On Track

with your Director,

Ed Carnegie

The rains came, they came again, and then they continued! It hasn’t quite been 40 days and 40 nights, but it sure seems like it. Most of you may know by now, that the creek (turned raging river) took out the Scott Creek Bridge again. This makes the fourth time that this bridge has been washed out. This time, however, we lost almost an acre of trees and land upstream from the bridge. Then the water went behind the revetment and washed out the logs that were holding up the bridge. For our remodeling job on the bridge, we are going to build a large concrete retaining wall in a U shape on the North bank and a straight one on the South bank. Below the base columns we will drill down past the normal creek bottom, or into bedrock. In addition, the new bridge will be longer, it will have a span 120 feet. As a result, we will now have a much greater width and a higher clearance for the water to flow through. This February was the wettest February on record.

When the bridge gets back in place, we will be able to start working on the other wash-outs and mudslides. Yes, we were buried in mud and rock again, actually three this year, but so far none as bad as last year. Then there is the washout that was discussed last month. It is a lot worse now in that there are two places where the track is hanging in the air with nothing below. One section is about 40 feet long and then a short distance south there is another section about 30 feet long. That sure would make for a great “E” ride.

Other parts of the ranch look like a war zone. Last week, between rain storms I called Lud McCrary, from Big Creek Lumber for help. Big Creek sent a log skidder and crew to assist, and with the ranch’s skidder we tried to pull the downed bridge out of the creek. We finally gave up after breaking every cable and chain we had on hand. We were however, able to move some downed trees and root balls out of the stream in order to hopefully protect our creek banks somewhat. A huge “thanks” goes out to Big Creek Lumber, Wally Mark and Jerry Kurz from the Swanton Ranch, as well as Bill McNab and Tom Vertel for a real wet, hard day’s work on Scott Creek.

For our regularly scheduled workday on Saturday, a few stout hearted souls showed up in the rain and tried to keep dry and warm. Yes, we will have an Al Smith day even if we are not able to operate on a lot of track. Tradition is tradition and if you don’t keep it up then it would not be tradition! Invitations will be going out very soon, so if you want one sent to a friend or interested party let me know, or copy yours and pass it on.

On a brighter note, I received an e-mail that mentioned that an article on the Overfair Railroad will appear with Part 1 in the March/April issue of “Live Steam” and with Part 2 in the following issue. A big “thanks” to Walter Rice and Karl Hovanitz for taking on the task and seeing it through.

New member Ross Reager of San Jose has joined our Society. On behalf of the entire organization we welcome you into our “train family” and we certainly look forward to seeing you at some of our next events. Many of our members may not recognize you right away so please introduce yourself so that we can get to better know you and vice versa.
We are starting to receive some activity or responses from our web page and I would like to share one of these with you:

Dear Ed,

My name is Joel King and I live in Helena, Montana.

I ran across the Swanton Pacific internet site while surfing for railroad goodies one night. Great site. I enjoy your newsletters on line.

Several years ago I purchased a video from Film Service Corp entitled Big Little Railways. It featured the Swanton Pacific, among other light railways. It was from watching that video that I found out where the Keystone Light Railway equipment that my father designed ended up.

My father, I, Walton King, along with Walt Teskey and Carl Auel started Keystone Light Railways of Pittsburgh, PA. As a little fella, I spent many an evening with my dad as he drew plans after plan of 19" gauge equipment for Keystone. I still have some of those original drawings that he made. I also, along with my two brothers and Grandfather, helped my Dad lay three and a quarter miles of 19" track down in central Kentucky then later built another line down in Alabama. It is good to see that the equipment ended up behind those beautiful pacifics of MacDermot's. I know that the Keystone group considered purchasing one or more of those engines at various times but nobody that had them wanted to let them go. Did you know that Keystone had H. J. Coventry draw up plans for a ten-wheeler patterned after a H&O RR prototype? It would have been a beauty.

