

Modeling the Western Pacific Railroad - *In the Beginning*

- Kerry Cochran



When I started getting into modeling railroads, back in late 1970's, little did I know about the Western Pacific. As I progressed with some modeling, I came across a model-train club in my area. After a couple of years passed I joined that club in about 1983, I soon found out about the Western Pacific Railroad Museum (then called Portola Railroad Museum).

Soon after finding out about the PRM, I made my very first trip to the museum. Arriving on a Friday midday, I met Norm Holmes and did an RAL that afternoon. That was it. I was hooked, I stayed the night in a caboose and the next morning, I made the mistake of asking what I could do around the museum. Well that turned out to be my start in the Western Pacific Railroad "I Got You".

This brought about my start in the modeling the WP and becoming a full time active member of the society. Now as it happened, in the model railroad club I belonged to, there were several WP modelers that I met and we started to exchange ideas and soon thereafter, I met Jack Palmer. This took me on a long ride with both modeling and the Feather River Rail Society.

One of the things that I have come to appreciate in both organizations, is the meeting and sharing of ideas with other people. As I have mentioned about meeting Jack Palmer, this friendship has lasted over 34 years. During this



time I have come to meet several members of the FRRS and more WP modelers.

During one of the model railroad club meetings about 1995, I asked about becoming a Life Member of the NMRA (National Model Railroad Association). While I was a member, I had never through about life membership. So in 1996, I started down that path and in August 1999 I became Life Member # 5764.

I know some people do not like the NMRA, however I have been blessed with some of the great friendships I have made going to NMRA meets. I have met several other FRRS members at the meets and these members have been a great resource for modeling the WP.

Now with this behind me, being an active member of the FRRS since 1985 and looking at being a member for my lifetime, I converted my active membership to a life membership in 2002, with becoming life member # 972. So, did I get off track? (Pun intended.) Over the course of several years I had come to meet several WP modelers and have gotten a chance to visit several WP model layouts.

Now fast forward to about 15 years ago when I really started to model more actively, and more recently since I retired, moving toward modeling more prototypically. Trying to find information on modeling the WP took me on a quest that I continue today; talking with other modelers, research in libraries (yes, they still exist), research on the internet and back issues of modeling magazines. This has now led me to an interest in the FRRS/WPRM Historical/Archives. (Which I became the manager of about four years ago.)

I started looking at what the FRRS has in the modeling arena a few years back and found that there was not much there. A few members have started some small groups to talk, ask questions and get support. This however fell apart back when the FRRS decided to move the Western Pacific Railroad Historical Society (WPRRHS) back into the mainstream of the FRRS.

( continued on next page...)



Early model of MOW crane tender  
(True Scale kit) 1988

- Photo by Kerry Cochran

For the next few years nothing seem to take place. I got to thinking about it, and since we just gotten a new webmaster and the website was being redesigned, I talked to him and started a set of modeling pages.

This now lead to the creation of a modeling committee headed by Bob Sims, with Ethan Doty, Kerry Cochran and David Epling as committee members. This in turn led me to start to post modeling information both in general and in HO scale on the society website.

While this endeavor is still young, I hope to do a couple of things around modeling the Western Pacific and bring more information to our members and the public. For now I will leave you with this, Part One – *In the Beginning*.

I hope to hear from our members on what they might like to see on the modeling pages and maybe a Question and Answer page can be created for everyone. Please feel free to contact me at [kcochran@wplives.org](mailto:kcochran@wplives.org).

### Things Around the Museum:

#### **Malfunction Junction - What's the Story? - Part 2** - Paul Finnegan

In the last issue of *the Train Sheet*, I asked readers that if anyone knew the story of how *Malfunction Junction* got its name, to please email it to me so I could share it with everyone. No one reached out to me, so the story remains a mystery. I did however get some second-hand

information that some old-time members thought it was named after a *Sesame Street* segment about a train junction with lots of confusion. That didn't sound right to me, but I did recall a *Schoolhouse Rock* segment that aired on ABC called "*Conjunction Junction*" that originally aired on November 17, 1973. I found it on the internet and shared it with one of our old timers, and he said, "That's it!"

The legend goes that early crews were confused in the area of our yard between Switch R and J where several tracks come together and someone coined the term based on the children's TV show.

Unless someone who really knows how *Malfunction Junction* got its name, I guess we will have to accept the *Legend of Malfunction Junction* named after the *Schoolhouse Rock* video.

