

The Train Sheet



Preserving "The Feather River Route"

...news from The Feather River Rail Society and The Portola Railroad Museum

Issue No. 52

November/December 1991



The FRRS Santa train ran on December 7, 1991; Skip Englert put on the red suit and white beard and greeted the kids with a HO HO HO and a candy cane. The train crew for the day is shown here from left to right: Gordon Wollesen, Dave Forrest, Peter Langdon, and Hank Stiles. Skip Englert is Santa with Vic Neves above him. Not shown in the photo is Ed Warren who took the photo.

Inside This Issue:

- Preservation Column.
- Arrival of SD9E SP 4404.
- Boy Scouts Visit the Museum.



Feather River Rail Society ***** Portola Railroad Museum

Preserving

"The Feather River Route"

P.O. Box 608
Portola, California 96122
(916) 832-4131

Hours: Memorial Day to Labor Day -- open seven days a week 10:00AM to 5:00PM. Fall, winter and spring hours: Open weekends 10:00AM to 4:00PM.

The Feather River Rail Society, a tax exempt public benefit California corporation, is the historical society for the Western Pacific Railroad and operator of the Portola Railroad Museum in Portola, California. The FRRS is not associated with the Western Pacific Railroad or the Union Pacific Railroad.

FRRS Tax ID number is 68-0002774
Member of Tourist Railway Association Inc.

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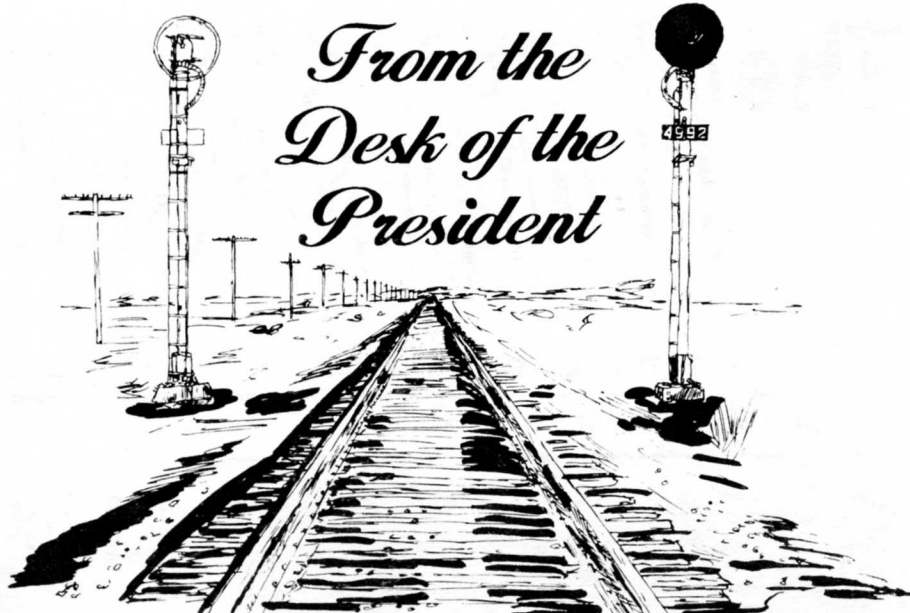
Mardi Vincent (916) 836-2167

Membership

Associate-----	\$15.00
Active-----	\$30.00
Family-----	\$35.00
Sustaining-----	\$75.00
Life-----	\$300.00

Dues are paid for 12 months from time of receipt. All memberships have one vote except for Associate. Associate members also do NOT receive the The Headlight.

From the Desk of the President



DOCENT - can't someone come up with a better name for a museum volunteer? The dictionary defines docent as a teacher or lecturer. That's fine, but it sounds like something you wouldn't want. Surely there must be a better word.

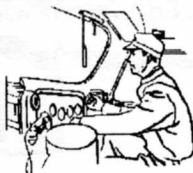
Speaking of volunteers, the Christmas season, now past by the time you read this, is a time for giving thanks for all the good friends we have and to share what we have for those in need.