Did the Swanton Pacific end up with the U25B diesel unit? What about the Fairbanks-Morse gas work engine? I have lots of 35mm slides of the Keystone equipment when it was in Kentucky and some of the Alabama operation if the historical folks are interested.

My father was tragically killed in an automobile accident in 1969 while traveling in a taxi cab on the beltway around Washington DC. He was in the process of taking a job with the Association of American Railroads at the time. This tragic event put us in a real tailspin and we just faded out of Keystone at that time. Any dealings with the business was just too much of a painful reminder of how much my mother missed her husband and we children, our father. It was a real tough time for this guy, I'll tell you. I was 14 years old at the time, and thought my father had "hung the moon" so to speak.

We knew that eventually the 19" gauge equipment was sold from storage in Alabama but never pursued it beyond that. Whether that Keystone rebuilt some 36" gauge engines and other things but we just lost touch.

I have never lost my love of railroads. During the last couple of years I have worked with Montana Rockies Rail Tours, a mainline passenger tour train operation that is doing very well running over the old Northern Pacific (MRX) line in Montana. It is a first class operation and the passengers seem pretty happy with their experience.

I am also interested in miniatures and have just subscribed to Greg Robinson's "Grand Scale Quarterly" magazine. I really love steam but Montana is real short in that category.

I am glad that the Keystone equipment ended up at such a super looking operation as you folks appear to be running. How many miles of track have you got down now? I sure looks good on my video tape.

Well, I have wanted to write for some time. Someday I hope to take my son for a ride on some line cars that his Grandfather designed. I will make it down some day. Rode Erich's Redwood Valley several years ago and had a great time.

Drop me a line some time and I'll dig out my small stack of plans and make you some copies.

Steam safely,

Sincerely,

Joel P. King
1421 Sibleius Street
Helena, MT 59601
(406) 443-0631
Anthony was feeling inspired and told us he was envisioning something on the theme of the Sistine Chapel with Adam reaching his hand out (perhaps for the throttle of the 1912?). We finally convinced him that all the great painters had to first start with a primer coat. We still have a bit more painting left to do there, so if anyone else feels inspired, feel free to pitch in!

Randy came by to do a bit of work on the 00 motorcar since we got the hydrostatic drive unit back from the rebuilder, and it should be usable again in another week or so, hopefully with more get up and go than it has exhibited the last couple of years. We were able to move the 1913 boiler from the machinery barn into the roundhouse in preparation for boiler work and inspection. We hope to install a few more clean out plugs and do some comparisons with the 1912 and the 1914 while they are all side by side. It is interesting to see the bare boiler and firebox assembly, so if you have ever wondered what lurks underneath all of the sheetmetal and plumbing, here's your chance.

Fitz and Andy were hard at work in the car barn working on the old Overfair ballast car. They replaced some dry rot, installed brakes and converted it back to the original design as a flatcar. We removed the two sets of wheeled trucks that had been supporting the 1913 boiler and will use them in converting the second Crown car so it too should be finished in another week or so.

I came back again on Sunday with Linda and Molly to finish working on the crane truck since Ed needed to revive it again, and found Ed, Bob Nichols and Tom Vertel hard at work clearing downed trees and rootballs and moving mud around. Bob sure can drive that Cat! I got some time in on the giant tonka machine and learned what horsepower and big tires can do. I ended up lending a hand clearing out some debris while Tom and Ed did the hard work. Molly had a great time wandering through the mud puddles. After all of the rain and a few days of sunshine, the grass in the meadow is green, the flowers are starting to bloom and April 5th is going to be a great day for a picnic. Hope to see you all there!
In the Roundhouse

