



# The Train Sheet

ISSUE 110

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News from the Feather River Rail Society and the Portola Railroad Museum

## Track Work Weekend a Success

By Rod McClure

Track defect. A term we have probably all heard but may have paid little attention to. It is something we would like to avoid, but as an operating railroad we are subject to having them just as all other railroads are. They occur naturally and over time with use of the track. What is a track defect you may ask? It can be anything from a broken rail to a hard throwing switch. They come in many sizes and different colors but they are all the same, BAD.

Rod McClure having been appointed Roadmaster by the Board of Directors at the October 2001 meeting made a very thorough inspection of our trackage shortly thereafter with the following recommendations being made;

Immediate improvements to the balloon track and the tangent track between Milward Switch and East 5 rail switch. These two sections need the most attention and repairs as soon as possible. The balloon needs roughly twenty five+ ties replaced,



All activities came under the watchful eye of Roadmaster Rod McClure (left) and Steve Habeck (right). - photo by Frank Brehm

over twenty gauge rods replaced, ten+ joint bars replaced, at least eight locations brought into gauge with two that are borderline unacceptable and capable of causing a derailment right now. There are also numerous places that show a need for additional ballast and drainage repair. The tangent track needs two rails

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## Santa Train 2001

By Pat Brimmer, Santa Train 2001 Project Coordinator

HO-HO-HO Well, Santa Train 2001 is over and I think everyone had a great time. As always, this project is a tremendous amount of work and without many volunteers to fill the gaps, this project would never be successful. For the first time in several years, we had a full Operations crew including 2 crossing guards for the first Santa Train on 12/01/01. The second week we had nearly a full crew, but in the interest of safety, we had fewer car attendants so that we could have 2 crossing guards at all times. We did the normal pull/push routine, but with the crossing guards

on duty, we were able to take the train down to the employee crossing on the east end. For the first time in my memory, we used the SP2873 for power. It worked really great because of the roomy cab (for lots of cab riders), the gyalight while we were moving forward and the red MARS light while we were backing up. The gyalight and the MARS light added a lot to the evening festivities and fascinated our visitors.

The first Saturday night was stormy and the crowd was down to about half of normal. However, the following Saturday night the weather was perfect and we had a huge crowd. Inside

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## Work Weekend a Success

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replaced for kinks, at least a dozen ties followed by tamping and leveling. Most of the switches within these boundaries need repair of some kind, including adjustment of the points, gauging and re-spikeing.

Most of the yard trackage needs additional ballast in different places, and the "new" storage tracks are in need of complete ballasting. This will require at least five car-loads of ballast. Much of the yard trackage is in need of gauging and adjusting of some type. There are soft spots in the ballast and drainage is also an issue in some locations. The mud build up in these locations have caused erosion to the roadbed and ties.

Both of the above items are crucial to the continued safe operation of trains at the museum. These also are required to maintain the minimum standard of Class 1 Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) track which provides for 10 mph passenger operation.

With the above deficiencies noted the call was put out for a 'track gang' work weekend. That call did not go unheeded. A very successful work weekend took place on November 17 & 18 with the replacement of twenty four ties, six joint bars and three gauge rods on the balloon track. This work was accomplished by a very enthusiastic crew consisting of Eugene Vicknair, Rod McClure along with sons Eric and Aaron, Steve Habeck, Scott Franklin and son Scotty, Greg Elems with sons Matt and David, Wayne Monger, Frank Brehm, and Alan Hirasawa. The "sons" provided much of the labor by pounding spike after spike as old ties were dug out and new ties put in place by the "older" participants.

Previous to the work weekend Alan Hirasawa had laid out ties, gathered the required tools, and worked on some of the Maintenance of Way equipment. The tug, Burro Crane, and A-8 Gang Car with trailer were all used during the day to haul equipment and each performed extremely well.