We have had a very good year at the Portola Railroad Museum; many members have been generous with their donation of dollars and time. Without both we would not be able to operate. I particularly want to thank Hap Manitt, Gordon Wollesen, Bruce Cooper and Ken Roller who are at the museum almost every day. Ed Warren donates a large amount of time at his computer keeping membership up to date as well as editing and printing the Train Sheet, John Ryczkowski also puts in a lot of time producing the Headlight. Dave Dodds carries our merchandise and story to every railroadiana show in Southern California. Dave is responsible for many new members. There are many other members who donate their time to help our organization prosper and to all we are very grateful.

Nineteen-ninety-two will present new challenges with the UP 3985 and train coming through in July and the TRAIN convention in November. We will have lots of new people visiting our museum. We want to make their visit enjoyable.

Barbara and I wish to thank everyone who sent us Christmas greetings.

-- Norman W. Holmes



YOU! Can Operate a Diesel Locomotive
for one hour with your own private instructor included.

Fulfill your wildest dream!

A handsome certificate suitable for framing is awarded after each rental. Rentals by appointment.

Double your fun!

Our popular "Combo" rental package includes Western Pacific "Covered Wagon" 921-D EMD F7. Call for details. Help support the Society. Phone number for appointments: (916) 832-4532.

Preservation: A New Column

Historic Railroad Preservation... What is a Railroad Museum?

by Kent Stephens

As a member of the Feather River Rail Society, have you ever been asked about our collection at the Portola Railroad Museum? Why do we have certain diesel units? Is it just a random collection of equipment, or is there a rationale behind the acquisition of certain diesel units? Are we just "playing with trains" or are we doing a serious effort to collect and preserve a cohesive collection of historic railroad equipment and artifacts?

One of the most important steps in organizing a museum is its museum statement. What is the focus of the museum? What are we collecting? The front cover of the September/October 1991 issue of the Train Sheet displayed a mission statement for the Portola Railroad Museum:

Statement of our Mission...

"The Feather River Rail Society is dedicated to preserving the history of the Western Pacific Railroad, railroad history of Northern California and the history of the evolution of the diesel locomotive in North America over the past 50 years. To this end, the Feather River Rail Society now has at Portola, one of the largest and most historic collections of diesel locomotives in the United States."

From this statement, you can see how the Oregon & Northwestern Baldwin AS616 units #3 and #4 fit into our collection plan. First, they are former Southern Pacific (and #4 is also ex-McCloud River RR #34). Secondly, Baldwin pioneered the development and proved the concept of the six-axle road unit. Note also how our other Baldwin, NVR #51 fits in as an early Baldwin switcher.

Some of our newer members may wonder about an "odd-ball" diesel unit in our collection -- Long Island FA-2 #604, ex-Louisville & Nashville #314. At first glance, this East Coast diesel doesn't fit in with a collection in Northern

California. This unit however, does fit into the collection framework. Most obvious is that it is an Alco freight unit that competed with the more popular EMD F series of "covered wagons." Thus it is a contemporary to WP 921D, although six years newer. Secondly, it can fit into the collection's geographic basis by being restored as a Spokane, Portland & Seattle unit, numbered one number up from their fleet of FA's, all of which were retired a number of years ago. Norm Holmes' original idea on bidding for LI 604, which the Board of Directors at that time agreed with, was to eventually restore it as an SP&S unit. Why would we be interested in an SP&S unit? A portion of SP&S' fleet of Alco FA's were still in service when the SP&S was merged into Burlington Northern. Not long after the BN merger, WP and BN started pooling power between Auburn, WA and Stockton, CA on two freights that operated on the WP High Line. An interesting mix of BN power showed up in the Feather River Canyon on the two through High Line freights, including several SP&S FA's, still painted and lettered for the SP&S. The FA's only made a few trips on the WP, and were swapped back to east-bound trains at Oroville. One reportedly made it back to Stockton.

FRRS bid on LI 604, even though it is an ex-L&N unit, after being advised by LI that the former SP&S units wouldn't be retired for some years. At that time who knows? So we bid on ones that were up for bid at the time and got #604.

There are two other possible restoration choices for #604. Union Pacific once operated a fleet of Alco FA's, as did the Great Northern.

In future issues of the Train Sheet, we will continue to address issues of railroad preservation and museum concepts as they relate to the Feather River Rail Society.

Back issues of the Headlight

Issue 1 (Out of print) California Zephyr Anniversary Issue.

Issue 2 Joint issue with the Freight Car Journal; WP freight car roster; color. 28 pages.

