



SWANTON PACIFIC RAILROAD SOCIETY

Number 38

April 1996

Reminder

Our workdays for April are Wednesday evening, April 10th. at Cal Poly, starting @ 6:00 P. M. and at the Swanton Ranch, Saturday morning, April 13th. starting @ 9:00A. M.

On Track

with your Director,
Ed Carnegie

A lot of work has been done the last few months to make the Swanton Railroad ready for the 1996 season. As always, there will still be some things that could be done to make the railroad look better. Starting Wednesday, 10 April, Mary Ann and I will be at Swanton, and if any of you have some time and would like to come up, over or down and help, you are more than welcomed to do so. The days are getting longer so there's more daylight to get "things" done. The Red house has been reserved and if you would like to stay and use its facilities just let me know.

Some of the items that should be completed before Al's Smith Day are:

- Track work; a few ties should be replaced before the run and a cleanup of the right-a-way, including blowing and cleaning the track.
- Finish the hand rails on the Scott Creek Bridge.
- The picnic meadow needs some rocks picked up, weeds mowed, light stands leveled, tables aligned, and other general "items" made ready for the day.
- The pile of trucks west of the car barn need to be taken apart and then have the parts sorted and placed in the car barn.
- The steel received from Andy McLean needs to be arranged, stacked and placed in one location.

- The locomotives and cars need to be lubricated, cleaned and made ready for the day's run.
- If you would like to help with the BBQ team, contact Jim Matheny, as wood and other materials need to be accrued.
- The Monday, right after the April meeting we will disk, level, mulch and plant grass seed in the meadow.

So as you can see, we have a lot of different projects that can be worked on by different individuals, with different work interests, all you need to do is just show up and be ready, willing and able to work. Every little bit that is done, all adds up, and that way we will be ready for a super day.

We are still in the planning stages to implement the next class for engine operators. John Tomlin and Marty Campbell, under the leadership of Vince Cipola, will be in charge of giving the classes. Remember if you are interested in attending these classes please let them or me know so that we can accommodate you.

I hope that all of you have a wonderful Easter. By all means, don't forget Al Smith's Day, Sunday, April 14. See you then.

In the Caboose

with
Lou Haughney

Lou had a very traumatic experience last month and our sympathy goes out to him. His hard drive on his computer crashed and he was unable to contribute any articles to this months newsletter.

Behind the Throttle

with your President,
Bill McNab

Sunday Feb. 11 we had our executive board meeting. Lots of discussion. All present except Bob Nichols who had commitments elsewhere. Each committee chairman had a report and each was discussed. Most of the reports were of an on going work protects nature.

This year besides regular projects, we will be emphasizing training aspects more. Our group is growing and we need to make sure that safety is of prime importance at all times. Signaling and rules for safe operation will be required for all to know. There will also be additional classes for qualified people to learn motor car and diesel engine operation.

A tentative train run and BBQ schedule has been formulated. The first event will be Al Smith's memorial and life celebration day scheduled for Sunday April 14..

It was nice to see our immediate past president, Dave Stupi, able to attend. Dave has been snowed under with work and some personal obligations he and his wife have taken on for close friends.

The meeting was adjourned somewhere around 1p. m. with informal discussions for another couple of hours.

Sunday morning before the meeting "one scoop" Ed Carnegie was at it again. Trenching his way across the meadow for sprinkler irrigation installation. I must report that the water supply and electric services were severely impaired. Two Samaritans, along with Ed and his wife, Mary Ann, accomplished much digging, plastic pipe jointing, wires pulled through, etc. and by dark 30 (about 7p. m. the situation was righted. For details, Bill Engleman is your man.

All committees report that we again will not run short of work projects this year. We are gaining on them! Keep the faith.

(editors note: The above comments were received after the March newsletter went to print. The following was received in time for this April newsletter)

We are experiencing mail delays on our newsletter presently so that the April news will have some info that missed March. Still appropro though.

You'll note that this month the 1995 recap of accomplishments is included. It does not go into a lot of detail nor speaks for the many hours that were put in on these tasks but does show the pride that all of us put into the projects. Hats off to all.

Remember the 1996 memberships. In the May newsletter we plan an up-to-date roster so it is important that your name is included.

For Al Smith's birthday and life celebration train run and BBQ Sunday April 14, we are going to need help from the group. If we schedule it right, probably about an hour or so each will do it. We need to direct parking, information, helping with the BBQ setup (Jim Matheny in charge), serving, cleanup, maybe some cap and shirt sales, historical setup of materials and Al's Orchard Supply caboose open to the public (Lou Haughney in charge) and of course the most important is to get the engine and cars ready to go with cleaners, polishers, and crew (Ed Carnegie in charge) with Randy Jones, Martha Neilsen and the round house crew all in the middle of it. If we really get good and a lot of kids are in attendance, we might lean on someone to organize a treasure hunt with a farm and RR theme.

See you at the workday on the 13th and the 14th for Al Smith day.

Calendar

- April 10 Cal Poly work evening
- April 13 SPRS workday
- April 14 Al Smith Day
- May 8 SPRS workday
- May 11 Al Smith Day

Martha Neilsen would like to remind individuals and groups who are planning any activity with the SPRS to contact her as soon as possible with any dates. This way we can plan ahead and have a full crew and the necessary equipment operational. You can contact Martha @ (408) 257-2683.

Rail Tails

Swanton Pacific's Movers and Shakers
by Steve and Cindy Huffstetter

(The ongoing chronicles of the giants who made the Swanton Pacific Railroad what it is today.)

When the Swanton Pacific name crosses one's lips, there is a name and a man irrevocably linked to the ranch and the railroad. We as a club would never have what we have without the vision, love, and generosity of Al Smith. This month we celebrate his birthday with the first official event of the year - "Al Smith Day."

