

DUNSMUIR RAILROAD DAYS 2006

- "A Grandma"

Last July, I took two of my grandchildren to Railroad Days in Dunsmuir. It was a beautiful drive into the mountains just north of Redding. When we arrived, my grandchildren were already jumping with excitement at the sight of the trains parked nearby. Belle, age 3, repeatedly called out to her younger brother, "See, Bubba. See the big trains?" Skyler (Bubba), who has a fascination with all forms of transportation, smiled widely.

Walking through the exhibits that lined the quaint streets, the vendors were friendly and welcoming. There were many hand-crafted items for sale and my daughter and I couldn't help but to stop and purchase a few things.

Along the fence, there were black and white photos on display of all types of trains. Belle ran from one picture to the next, stopping on one of an old steam engine. She called to me, waving me over impatiently, and announced, "This is the one I like, Grandma. It's big and pretty."

We continued walking toward the train yard, making our way through the variety of food vendors. The smells tantalized our noses, reminding me of the hot summer days spent at the county fair as a young child.

We were cordially greeted by volunteers who quickly loaded the children up with complimentary coloring books, crayons, and other railroad memorabilia. We purchased our official Dunsmuir Railroad Days button, at an affordable rate of \$1.00 each, and pinned them on our shirts.

We entered the trains, exploring each one from front to back. It was fascinating to see the older trains, and you could almost see and hear the fun and excitement that once filled the cars. One of the trains housed a store inside where the children each purchased a book, a conductor hat, and a train whistle.

Next, we stood in line to ride the speeders. These small railcars hold three or four people, including the driver. Belle and I sat in one car, and Autum (mother) and Skyler took another car positioned just in front of us. The children waived back and forth to each other as the speeders traveled down the tracks.

Back in the train yard, we were invited to bring the kids onto a locomotive that sat on a large turntable. It was explained to us that locomotives would pull onto one of these turntables, and the table would rotate to turn the locomotive around and send it back on the tracks in the opposite direction. Inside the locomotive, the children were allowed to sit in the conductor's seat, where grandma took pictures of them! As we exited the locomotive, we were asked to remain standing along the railing on the train while the turntable moved.

Standing just down from us was a reporter from the Record Searchlight. He asked permission to photograph us and use the picture in his newspaper article. We granted him permission and then suddenly the large locomotive shifted as the turntable began to move. A smile crept across the faces of my grandchildren as the turntable began to slowly spin.

I want to give a big shout out to the outstanding, friendly volunteers that put their time and energy into Dunsmuir's Railroad Days. The event provides families a place to go where they can experience a fun-filled day at a minuscule cost. In a world that has become so fast-paced, it was nice to slow down and spend some quality time with family. I would love to see more events like this all year long in and around the Redding area.

This July, I will be taking all of my grandchildren to Dunsmuir. For just one day, there will be no video games and no television. Instead, we will spend time together eating a hot dog, listening to a live band, shopping from local vendors, and exploring the wonderful world of trains, all while enjoying the fresh mountain air. We will create lasting memories to re-live time and time again. I encourage others to do the same.