Issue 3 (Out of print) F3s in freight service; AAR box cars; WP tank cars; index to historical articles in back issues of the Train Sheet.

Issue 4 A tale of 2 engines; PC-WP box cars; GP40s....a guide to types; circus specials. 36 pages.

Issue 5 The Reno branch; M-K remanufactured GP35s and GP40s; the Charles O. Sweetwood car; mill gons. 48 pages.

Issue 6 M-K remanufactured GP40s, part 2; Budd RDCs; cupola cabooses; 1970 freight car roster. 52 pages.

Back issues of the Headlight are available for \$4 each postpaid. Back issues of the Train Sheet are available for \$1.50 each postpaid. Send your order to:

FRRS Gift Shop at P.O. Box 608, Portola, CA 96122.

A Wholehearted Thanks...

This is just a quick, but sincere, tribute from all of us to thank FRRS founder, president and general manager Norm Holmes for all of his hard work, long hours and dedication that have gone into making the museum what it is. The museum shows his efforts, and it is a great place to work and to visit. Thanks, Norm from all of us!

Membership Report

as of December 27, 1991

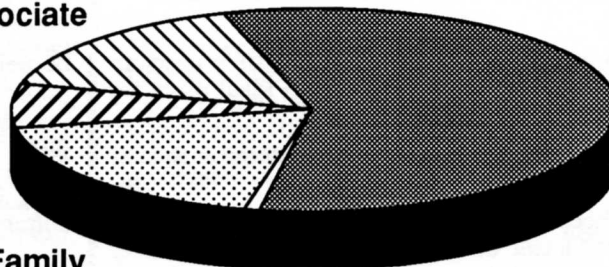
161 Associate

66 Life

184 Family

10 Sustaining

567 Active



*Total FRRS membership is 988.
...Of these, 31 are Charter members.*

Don't Let This Happen to You! Hard Hats!



Any museum volunteer working on the restoration, repair or servicing of equipment and/or locomotives - or working around heavy equipment such as cranes - must wear a hard hat. A supply of new hard hats has been purchased. This is for everyone's safety, and it is also necessary due to insurance requirements. The hard hat policy was formally reaffirmed by the Board of Directors at the October 1991 meeting.

Purchase Limit

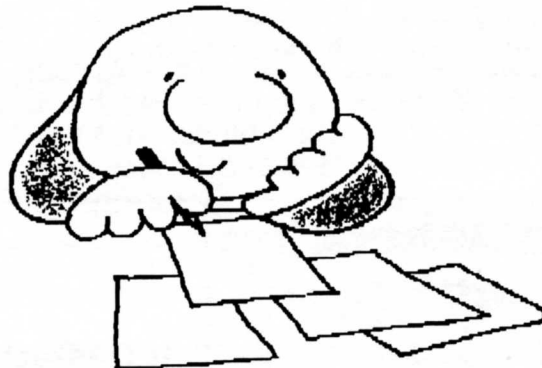
All members are hereby reminded that there is a \$100 (one hundred dollar) purchase limit when charging supplies or services to the Feather River Rail Society. Any purchase over \$100 MUST have advance approval from either Norm Holmes or FRRS Treasurer Gordon Wollesen. Advance planning for supplies costing over \$100, which are needed for a project, will be necessary with the purchase limit.

Any supplies or services purchased, whether the cost is under or over \$100, must be by persons authorized to make the purchase, and must, of course, be for the benefit of the Feather River Rail Society.

It would be very helpful to Gordon Wollesen if copies of bills were given to him with a notation of what was purchased and who purchased it. There is a treasurer's file basket in the operating department office that should be used for this purpose. Gordon says it has been a problem from time to time to receive a billing from a supplier with no indication of what was bought, or by whom.

The \$100 purchase limit policy was approved by the Board of Directors at the March 10, 1991 meeting, and was announced in the board report column of the March/April 1991 issue of the Train Sheet. This policy reaffirmed what had been an informal policy.

I Like To Write...



Many FRRS members like to write, but they need an outlet for their writing. The Train Sheet is an ideal place for FRRS members to have their writing printed.

