running, also a big thank you goes to the food service people who kept feeding us until the very end. A big thank you goes to all who put time in at the Museum.

Jim Gidley, Sr.  
Trainmaster

## Final 1996 Operating Season Crew Qualifications

- Yard Engineer:** Kerry Cochran.
- Fireman:** King Felton, Judy McGrath and Melissa McGrath.
- Conductor:** Ken Iverson, Judy McGrath.
- Brakeman:** Paul Finnegan, Harold Lantz, John Whitaker and Judy Whitaker.

In 1996, two people moved up to Passenger Engineer, one person moved up to Yard Engineer, eight people moved up to Fireman, six moved up to Conductor, and nine people moved up to Brakeman.

A big thank you goes to you all from the Trainmaster for your dedication and hours of service to attain these goals.

# Trains To Stay On Feather River Canyon Route

The following is a digest of an article appearing in the November 12, 1996 issue of the Portola Reporter. Editor Terri Nekar wrote the article following a presentation before the Portola City Council and residents by Ray Breedlove, Union Pacific's Portola Manager of Train Operations.

"Union Pacific isn't leaving Plumas County. The merger with Southern Pacific will enable Union Pacific to make use of existing parallel lines - over Donner and through the Feather River Canyon... Tracks running over Donner Pass will ultimately be used for intermodal - lighter and faster traffic... Trains coming through Portola will be manifest - heavier cargo consisting of box cars and gondolas carrying mixed freight... The Donner route is faster and shorter than the Feather River Route. It is also steeper, which lends itself well to lighter trains. Currently the SP has to use helper units to get the heavier manifest trains over the mountains.

"The Feather River grade is a one percent grade giving us the luxury of not having to worry about how big the train is, how much horsepower it takes or how many locomotives we need, he said (sic)... Given the number of heavier trains currently going over Donner, which will be transferred to the Feather River Route, he expects an even exchange. Before intermodal traffic can be moved over Donner, UP will have to do a lot of reconstruction on the present tracks, raising the heights of snow sheds and tunnels to accommodate double stacks...a two year project.

## Pacific Limited Group

The Pacific Limited Group has announced that there will be no excursions on the UP in 1997. The increased cost of renting the train and increased insurance requirements were the reasons given. The 1996 trips in Iowa, to Dunsmuir and out of Chicago made a small profit, but the Branson trip did not meet expectations. Lack of lead time to advertise, and increased insurance requirements after the fares were announced, led to a loss for this trip. All four groups which comprise the PLG - Central Coast and Promontory NRHS groups, Union Pacific Historical Society and Feather River Rail Society - have agreed to make up the shortfall so that all bills would be paid by the year's end.

FRRS members participating on the Iowa trips were Ron Piles, Mike Howard, Jack Hathaway, Jeff Blackman and Norman Holmes. On the Branson trip were Albert Estabrook, Jack Hathaway and Errol Spangler.



## 9th Annual Free Trip Opportunity

By Chris Skow

Trains Unlimited, Tours and the Feather River Rail Society are pleased to announce the 9th Annual free trip opportunity. The winner of this event will receive two free spaces on any Trains Unlimited, Tours North American trips operated in 1997. This includes tours operated in the United States and Canada.

Donations for fund raising tickets are \$7 each or 5 tickets for \$30. All sales from these tickets will go towards the Building Restoration Fund at the Portola Railroad Museum. The drawing will be held at the museum on May 10, 1997.

If you have any questions please call Trains Unlimited, Tours toll free at 1-800-359-4870 or 916-836-1745 or write: P.O. Box 1997, Portola CA 96122. If you want to buy more tickets, Trains Unlimited, Tours can supply these. Total value for this free trip opportunity is \$6590.