by Randy Jones

While the rain has continued unabated this month, so has the work in the car shop! The disassembly of the Overfair ballast flat car led to a discovery and a correction of last month's column. The frame of this car is not original as we had believed; it must have been rebuilt with fir lumber either at Billy Jones's or in Redwood Valley Shops for the Calistoga Steam Railroad. A portion of one sideframe was dry-rotted to dust! Fitz & Andy replaced this and other parts and re-piped the brakes. At least one truss rod needed welding and this was done by continuing member/ new volunteer/ certified welder Ken Forman. Welcome to the madhouse, Ken! Another change regarding this car since last month's letter is that it was determined that a complete rebuild would be necessary in order to keep it in ballast service. A discussion ensued re: the merits of that versus a whole new steel car. It was decided that especially since the railroad is temporarily shut down, the most progress could be made by first making relatively quick repairs to the Overfair car as a flat car with side-boards, then completing the next Crown car, and finally building a new steel ballast car. I will begin the plans soon, in hopes of having something ready for the Board meeting on the 15th. Regarding the locomotives, Ken Fisher was down from Portland and helped out last month with the 1914's main rods. We are really surprised and pleased that the work required is less extensive than originally expected. Would that all of our projects were so! It is great to see the 1913's boiler back in the roundhouse, and we anticipate making a date soon with John Greco to map out the work on it. As soon as it goes up to John's shop in South S.F., we can get going on the locomotive frame, driving boxes (which contain the driver axle bearings), spring rigging and equalization. I am going to contact the Golden Gate RR Museum to see if they might be interested in doing some work for us. The multiple benefits here are that our groups are already familiar, they already have an understanding of steam locomotive technology, and any money we spend goes to a non-profit like ourselves (and a RR, too).

As before, if you have questions or concerns you would like me to address, you can write to me at 328 Stanford Ave., Santa Cruz, CA 95062, or call me at 408-425-5065, or E-mail me at RJones@pacbell.net. For emergencies (or if you just can't get through - we have teenagers at home), you can page me at 408-699-6800.

Hope to see you all at the March 14 workday!

In the Caboose

with your Historian

Lou Haughney

AL SMITH'S ACQUISITION OF LOCOMOTIVES 1914, 1915, & 1930 and a LINCOLN CONTINENTAL

Al Smith completed his collection of the four Mac Dermott/Overfair Pacific locomotives with his purchase in 1984 of engines #1914 and #1915 from the estate of Quentin Jarvis. At the same sale, Neil Vodkeva, a long-time friend of Al and of the late Billy Jones, bought the Overfair switcher engine, #1500. The locomotives were immediately trucked back to Northern California from the sale site in the San Pedro/Wilmington area of Los Angeles. The Pacifics went to the Swanton Pacific Ranch; the switcher #1500, to the Wildest Railroad in Los Gatos. With these transactions, all of MacDermtt's Pacifics were now together again, and his tank-type switcher was only a few miles away in Los Gatos, at another active, narrow-gauge railroad. The story of how these locomotives went to Southern California was told in the August 1997 issue of the BPRS Newsletter. Briefly, three railroad buffs bought the equipment from Billy Jones on November 1, 1959 and moved them to the Los Angeles area. Jarvis, the surviving member of the trio, operated the #1500 at the Orange County Fairgrounds during the summers of 1975 through 1977. After Jarvis died in 1982, his estate passed into the jurisdiction of the Public Administrator for Los Angeles County. The latter scheduled a public auction of the railroad for March 12, 1983. During the years, Jarvis had collected a large amount of railroad equipment. News of the upcoming sale spread quickly throughout the narrow-gauge railroad community.
For example, George Barlow, the retired, chief driver of the 1/3 scale locomotives on the Romney, Hythe, and Dymchurch Railway in Kent, England, learned of the sale when he went to Southern California in 1982 to see the locomotives. Barlow then informed Al, whom Barlow had just visited. An inventory of the items included in the estate is found in the CSRM Library’s file on MacDermot and Al Smith. Handwritten notes on the list, probably made by a CSRM staff attendee, give information about the sale. The list describes the engines as follows:

Item 49 - Locomotive #1. 4-6-2 Pacific steam Loco. Unfinished W/Spare Parts

Item 50 - Locomotive #2. Pacific Locomotive Unfinished W/Spare Parts. “Unfinished...” was underlined by the annotator, who added this comment, “pistons frozen 1915”

Item #95 - 0-6-0 Switcher W/Tender Operation at Orange County Fair—runs on Propane.

