



# SWANTON PACIFIC RAILROAD SOCIETY

Number 68

Cal Poly

December 1998

## On Track

with your Director, Ed Carnegie

Now that the rush is over and the bridge is up we can settle down to a more normal life style. I hope that you are all as stuffed as I am and are watching your diets (??) We have an answer for you weight watchers--come to our workday! We have our next one scheduled for Sat. Dec. 12, 1998 and then our next one for Sat. Jan 9, 1999. If you come to those you are bound to work off some of those extra calories from Thanksgiving, and the holiday indulgences! Hope all of you had a very nice Thanksgiving and were able to spend it with family and friends.

Last workday we had a lot happening. We've had a good response on the ballots and they were counted by a selected group after our board meeting on Sunday, 11/09/98. The newly elected officers will be announced elsewhere in this newsletter.

Work done at the last workday was highly productive in that the following things were accomplished:

- Under the supervision of Elmer, the Pratkanis family, Carol Campbell, Bob Morehouse, Cosmos, Mary Ann, Barney, and I threw a "rock party"! Should you want more details of the event ask any of us.
- A class for locomotive fireman was conducted by John Tomlin for Tom Vertel and Bill Engelman. In addition, qualification tests were administered by John and Andy. Don't forget for those of us who need to re-qualify--schedule yourself for an exam ASAP!
- A special steam run was conducted for approximately 50 students from Soledad. This event was sponsored by the Cal Poly Natural Resource Dept. and MESA Group.

This worked out fine for us as we were able to combine service and educational instruction for steam operations.

- Marty Campbell and crew continued their work on the 502. Hopefully by New Year's eve it will be up and running!
  - Fitz and crew in the carbarn worked on keystone passenger-car brakes and have developed a unique system of applying brake pressure. "Check it out" when you get a chance.
  - Fred continues to paint on the station and with the colder, damper weather he has even brought a heater to speed the drying process along, not to mention keeping himself and whomever comes to talk with him warm.
  - The grounds crew started their "winterizing" by harvesting a good crop of weeds, mowing the lawn which isn't growing quite as fast now, and planting some new bulbs to come up in the spring, as well as removing bulbs for the winter.
  - After the workday on Saturday the "hanger-onners" stayed around for a tri-tip dinner, conversation, and train videos held at the rehouse.
  - On Sunday, following the workday a very lengthy board meeting was held where much was discussed. Some subjects will be continued this month. If you are interested all members are welcomed to attend these meetings.
- Don't forget our traditional New Year's eve run. This year we are celebrating our 20th annual run! It will be a night you will all remember. For New Year's Eve we will be having a potluck before the train rides begin. This really is going to be a "pot-luck", in that you bring the pot with whatever you feel like bringing, and the luck is that hopefully we will not all have beans to eat!

We will all be getting the engines and cars ready during the day and will plan to eat shortly after it gets dark.

We hope you are able to come, as the evening is always a lot of fun for the families. Remember to dress warmly and think positively for no rain!

New memberships received over the last few months were as follows:

Jim Cochran	Davenport
John Newman	Redwood City

On behalf of the entire organization we welcome each of 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 yourselves so that we can get to better know you and vice versa.

Reminders: If you are planning to stay in the Redhouse either Friday or Saturday, let me know and I will try my best to have your reservation taken care of. Please let me know a few days in advance. We are responsible for cleaning up after ourselves and to take home anything we bring in.

Being the last newsletter of 1998 I want to express my sincere thanks to all the members that worked so hard and accomplished so much during this past year. Our organization and its accomplishments would not be possible without your support. Throughout the year we receive so many compliments about the progress and improvements in the facilities that are the results of the many hours of volunteer work by you our members. The most often heard remark is that "Al would be proud!"

Mary Ann and I would also like to wish everyone of you a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year. As always we look forward to working with all of you in the coming year and to continue to have our friendships grow.



