



## SWANTON PACIFIC RAILROAD SOCIETY

Number 62

June 1998

### On Track

with your Director,

Ed Carnegie

Ed and Mary Ann have invaded Europe and Bill McNab contributed the following article in their stead.

### TREES TREES ETC.

By Bill McNab

On the May workday, a precarious walking trip down the railway to the south end was made. Besides the tracks suspended roller coaster fashion over open air for a couple hundred feet, there are six to eight trees, limbs, etc., in horizontal repose impeding the walkers progress. On rounding Windy Point the track has been taken over by thistles three to four foot high and an area clear out to the bay tree. It takes a thick skinned person to ouch a way through without turning back.

Down to the Redwood glen for an inspection of what has been our tree planting project for the last four years. It's more like redwood gulch with the center section showing a 10 foot deep 12 foot wide chasm where the placid little runoff creek ballooned into a roaring amount of water to move several truck loads of rocks and mud across the tracks and out into the field. We did lose some of the trees but at present, with the thistle, poison hemlock, stinging nettle, tall grass and you name it, it is tough to even locate the trees.

It appears the family and memorial trees have survived, some flush with new growth, others just sitting there. As a guess, the remaining trees should number in the 30's.

The field at Windy Point has become hog heaven, with wallows from pigs all over the field.

While the Railroad is waiting for Fish and Game permits to rebuild our Scott Creek bridge there are many tasks we can work on. Besides the many tasks underway, the extensive rains have brought shall we say "challenges and opportunities" for the volunteers and friends to show their weed, mud, and tree branch clearing abilities along the railroad right of way.

Red House - Although we have the Red house reserved for overnight workdays the second weekend of each month we again had the farm schedule us out. This reduced our available members at the workday. It certainly has happened often in the past six months or so even though we try to emphasize how important this is for our volunteer workers to be able to stay overnight. It is a two hour trip or more driving from the Northbay and three to four hours from San Luis, Modesto, or Stockton. Make that round trip in a day, plus working 6 to 8 hours, we're putting tired people on the road - not a good idea.

See you on the June workday, bring that 'can do' attitude and all the friends you can find.

## Behind the Throttle

with your President **Bill Engelman**

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We are planning a big workday on June 13th and will be having a BBQ/picnic in the afternoon after our workday. Linda, Molly and I are planning on staying over the weekend in the meadow, so come by and say hello.

We anticipate a lot of progress on the bridge construction that weekend, and we need people to prep and paint the components before our team of welders start to assemble. Anyone is welcome to participate in this phase, it is not high tech work by any means.

We are having an executive board meeting the next day, Sunday the 14th.

The ranch has a crop of young goats this year, and boy are they cute. Molly has been having a great time playing with them and feeding them. One of the goats, May (or Maaaay as we call her) was running around following Molly like a puppy when she was four days old, it was great fun. Stop by and see them, there are usually a couple in a pen near the red house. Children really enjoy playing with them, and they might get to help feeding the goats. Ask LaDonna or Tom.

I have been spending a lot of time at the ranch lately and have a badacious case of poison oak to prove it after taking the motorcar out for a test. In the words of Elvis, I'm itchin' like a man in a fuzzy tree. If any of you are not allergic to poison oak, we could sure use your help in clearing the area around the tracks. The El Nino rains have encouraged lots of growth, and we have not been able to get to it for a while. Those of you who are allergic to it will have no problem if you don't go past the meadow area until we can get it cleared.

Ed and Mary Ann are back from their trip to Europe, and have lots of stories to tell about their experiences and they tell us that videos will be available for those interested. Barney is glad they are back, but he seems to have some mixed emotions since he had such a great time staying with Tom and Fred Vertel. Even though he is 10 years old, Barney learned a new trick which they would be glad to demonstrate for you!

We had a small but dedicated turnout on our most recent official workday, we were able to pour two concrete pads for the air compressors at the car barn and at the machinery building. Many thanks to Cosmo, Elmer, Fitz, Andy, Bob Morehouse and Boulder Creek Bob for their help with the concrete work.