While most of the ties previously identified as needing immediate replacement were the focus of this work group others nearby were also found to be suspect and although possibly not in need of immediate attention were also dug out and replaced thereby eradicating the need for additional work at the same site in the near future. In the future, when we replace ties under a joint, 4 new ties will be installed instead of just two. This new standard will upgrade the track structure on all of our main operating track. During the tie replacement portion of the work, broken gauge rods were replaced; new gauge rods installed where needed, broken joint bars were replaced, and the rail re-gauged according to FRA specifications.

Also busy during the day on Saturday was Gail McClure who prepared and delivered a very delicious and well received Italian dinner. After working all day the crew soon had Gail back in the kitchen preparing additional entries to satisfy their hearty appetites. The crew extends a very big Thank You to Gail for this very tasty and filling dinner.

Sunday found most of the crew back out working. A previously derailed tank car was put back on the rails using the recently made serviceable truck crane. Work on the roadbed and

track is far from concluded as plans are already underway for additional work weekends next year as soon as the weather becomes slightly warmer. Additionally all of the track material and necessary tools will be relocated to a central area so it will be much easier to locate the proper material needed and keep a better count on what we have and what we need. I want to thank all of those who participated and hope that we have more volunteers for the upcoming work gangs. We have a couple of big projects to tackle this upcoming year that will increase storage and make switching operations much easier. If you have never been involved with track work and are interested in learning, let me know and I will be glad to help you learn! I will be posting upcoming MoW work weekends in the Train Sheet and on the FRRS board soon.

It is important for all of us to remember that without good track, safe train operation would be impossible. And safe train operation is number 1.

### Obituary Larry Harrison

Long time FRRS, PLA, and railfan community member, Larry Harrison, passed away peacefully on December 13, 2001. Larry's pride collections included black and white photographs of all Southern Pacific steam locomotives (the majority in serviceable/operating condition), Western Pacific steam, and various other Western United States steam locomotives. He began photographing as a young man. He also collaborated with Fred Stindt, Arthur Lloyd, Gerald Best, Doug Richter, Guy Dunscomb, and Al Phelps, just to name a few.

Larry supported and belonged to many other rail organizations, including the Feather River Rail Society, Pacific Locomotive Association, Bay Area Electric Association, Friends of the Sierra Railroad, Friends of the 1233, National Association of Railroad Passengers, and the Northern California Railroad Club. He dearly loved the Western Pacific and many of his photos have appeared in several books regarding the railroad.

One of his great loves was the fraternal organization "E Clampus Vitus", of which he was a member of no less than 10 chapters, having served as Grand Noble Humbug for the New Helvetia Chapter, #5.

Enjoying his love of railroads he lived a happy and full life. Larry was 93.

Our condolences and thoughts are with the family.

## Santa Train 2001

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the beanery were lots of goodies and warm drinks. Mr. and Mrs. Santa Claus were there for all of the kids. Rumor has it that Tom Graham (the biggest of the kids) even snuck in to see Santa when he thought no one was looking. Guess he just wanted to make sure that Santa didn't forget him on Christmas eve. Hmmmmm, wonder who else went in to see Santa that we don't know about?

Now comes the hard part: thanking everyone for the fantastic job that they did in every way. It's hard only because I'm afraid that I will miss someone. If I did miss your name, please accept my apologies and know that it wasn't intentional.