## OUT IN THE WORLD

### Publicity and Events

Mary Ann Carnegie and Fred Vertel

Dates to mark on your calendar:

#### 1998

Saturday	December 12	Work Weekend
Thursday	December 31	New Year's Eve Run

#### 1999

Saturday	January 9	Workday
Saturday	February 13	Workday
Saturday	March 13	Workday
Sunday	April 04,	EASTER
Tuesday	April 06,	Al Smith's actual birthday
Saturday	April 10	Workday in preparation for Sunday run
Sunday	April 11	Al Smith Day/Run

At the November board meeting much discussion was held regarding the possibility of Swanton Pacific RR participating in the 1999 Rail fair in Sacramento. Fred Vertel volunteered to present several options to the Sacramento RR Museum as to how we might participate in the event. This will be the primary discussion item at the Dec. board meeting so if you want to be a part of the planning, be there!

An all points bulletin is out for any of you that might have photos taken of various events, participants and other Swanton related activities. See Fred Vertel who is putting together a current historical album for our archives. For 1999 we would like to have a few outings to interesting railroad functions. If any of you have suggestions please let either Fred or Mary Ann know and maybe we can arrange a family event for all us.

## Behind the Throttle

with your President, Bill Engelman  
 engelman@compuserve.com

Voice: 650.726.6908 Fax: 650.726.7030

On behalf of the re-elected officers, I would like thank you for voting in our recent election. We will take it as a "vote of confidence" that the membership has chosen to put us in our place for another year. It has been an eventful year, with lots of challenges, we have high hopes that '99 will be a better year for the railroad. Wouldn't YOU like to become more involved and be an officer in the following year? Start thinking about it now, we encourage you to participate, for this is your organization too.

On December 13, at 0930 the board will be meeting in the "Red House" to discuss our goals and priorities for this next year and beyond. Please feel free to contact any of the executive board members, listed in your newsletter, with any suggestions you might have, and projects that YOU would like to be involved in. Also, suggestions for activities to bring the membership together for fun would be appreciated. We want to have more fun this year, but we are not sure we still know how. We are contemplating an anti-rain dance in January...

Be sure to attend our annual New Years Eve party and run day, Details should be elsewhere in this newsletter. It is a great family event, and a safe and fun way to welcome in the new year. How many other people do you know who welcome in the new year at midnight with the first steam train ride of the new year? Some people like to make a little noise at midnight to welcome in the new year, but here at the SPRR we have the real thing, you can hear the steam whistles on the MacDermott locomotives, a Nathan M-3 Airchime from a Denver and Rio Grande locomotive and a couple of Nathan P-3 Airchimes from Southern Pacific! Lots of fun to be had by all, so see you there!!!

### ATTENTION SPRS PHOTOGRAPHERS!

Fred Vertel is preparing for the First Annual Swanton Pacific Yearbook, "1998, The Year in Review", a permanent addition to our historical archives.

Fred is asking for photos between now and January 15th, 1999 and would like to include submissions from as many members as possible. While technically superior photos are desirable, Fred feels it is more important that the photos and text tell the story of the SPRR during the year. The desired format is 4X6 color prints, but whatever size you have he'll work with. The goal is to have as many of our members (and guests) as possible represented in this book.

Please identify "who", "where", "when" where possible on the reverse... preferably with a stick on label as ball-points tend to impress the photo. Photo credits will be given and all pictures selected become the property of the SPRS. Others will be returned after the album is completed. At the Swanton Pacific Railroad...historical preservation is ongoing. Please contribute.

Mail to:

Fred Vertel  
 1475 Redwood Drive  
 Los Altos, CA 94024-7250.

Questions? email FTVERTEL@aol.com

### ELECTION RESULTS

President	Bill Engelman
1st VicePresident	Bob Morehouse
2nd VicePresident	Andy McLean
Treasurer	Ed Carnegie
Secretary	RGB 'Fitz' FitzPatrick



### Swanton Pacific Railroad's New Year's Eve Tradition

The Swanton Pacific Railroad's "Special New Year's Eve Run" on December 31, 1998 will mark the 20th anniversary of this popular, neighborhood event. According to those associated with Al Smith in the early days, the first one occurred on December 31, 1979. That was just four months after Al Smith had bought the rolling stock and equipment of the Calistoga Steam Railroad from Bob Maxfield.