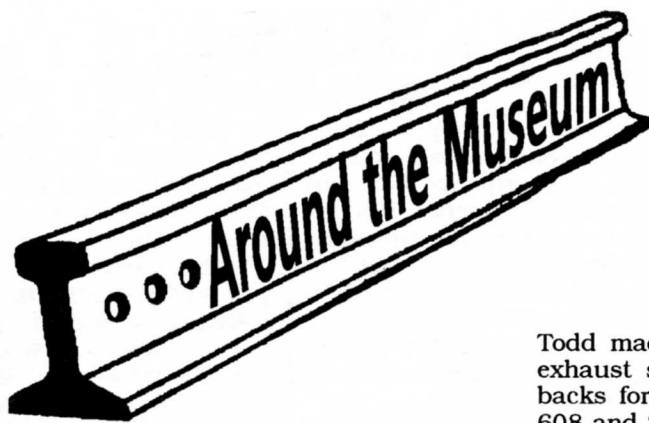
All FRRS members are hereby invited to submit their own articles for publication in the Train Sheet.

You must keep in mind the purpose of the Train Sheet: It is the newsletter of the Feather River Rail Society and the Portola Railroad Museum. The Train Sheet only accepts articles for publication that pertain to news of the museum or current happenings or stories about society members. For example, if a member makes a trip to the museum and wishes to write about the experience, this would

be perfect. Members can write about projects that they are undertaking at the museum. If a member who is active at the museum would like to write a story about a day at the museum, with say, something funny that happened, fine! If a member rented a locomotive and enjoyed the experience (and who doesn't) then write about it. All of these topics are suitable for the Train Sheet.

The Train Sheet does NOT accept historical articles... that's the job of our sister publication, The Headlight.

Send your submissions to the Train Sheet editor at the address on page 2. By necessity, all articles must be subject to refusal or condensation.



We're on television: In addition to television coverage about our locomotive rental program on Reno, Sacramento and San Francisco stations, we have learned that one segment was repeated on other television news programs including the "Today" show. We know whenever we get publicity because Bruce Cooper's phone starts ringing with people inquiring about our program. We also had a special show taped for viewing on the Leisure channel. Plumas County has never received so much TV publicity ever.

Bruce's locomotive rental program has been very successful this year and has brought in needed revenue to enable us to purchase and restore equipment we would not have otherwise. As a new feature this year for \$50 additional, (\$60 for a 2 hour rental) Dean Hill will make a video of the person(s) doing the rental and send it to them.

Museum Doings

Bruce Cooper made our International dump truck pay for itself by hauling 24 loads of gravel from Graeagle to keep our new entrance road mud free. Norm Holmes hauled a load of Alco 244 heads, some air brake equipment and a small trailer all acquired from several sources of government surplus property.

The Santa train

The Santa train ran on schedule December 7, 1991 with a new Santa. Because of health problems, Emery Godard could not be Santa this year, instead Skip Englert put on the red suit and white beard and greeted the kids with a HO HO HO and a candy cane. Vic Neves and Hank Stiles were the engine crew, Gordon Wollesen, Peter Langdon, Ed Warren, and Dave Forrest were the train crew. Hap Manit decorated the museum entrance with a Christmas tree and Barbara Holmes worked the gift shop.

Donations

Through the help of John Kirkland and Bert St. Vincent, we now have two rebuilt Westinghouse traction motors donated by Geneva Steel Co., Provo, Utah. We only had to pay the freight charges from Utah. We were in need of a motor for our Baldwin DS-4-4-660. When weather permits, the bad order motor will be replaced.

More Donations

Peter Langdon designed and Jerry

Todd made a number of sheet metal exhaust stack covers and four metal backs for the cab heralds for engines 608 and 2001. Roger Hepkema donated twelve boxes of California Zephyr dining car checks that we can sell at the gift shop and at railroadiana shows.

Cash Donations

The following people have made cash contributions to the FRRS:

Norman E. Anderson
Alan Aske
Milne Collis
Steve Fauth
Henry Forni
Charles Givens
Jeffrey Jamason
Richard W. & Nell Kirker
Fred Klyver
Michel Knight
Gordon MacDonald
David Martin
George Moody, Sr.
Albert Novak
Philip John Schmierer
Ralph Shafer
Richard Sloan
Larry Van Horn
Joe Vondracek
Harold Warley