Lou was working on the roses again, and they are showing the results of his labor, they are really looking good.

Randy and Goeff fine tuned the turntable some more using a transit to sight the elevations, and assure us that it is as close to perfect as we can get without hi-tech laser spotting equipment.

Cosmo made up some slip forms, so we will start pouring the concrete blocks this next workday. Soon that project will be behind us.

Next equipment project is the 502 diesel, see Marty if you want to help. It will be down for a couple of months while we work on air brakes, transfer case, torque converter, air tanks, sanders and more.

I spent several days working on the motorcar and can now finally say that it is fixed and running as well as it ever did. I finally had to get a factory rebuilt drive unit, since the company we had been dealing with was not able to get it right after several attempts. It has enough power to spin its wheels now, so we may need sanders on it. Many thanks to our friends at Central Hydraulics in Redwood City for helping us out on this one, we should have gone there in the first place. They are railroad buffs and very nice people to work with. If you have any hydraulic equipment servicing needs we highly recommend them. Tell them the SPRR sent you.

It looks as if we will have permission from our friends at Fish and Game to finally remove the old bridge and start our preparations for the foundation of the replacement bridge around July first. We hope to have several bridge sections assembled by then and hope to make rapid progress from there on.

The longer we are unable to run our trains, the more charitable organizations are hurt by our inability to offer our facilities for their fund-raisers. Most of you know that we gladly provide facilities and train rides for several charitable groups throughout the season, and we are anxious to get rolling again.

I would like to address the issue this month of whether or not the Swanton Pacific Railroad performs an educational function. Let there be no doubt that we do perform in that capacity.

We have a lot of very talented and dedicated people who volunteer their time on a regular basis to keep our operation running and growing under the direction of your distinguished Cal Poly professor, retired, Mr. Ed Carnegie. Any members of our Swanton Pacific Railroad Society, as well as students or faculty of Cal Poly University are welcome to come out to the ranch and join in our ever evolving program. Working with us, you can get hands on experience learning welding, metal fabrication, electrical wiring, concrete, road grading, track work, heavy equipment operation, bridge design, bridge building, construction techniques, materials coating, plumbing, hydraulics, surveying, restoration of historical machinery and equipment, steam and drive systems, gardening, rose pruning and you name it we do it! We are now offering classes in railroading from basic safety up through operation of the diesel and steam locomotives. We encourage active participation. If you have an interest in learning, then come on out for our workdays, held at least once a month on the second Saturday of each month, and frequently more often during the summer months. If you are interested in one of our projects, we will be happy to team you up with a member to learn by doing.

## In the Caboose

with your Historian

Lou Haughney

### Les quatre Pacific de Louis MacDermot

1912, 1913, 1914, 1915...Ces dates sont aussi les noms de baptême de quatre locomotives en réduction, construites pour promener les visiteurs de l'Exposition internationale de San Francisco, en 1915. Elles ont connu bien des tribulations.

{So begins an article in the French railroad magazine, La Vie du Rail, February 7 to 13, 1991. Jacques du Sordet, the author, had visited Al Smith at the Swanton Pacific Ranch, sometime in 1990. He was impressed by the MacDermot locomotives and especially by Al's preservation of them. The two page article with several photographs is available in Al's OSH caboose. A translation of his article follows.}

In 1915, upon the occasion of the opening of the Panama Canal, the city of San Francisco in California organized an International Exposition, the "Panama Pacific". In order to carry visitors around the fair, Louis MacDermot of Oakland, an enthusiast about trains, built a series of mini-trains. Cars, of course; but, especially, four superb steam locomotives. Using as a basis the Pacific type 4-6-2, MacDermot made his locomotives 1/3 of the size of the model. Only the cab was left large enough to allow the driver to slide into it. Built in 1913 and 1914, these four engines were christened "1912", "1913", "1914", and "1915". Higher than 1.80 meters and about nine meters long, each pulled a train filled with visitors on the 10 kilometers of track. The price of the tickets - the equivalent of 50 [French] cents! Unfortunately, if the adventure is exhilarating, it did not prove to be profitable for MacDermot. At the time of accounting, the final statement was out of balance - a deficit of \$40,000. MacDermot had lots of trouble to regain that loss; and, despite the help of the family of his friend, Charlie Hoyle, he died in the greatest poverty in February 1948.