Cindy and I first met Al when the SPRS was formed in 1992. One would never suspect from his appearance and approachability that he was a wealthy man. But that was typical of him. Flaunting what he had was never his style. He just did good things with what he had earned. And of course one of the best things, from our point of view, was our little railroad. Much has been written by better writers about how Al assembled the Swanton Pacific equipment. Probably other stories can still be told that we haven't had the time to learn about yet. But we've heard a few tidbits here and there, that I think will tickle the fancy of many...

We never knew that Al had an artificial leg until after his passing, and hearing the story of how his Boy Scout training saved his life. Vince Cippola tells us that Al had lots of fun with his wooden leg. Once, so Vince says, Al went horseback riding, and a young man riding with him was astounded when Al caught his leg on a tree. Not that the leg was caught, but that the leg kept getting longer as Al backed his horse away from the tree! Another story from Vince tells that Al was waiting for a bus in Los Gatos, when his artificial leg came loose. Without shame, Al did what had to be done to get mobile again. I guess I would have done the same thing.

Al, I'm told, was never on time for any business meeting in his life. Or many other things as well. Francis Stone tells me that when she wanted Al to be at her house for dinner at six, she would tell him to arrive at five. Otherwise, he'd show up at seven! Rumor has it that this was a business strategy during his days running Orchard Supply Hardware. While waiting for Al to show up, the other participants in a meeting would close out of sheer boredom, making things easier (and probably more lucrative)

for Orchard Supply. Entrepreneurs, take notes! But Al never was late for anything to do with railroading. He used to take cab rides down to San Luis Obispo with Neil Vodden (who Al always referred to as "Coach," for reasons we have yet to discover). While there, he made friends with many of our mentors at the railroad today. And, we're sure, had some experiences that we've been told NOT to write about... One legend is told of the road trip to acquire locomotives 1914, 1915, and the last remaining Overfair equipment at auction in Southern California. Because of the number of people going with him, Al had to abandon his trademark pickup, and rent a Lincoln Town Car. Apparently, this made quite an impression on the other bidders at the auction, who asked, "Who's the rich guy in the Lincoln?" They never suspected that the successful bidder had rented his ride for the weekend, and was more comfortable in a pair of bib overalls than a business suit.

Once, during the last year of his life, I remember Cindy and I chatting briefly with Al. We were thanking him for letting us have the opportunity to work on his railroad. Al turned it around, and thanked US for being willing to help. It made us feel good to know that he appreciated us, and our meager contribution to his treasures.

And that I think sums up Al in a nutshell. An unassuming man, kind of heart and generous in deed, who enjoyed being who he was and giving what he could.

As the plaque by the roundhouse reads:
In Memory of Al Smith
A friend that shared his dreams
and his toys with many.
Hail to the Chief

As you ride behind the trains this weekend, remember the man who made it all happen - our friend, Al Smith.

1995 Accomplishments

compiled by:
Bill McNab

Railroad ties replaced, track straightened, set to grade and ballasted in selected areas.

BBQ pit completely redone and enlarged with 2 large grills now available. All roofed over so the cooking area is available in any weather. Serving area tables constructed.

Additional lights completed around meadow and train station area.

Rock and dirt brought in to reshape road bed approach to Scott Creek bridge.

Scott Creek bridge: rails, ties, ballast removed from bridge: north end of bridge raised, timbers replaced under bridge. Ties, rails, ballast on bridge replaced, concrete abutment poured at north end of bridge. (major project).

History of RR and engines was assembled from places and people near and far. History display racks built.

Car barn expansion: area graded, concrete block footing/retaining wall put in, concrete floor poured with 3 sets of rails inlaid into the concrete floor. Area roofed over and metal siding applied to enclose the sides.

Diesel engine 502 various parts overhauled. Detailing, wiring, and authenticating engine.

Steam engines extensive work done to upgrade equipment and reliability. Other roundhouse projects.

Fuel storage containment of concrete floor and walls, completed and roofed over.

Equipment updating.

Ballast storage completed with concrete floor poured and walls of large concrete blocks lifted into place. Capacity of storage is large truck and trailer of gravel.

Social events / train runs, BBQ

Equipment obtained:

- Steam engine #1500
- High pressure washer
- Tools

Well drilled in meadow area for irrigation of picnic area and the surrounding areas. A source for fire protection.

Fire ring pit moved to south end of train station.

Creation of alligator pond for Land Trust get together.

Telephone

The Swanton Pacific Railroad Society now has an operating phone in the machine-shop. The phone number is (408) 423-8204 and is listed under Swanton Pacific Railroad in Davenport. The phone service is set up for "credit card calls only" for out going calls. It accepts all incoming calls, except for collect calls. The SPRS also has their own answering machine for those of you that need to leave a message. Please note this number at your home in case someone needs to contact you during our workdays.

Membership

Annual dues to the society is \$25.00 per person. Dues are collected during the first of each year. Any correspondence to this newsletter or change of address and/or phone number should be sent to:

Swanton Pacific Railroad Society
Agricultural Engineering Department
Cal Poly State University
San Luis Obispo, CA 93405

(805) 756-2378

(805) 756-2626 FAX

<http://www.calpoly.edu:80/~ae/swanton/sprs.html>

Workdays are held at the Swanton Pacific Ranch near Davenport, CA., the second Saturday of the month and the Wednesday evening, prior to that Saturday at the Agricultural Engineering Department, Cal Poly State University. Anyone and everyone is welcome at these workdays. The phone number at the Swanton Pacific Railroad for messages is: (408) 423-8204