First of all in getting things ready. **MANY THANKS** to Edna Ede, Missy Iverson and Norm Holmes for making sure that we had more than enough refreshments for everyone; to Rod and Gail McClure and their family and Bryan and Stephanie Sprague and their family for cutting down the beautiful tree and then putting it up and decorating the tree and the beanery; to Steve Habeck for stringing the lights on the cabooses; to Norm Holmes for making sure we had plenty of candy canes for the kids; to Hank Stiles for taking care of last minute mechanical problems; to Norm Holmes, Alan Hirasawa and Ken Roller for getting the baggage car ready for a static display and a G-scale Santa Train; to Bart Rohles for loaning us his G-gauge Santa Train for both weekends; to Ken Iverson, Tom Graham, Steve Habeck, Kerry Cochran, Rod McClure and Alan Hirasawa for yard switching; to Judy McGrath, Stewart Dorsey and Jack Zygnier for putting up the lights on the parking lot fence and the barriers inside the diesel shop; to Jim Murphy for taking care of the advertising; to Debbie Murphy for washing a Christmas rug and tree skirt; to Ken Roller for doing general clean up; to Stewart Dorsey for doing general clean up and making sure that our sidewalks were free of snow; to Ed Powell for making sure that the stoves on the cabooses were in good working order; and to Rich Lema for installing a music system so that we could listen to Christmas music all evening long. Special thanks to Chris Jozwiak and his family for donating miniature train ornaments for the beautiful Christmas tree in the beanery.

On the day of the Santa Train, **MANY THANKS** to Edna Ede, Missy Iverson, and Barbara Holmes for helping serve goodies in the beanery; to Gail McClure, Stephanie Sprague, and Cathy Jozwiak for last minute decorations and greeting our visitors in the beanery; to Frank Brehm for taking photographs; to Norm Holmes for keeping the beanery warm by making sure the door was always closed; to Tom Graham for coordinating the cab riders; to Ken Iverson and Norm Holmes for just being there and doing whatever needed to be done; to Andy and Gayle Anderson

for running the gift shop; to Linda Brimmer, Ken Iverson and Bart Rohles and his family for watching the static display and running the Santa Train in the baggage car; to Alan Hirasawa for doing a little bit of everything where ever he was needed; to Ken Roller for being the Chief Model Railroad engineer; to Union Pacific for giving us permission to use the ramp track as needed; to Andy Anderson for having hot pizza arrive at just the right time for the cold and tired train crew and other volunteers; and to the **GREAT** Operations crew that battled the weather for 4 – 5 hours each evening. The Operations crew consisted of Kerry Cochran, Don Borden, Dave Kantoff, Ed Wagner, David Whitney, Ed Powell, Chris Jozwiak, Loren Ross, Judy McGrath, Jack Zygnier, Ken Iverson, Tom Graham, Eugene Vicknair, Bob Carr, Eddie Chase, Melissa McGrath, Lew Barnard and Pat Brimmer.



Santa Train activities would not have been complete without having Santa and Mrs. Claus on hand for the kids "wish lists". - photo by Frank Brehm

Then, after all of the fun and games of running the Santa Train, everything has to be cleaned up and put away. This is often where we have difficulty as cleaning up is not nearly as much fun as getting everything out and put up. However, this year a spectacular group of people stayed behind to make sure everything was taken down and put away for next year. Judy McGrath and Gail McClure both purchased plastic containers for storing the caboose lights and the beanery decorations. This will make things so much easier next year. All of the lights for a single caboose are stored in a single plastic container, wrapped around pieces of cardboard (cut by Ken Iverson) to keep them from getting tangled over the winter, and then Judy marked the containers to indicate which caboose the lights go on next year. She prepared a similar container for the SP2873 also. Gail has gotten rid of the cardboard boxes which were totally falling apart and put all of our decorations in marked plastic containers in the "party car". This extra effort by Judy and Gail will certainly make the job easier for everyone next year.

Finally, **MANY THANKS** to Rod and Gail McClure and family for taking down the Christmas tree and the beanery decorations; to Ken Roller and Alan Hirasawa for cleaning out the baggage car; to Tom Graham, Melissa McGrath, Bob Carr, Lew Barnard, Ken Iverson and Andy Anderson for taking down all of the Christmas lights from the cabooses, locomotive, parking lot fence and barriers inside the diesel shop, doing the final yard switching and making sure the museum was ready for winter.

In closing, I want to say how much fun it was coordinating this project. But, it was fun only because of all of the people who volunteered to do so many things and then did them in a very special way. Thank you, Thank you, Thank you.

I hope all of you had a wonderful Holiday Season and a Wonderful New Year.