Versions of when and what constituted the first run vary somewhat as different participants recall details of particular interest to them. However, all agree that a great tradition was started for the Swanton Pacific Railroad and Ranch

According to one account handed down by local lore, Al, Neil Vodden, Charlie Hoyle, and other early cohorts, were taking a welcome rest in late 1979 after a day's work on the railroad in chairs outside the machine shop, which, at that time, was the engine barn for the locomotives. They decided to have a special run at **midnight on Dec. 31, 1979. They fired up #1913 locomotive and ran it down the track for "35 chuffs" and then backed it up to the shop after blowing its whistle with mighty blasts. (Those familiar with railroading language will have to translate "35 chuffs" into a measure of the distance it traveled.)**

All the persons I contacted referred me to Ken McCrary, a member of the family that has lived on Swanton Road for several generations. Ken gives this account. Back in the era of 1979-1980, Ken attended a show in Redlands of old farm and logging machinery, particularly of steam-powered machinery, which Ken has been collecting for years. At that show, one attendee mentioned how he had ushered in a New Year with blasts from his steam whistle. Upon

his return to Swanton, Ken suggested to Al Smith that the locomotive's whistle could be used to greet the New Year. Al responded enthusiastically with words such as, "That's a great idea! We'll have a train ride and a bonfire in the meadow. Let's invite all the neighbors." Ken had previously setup a steam donkey engine in the meadow with a 60 foot spar pole and cables, by which he would demonstrate the hoisting of timber logs from the bluffs to the meadow. On New Year's Eve, while Al and friends were firing up the locomotive, Ken fired up the steam donkey's boiler. He took steam from the donkey to operate a generator that provided electricity for floodlights. Also, Ken brought out his large steam cooking pot, in which he heated cider to toast the New Year. This pot was double jacketed with the steam being injected between its walls. Al's railroad buddies brought their collections of steam whistles, which were attached to the steam donkey. One fellow brought a 3-tone whistle from the tug Hercules. At midnight, the walls of the Scott Creek canyon reverberated mightily and for many minutes with the mighty blasts from all the whistles, and especially from the tug's thundering chord. Ken recalls that the train ride went just beyond the switch at the far end of the meadow because a bridge had not yet been placed across Scott Creek

Thus started an annual ritual for the Railroad and Ranch, for Swanton Road neighbors, and for Al's friends. Martha Neilsen says the New Year's Eve celebrations resulted from a "roundhouse chat". For the first one, neighbors and friends brought six kinds of stew, each different. In the first few years, "we used to eat in the shop and everything was set up on tables." They have always been informal. Notice was spread by word of mouth. Ken would prepare his hot cider, the only liquid refreshment Al would allow. This was Al's way of showing what he meant when he said, "This railroad will be for the enjoyment of myself, my friends, and my neighbors"

Elmer Stone and Bud McCrary, Ken's father, recall well the run on Dec. 31, 1981. By then, a flat-car bridge had been placed across the creek, but at a lower height above the water than we have seen it in the recent years. The track extended through the trees and creekside shrubs for some distance beyond the creek crossing. Rain had been falling for some

days before; but, it had let up during that day, so the annual gathering took place in the meadow. The train ride started out under threatening clouds. Neil Vodden and Charlie Hoyle were the crew. Al and Bud were riding in the hopper car. As they crossed the creek, they noticed that the water level was getting close to the bridge. Ken remarked to Al, "This may be trouble" Sure enough, the rains resumed during the night. Four days later, January 4, 1982, the bridge was washed out - for the first time. It was reinstalled at a higher level, and operations went on successfully during 1982. However, El Niño rains started again during the 1982-1983 winter. In February 1983, the bridge's abutments were washed out again - for the second time

Despite problems with weather, the New Year's Eve runs have always been made since that first event. Last year in the autumn of 1997, a major realignment was made in the track from the meadow to the bridge; and, the abutments were rebuilt. All that was completed in time for the end-of-year run. But, we were already into another El Niño season.