A great admirer of MacDermot, Charlie Hoyle also plays a big role in the history of these trains. He saw to it that they did not disappear, and he took such good care of the "1913" that, even today, he is considered as the "spiritual owner" although he died in 1986. At first [after the Exposition], the trains and locomotives spent five years at the Oakland Zoo. Afterwards, after a sojourn at Billy Jones' ranch, the "1913" was found at Santa Clara while the others were used in amusement parks in Southern California. A few years later, the "1912" and the "1913" went to Calistoga, the property of a certain Robert Maxfield, but their success was not dazzling.

It was up to Albert Smith, a friend of Charlie Hoyle, to reunite at last the locomotives and the cars. In 1979, he bought the "1912" and the "1913" and, in 1980, the "1914" and the "1915". Albert Smith was enthralled with them and returned life to these trains. He restored those locomotives perfectly, except the "1914" which had not been finished, and regularly invited his friends to come and share his enthusiasms. Three kilometers of tracks, a small station, a barbecue, and "Bud" beer that flowed like waves.

A diesel locomotive, more practical to use, came to reinforce the equipment of the "Swanton Pacific Railroad". It is a model from the General Electric type U-35B built by the Keystone Light Railway Works at Pittsburgh. Like all the steam locomotives, the diesel is also obviously [built] to a 1/3 scale. At the same time the "1915" left Albert Smith's train shed to end its days at the museum in Sacramento.

A bachelor 69 years old, Al Smith is [to be found] from now on almost more often on his engines than on his agricultural lands. If, by chance, you go by Santa Cruz in California, let yourself be guided by a whistle blast and clouds [of steam], and go and pay a visit. **by Jacques du SORDET**

\*\*\*\*\* Comments by LCH. First, thanks to Ms. Maria Ricotti and Mrs. Henrietta Vowell of San Carlos for providing the translation of the article. Ms. Ricotti is a retired high school language teacher, and Mrs. Vowell is a WWII war bride from France. We have chosen to make a literal translation to preserve the flavor of the writer's feelings. Only in a few instances marked by [brackets] have I changed or added more appropriate words or phrases. The article impresses me with the amount of information that Sordet obtained from his visit with Al Smith, probably in 1990. There are a few minor errors. The "1915", not the "1914", was the engine that MacDermot did not finish; and, the "1913" ran at the Oakland Zoo about 2 years or so. The engines were stored in the Los Gatos area, not in Santa Clara; but, the proximity of all those cities still leaves me confused as to just where I am while driving through them. His reference to the "flowing Bud Beer" was before my time at Swanton. However, I am intrigued by his mentioning that MacDermot suffered a loss of \$40,000 from his operation of the Overfair Railroad. I have not seen that figure before. Some of the references I have seen suggest that MacDermot took an unspecified loss or broke even. Now, Sordet must have obtained that number from Al Smith or from one of Al's friends of the Billy Jones era; so, some credence may be given to its authenticity. In a note to Al with copies of the article, Sordet describes the journal *La Vie du Rail* as "This magazine is the best in France about train". Sordet certainly did well in informing the French train enthusiasts (les passionnels) about the Swanton Pacific Railroad. Does anyone recall his visit here?

***Safety is an attitude and a good habit  
that can be learned.***

**My dog ate my homework.** Well, sort of. My computer got sick and hid all my SPRR files. My apologies for getting this out so late. If any one knows of a virus that performs a logical AND 2 (10 in binary) to every odd address on a hard disk please let me know.

Many thanks to Ed C. and Bill E. for e-mailing me their article and the mailing list. Saved me a lot of typing. Fitz ☺