Steam to San Jose

As announced in the September-October 1991 Train Sheet, the Central Coast Chapter of NRHS is sponsoring the 1992 NRHS convention in San Jose. In conjunction with the convention Union Pacific will be sending Challenger 3985 with a passenger train from Cheyenne to San Jose. Central Coast has asked us to sell and staff the Winnemucca to Portola segment July 16, 1992, and the Portola to Sacramento July 18, 1992 segment. We will also help on the Elko to Winnemucca July 15, 1992 and Winnemucca to Elko on July 29, 1992 jointly with Central Coast and Promontory Chapter. Through tickets from Cheyenne to San Jose and return will be available. Ticket prices have not yet been set and reservations are NOT being taken at this time. A first class mailing will be sent to all FRRS active, family, sustaining and life members announcing ticket availability and details as soon as possible, probably in February, 1992.

Norman & Barbara Holmes and Bill & Melony Evans met with the other sponsoring groups and Steve Lee at Salt Lake City December 13, 1991 to discuss details. It was decided that there will be a central reservation office to handle all ticket sales and inquiries. An 800 number will be activated March 1, 1992.

TRAIN Convention

Barbara and Norman Holmes attended the TRAIN convention in Duluth, MN, November 1 and 2, 1991. It was an experience to say the least. Duluth had a record snow, the most ever to fall from one storm - over three feet. The convention delegates were virtually prisoners in the hotel as roads were closed and the town shut down. Due to closure of airports and roads, the FRA representative, our Washington, D. C. watchdog and the Wisconsin Central Railroad President all were unable to get to the convention.

Local people and delegates were substituted for seminars when previously scheduled people could not get to Duluth.

The Lake Superior Museum of Transportation group did a fine job in hosting the convention under very trying conditions.

Norm presented a brief synopsis of our Fall, 1992 convention to be held at John Ascuaga's Nugget in Sparks, Nevada, co-hosted by the Friends of the Nevada State Railroad Museum.

MRS-1

by Norman Holmes

During the Korean War period the U. S. Army decided it needed new locomotives, some that would be suitable for overseas duty in case the cold war heated up. Specifications were submitted to both EMD and Alco in November, 1951, to produce a locomotive that would be capable of being easily changed to any track gauge between standard 4' 8 - 1/2" to a maximum of 5'6". Couplers were to be adjustable to various heights and the underframes were arranged to mount any type of coupler. Mounting plates for installation of buffers were located on each end plate. Clearance restrictions required the units to be no taller than thirteen feet.

EMD was first to produce a unit, designated MRS-1, in March 1952. They built only thirteen units which were numbered USA 1808 thru 1820. Ultimately one EMD unit was assigned to Vandenberg AFB, CA, others elsewhere. Four were tried at Hawthorne Navy Ammunition Depot, NV, but were unsatisfactory at that base. In 1977 five units were sent to Alaska, but were never used by the Alaska Railroad. They were scrapped in 1983. Two units were acquired by the Pacific Southwest Museum Assn. for operation at their San Diego Railroad Museum. The six remaining EMD MRS-1 units were in service at the Military Ocean Terminal, Sunny Point, NC as of May, 1990.

Alco produced their first MRS-1 unit, designated RSX-4 by Alco, in March, 1953 and completed an order for 83 by October, 1953. They carry both Alco and GE builders plates and serial numbers because of a joint contract basis. Fifty units were equipped with steam generators and carried a prefix letter "B" before the road number. B2041 thru B2090 were steam equipped, 2091 thru 2123 were not. All units were equipped with insulated fuel pump, filters, fuel tank and lines. A heater system using diesel fuel could heat the fuel tank, crankcase oil and battery box. A second heater could heat the coolant. The units were designed to operate from -40 degrees to +125 degrees F.