The following notes were written by the observer about the sale prices.

**Item 49 - (Locomotive) 1. “Start bid item 49 - $7,000. Sale price $5,500. owner #3.” (apparently, this refers to bidder #3, Al Smith.)**

**Item 50 - (Locomotive) 2. “$2,500 (sale price?). Start bid item #50, $4,000.”**

**Item 95. - (the 0-6-0 switcher) “buyer #4 Neil Vodden, start $10,000, sale $8,500”**

Also included in the sale were numerous items of railroad equipment and supplies; such as, pressure gages, British signal lights (went for $80), warning light (went for $50), vertical and horizontal steam engines, trucks, wheels, spikes, rails, whistles, etc.

**Item #90 is intriguing, "Cts. of Engineer Drawings & [wood] Patterns". The bid for this started at $75 and it "sold for $375 to # (blank), not buyer #3".**

Could this be some of the MacDermot drawings and patterns that have showed up at Swanton?

**Loading the 1914 onto a trailer at the Jarvis Estate, March 1984**
The attendee's notes are somewhat cryptic and not completely clear, at this time, to someone who did not attend the auction. Maybe the buyer was Al or Neil. Who else would want those drawings if they did come originally from MacDermot through Jones? Al made a big impression on the attendees at the auction sale, not only because of his purchases but more importantly because of his appearance there with a Lincoln Continental, one of the premier luxury cars of that era. An article in the Cal Poly Today of Fall 1994 tells this story about Al's acquisition of the MacDermot locomotives, both at the Jarvis sale and, earlier, from the Calistoga Steam Railroad. He bought his first steam engines from a winery owner in Napa. The seller wanted $500,000 for the original McDermtt’s (sic). Smith told him that anyone who’d spend more than $100,000 on a hobby is crazy. The owner sold them at Smith's price. Two of the locomotives were bought at an auction in Los Angeles.

Just before he left, Smith saw an ad for a special rate of $24 a day to test drive a Lincoln Continental. He thought it'd be a cheap way for him and his buddies to get to the auction so he rented it. At the auction two steam engines came up for sale and the auctioneer wanted bidding to start at $40,000 each. Much to his dismay, only Smith bid on them and he ended up getting them for $3,000 and $2,000. As the engines were being loaded onto trucks for the drive home, Smith heard one observer ask the other, "Who's this guy that bought up everything?" The other said, "I don't know, but he must be rich - he's driving a Lincoln Continental." Presumably, that article was based on Al's telling the story of that trip.

After arriving back in Swanton, Al returned the Lincoln Continental to the rental agency. Then, he resumed driving around in his pickup truck while dressed in his habitual bib overalls.

Al at the wheel of the renowned Lincoln Continental. March 1984
In regards to the prices paid at the Jarvis auction, the versions in the auctions’s inventory list and in the Cal Poly newspaper are quite different. Nevertheless, they do agree that the upper limit for the amount Al paid for the two locomotives was $10,000. Locomotive #1914 was restored by Al and his friends of the Swanton Pacific Railroad Society; it was returned to service on the SPRS trucks in ???. That was the first time it had been operated since it ran at the Panama International Exposition in 1915. Locomotive #1915, which was never finished by MacDermot, was donated by Al Smith to the California State Railroad Museum. The exterior was completed and restored by the “Project 1915” volunteers of the Pacific Coast Chapter, Railway & Locomotive Historical Society, Inc., in 1991. Now it sits in its shining splendor in the entrance lobby of the California State Railroad Museum in Old Sacramento. Locomotive #1500, the 0-6-0T switcher, remained at the Wildcat Railroad in Los Gatos until 1995 when it was bought by the Swanton Pacific Railroad. As is, by then, it had been completely disassembled for overhaul. Reassembly and restoration of it is on our wish list. With the 1500’s acquisition, all of MacDermot’s locomotives are now at the Swanton Pacific Railroad, with the exception of #1915. It is fitting, however, that Al and the CSRM have provided a worthy and prominent location for the 1915. NOTE: A group of 14 snapshots entitled “LA Overtair Engines 1914” show the loading of the engines onto trailer trucks in Los Angeles and then the subsequent reworking of them at Swanton. These photos are among those recently found in Al’s house. They will be available for viewing in Al’s caboose.