The cold war never really heated up to include the use of

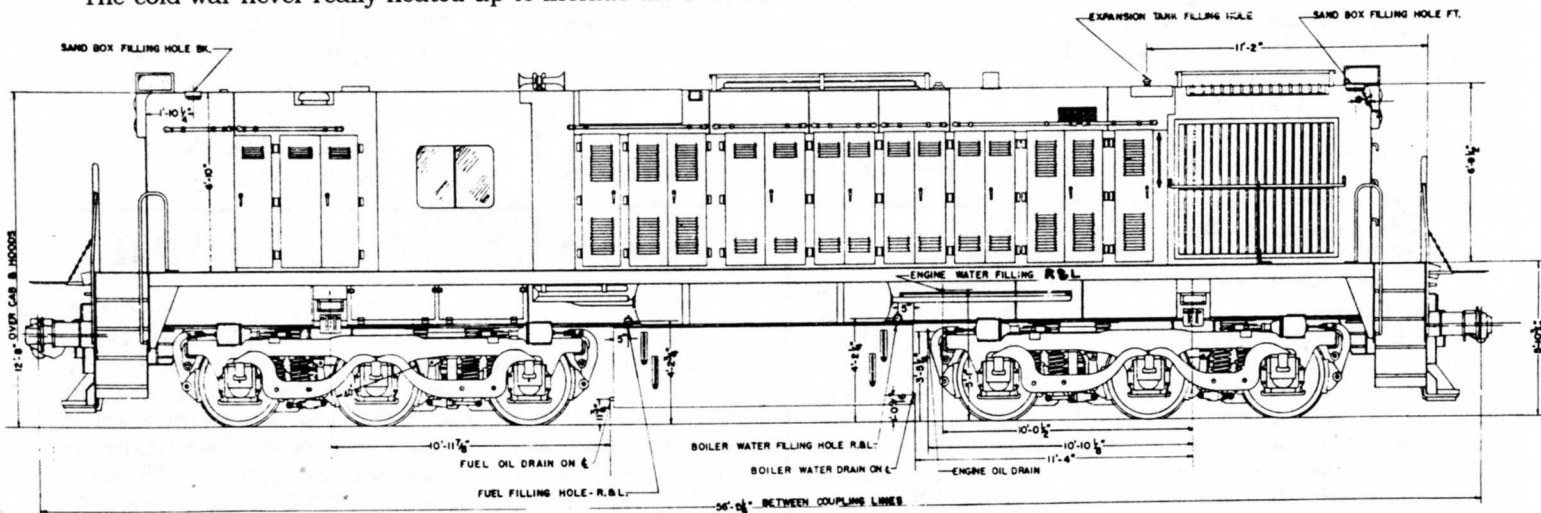
the MRS-1 units. The majority of the units were in storage most of their life. Thirteen Alco's were transferred to the Alaska Railroad in 1974-75 and were used in switching service until 1983-84, when they were scrapped. Because of their age and the government's desire to standardize on fewer locomotive models, the 38 year old Alco's are being sold. Costing the government \$500,000 each because of custom design and cost plus contracting, the units are now bringing only a small fraction of their original cost. (An EMD GP-7 bought in 1953 cost about \$170,000.) Concord Naval Weapons Station, CA, was using Alco MRS-1 units until a few years ago. Two have been acquired by the State Park system in Jamestown, two are going to the Railroad Museum in Sacramento, four were sold to Norman Holmes, two going to a scrap yard and two going to the Portola Railroad Museum. Four are awaiting disposition. Hill AFB near Ogden, Utah, has six units awaiting disposition. One unit was acquired by the San Diego Railroad Museum from Vandenberg AFB and the Bluegrass Railroad in Kentucky operates one unit in tourist service.

The 12 cylinder 244 engine produces 1600 hp. The unit weighs 120 tons and rides on three axle Alco Tri-mount trucks. All axles are powered with GE 731 traction motors. Axle weight is only 20 tons per axle and they will operate on up to 30 degree curves. They operate long hood forward. (Our SP SD9E weighs 180 tons (30 tons per axle) and has a minimum radius of 22 degrees.)

Units at Portola

USN 65-00541, ex USA 2119, Alco # 80352 6-53
USN 65-00544, ex USA 2122, Alco # 80355 6-53

Above data gleaned from "The Diesel Builders Vol. II" by John Kirkland, "The Short Line" published by Garreth M. McDonald, and "Rail Classics" July 1976.



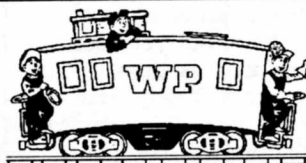
FRRS member

Don Olsen

of Catenary Productions, is in need of color slides of WP steam and early WP diesels for the cover and for promotion of his new WP video. Contact him directly at:

Don Olsen

795 Burnett Avenue, #2
San Francisco, CA 94131-1419
415-285-5865



Caboosing

with Hap Manit

will not appear in this issue. Look for it again in future issues.