WILDLIFE ENTERPRISES ©

OBSERVATION CAR
by C. Paul Stark
Retired Regional Supervisor
South Coast Region

We had just spent hours, well it seemed like hours getting there. Remember, in those days the speed limit was only 45 miles per hour, the Santa Cruz grade was still partly one lane in some sections, the horsepower in cars was not equal to today’s, and the traffic appeared as bad as it always is. We may have been only 35 miles from home, but to us, it was an eternity. I don’t think any of us asked, “How much longer ?”, but we got close.

We were just kids, doing what kids do, poking each other, laughing and chasing one another. In amongst this hassle we were changing into our swim trunks. Shortly we were running down the road to the swimming hole and someone yelled after us, “Hey, wait for me”. Looking back, here he came, hopping down that road on one leg, going about as fast as we could on two.

We had always known that Mr. Smith limped when he walked, but what kid of 13-14 even thinks, let alone questions why anything is? He was just our agriculture teacher. That was my first vivid remembrance of Mr. Smith.

When I began thinking, I had been in Mr. Smith’s class for about a half year. This was my sophomore year. I had wanted to take Agriculture as a freshman. Believe it or not, there was agriculture in the Santa Clara Valley in those days. Thousand of acres of Prunes, Pears, Apricots, Cherries, Walnut and Almonds. There were also lots of strawberry patches. And, I picked tomatoes on the grounds of the Winchester Mystery House. As I said, I wanted to take Vocational Agriculture as a freshman, but my vice-principle (they did the scheduling in those days) said I couldn’t because “I was college prep.” (Some things do not change. This statement is still uttered by counselors, throughout this state.) I was able to get into Vocational Agriculture my sophomore year only by getting my mother to take a day off from work to convince my counselor that it was OK for me to take the class. I also remember that I obtained a new name. The rest of the school never called me by my given name. I became another “Dumb Aggie.”
But, I digress. When Mr. Smith wanted to thank us for doing a great ??? job at school (Campbell High),
he would invite eight to ten of us to spend a weekend
at the old Boy Scout camp which he owned and
eventually became a part of the Swanton Pacific
Ranch. We would jump in the back of the cattle
truck (something else you can no longer do) and off
we would go.

During our visit we spent much time at the "Old
Swimming" hole. As I remember it, part of the creek
dammed and concrete walls put along the banks. The
water was cold and you couldn't see your finger tips
if you placed your hand in the water. I am sure the
county health department would never approve its
use today, but we had lots of fun. And, it never did
kill any of us.

No trains on the property then, so we took hikes
throughout the property and, I suppose, those of
others around it. Our impression was that fences
were put up to keep cattle from overgrazing;
certainly not to keep us from enjoying the view and
to get up to where you could smell the clean, fresh
ocean air. For a kid without a father, those were
GREAT times.

He also took us into the Sierra Mountains during the
summer, but that is another story.

In class we were never "Dumb Aggies" to Mr. Smith.
He treated us as young adults and was quick with his
praise and a BIG ready smile. Mr. Smith smiled a
lot. He made the day fun. He was also strong. Fool
around in class and he would grab you by the upper
arm so tight, you didn't move.

But, he was forgiving. I remember diskin' in the
orchard and getting the disk caught on one tree, with
the front of the tractor flat up against the one just
beyond it. Had to disconnect the two and pull the
disk sideways. But after treating the "Tractor Blight"
on the trees, life went on. If Mr. Smith lost his
temper, I do not remember it.

Mr. Smith was the reason I became an Agriculture
Instructor, and I have thought many times, over the
years, of him and our weekend trips. Just before he
died he showed me the cabin at which we stayed. My
heavens, how small it is! How did we all fit in it???
I guess it was as big as Mr. Smith's heart.