In February 1998, the rains inundated the creek, the alders along the sides of the creek collapsed like a toothpicks, and the creek was diverted with full swollen force against the north abutment. The bridge collapsed for the third time

Now, with the new and longer bridge installed in September, we will be able to run again across Scott Creek on New Year's Eve. But the ride will be shorter than usual because now the track crew has to inspect and rebuild, where necessary, the track bed beyond the bridge up to the site of the 100 foot washout about 1/2 mile farther down from the bridge. After that washout is repaired, then much more work remains to clear the mud that covers the far end of the track, down by the turn-around wye

Short as this 20th New year's Eve Special Run will be, the valley will still echo with the blasts of its whistle at midnight

(Thanks to Martha Neilsen, Elmer Stone, Bud and Ken McCrary for their recollections and to their contributions to this tradition.)

# SWANTON PACIFIC RAILROAD SOCIETY

## Executive Board Meeting Report

Swanton Pacific Ranch - Redhouse November 15, 1998

The meeting was called to order by President Engelman at 9:30 AM

### ATTENDANCE

#### Officers

President	Bill Engelman
First Vice President	Bob Morehouse
Second Vice President	Andy McLean
Secretary	"Fitz" FitzPatrick
Treasurer	Ed Carnegie [Director]
Immediate Past President	Marty Campbell

#### Committees

Track	Elmer Stone
History	Lou Haughney
Engines & Rolling Stock	Randy Jones
Operations	
Publicity and Event Coordination	Mary Ann Carnegie and Fred Vertel
Machine Shop	Geoff Tobin

The Executive Board minutes of August 9, 1998 were approved.

## REPORTS OF OFFICERS AND COMMITTEES

### TREASURER'S REPORT - Ed Carnegie

The Society has a current operating cash balance of \$12,483 December 1998 we will receive a draw from the endowment. The bridge expenses to date are \$38,148. Cal Poly Day netted \$2,930

### DIRECTOR'S REPORT - Ed Carnegie

Mr. Dan Howard-Green advised Ed the MOU has not been completed as yet.

### SECRETARY'S REPORT - Fitz FitzPatrick

Regarding postage meters: At \$25 a month plus postage, not practical at this time.

### TRACK - Elmer Stone

The track between the bridge and the washout needs ballast. The crossing near the caboose needs to be raised before spring. A 'searchlight signal' from Niles Canyon needs to be picked up. Tobin and McNab to do so.

DISCUSSION Ed reports the beginning of a study by a hydrologist, working with Fish and Game, as to how best repair damage done at the washout. Many options were discussed. Randy Jones noted that the track south of the washout is covered with dirt and weeds, work will be foot by foot to clean it up. Consensus is the crossing work to be the highest priority.

### FACILITIES AND GROUNDS - Mary Ann Carnegie

As most plants are dormant so ag work is at a minimum. Fred and Tom are painting and repairing College Park Station. Ed noted the many compliments we have received regarding the grounds. Mary Ann introduced the idea of having a bulletin board, a la State Park displays, having copies of the newsletter, Society information, some historical items, and the like, visible as one enters the SPRR area. Location and content were discussed. [See New Business]

### HISTORY - Lou Haughney

Lou reported an e-mail request from Mr. David Mummery of Colchester England re: SPRS /McDermot history. He found us on the web site. Cosmo DiFrancesco found reference to McDermot's runs at the Oakland Zoo. Warren Miller donated two Overfair Railway passes to the Society. Current activities and long range plans were discussed

Fred is working on the 'yearbook'. Please submit any photos you may have available.

### ENGINES AND ROLLING STOCK - Randy Jones

The 502 gearbox had shavings and metal chips in it, going back to the repairer. The jack shaft is eccentric, to be repaired. Disk brake caliper needs fine tuning.

The 1913 - work is on hold.

The 1912 and 1914 - control valves need routine maintenance. The 1912 is the best looking due to Marty's efforts.

New member Bruce Sherman has volunteered to work on constructing a steel ballast car. Pat Marooney will be machining some loco brake valves. Noted that we will need a larger wash tank, or equivalent, to accommodate the rebuild of the 1913 and maintenance of the other loco's.

## PUBLICITY AND EVENT COORDINATION - Mary Ann Carnegie and Fred Vertel

Dates to mark on your calendar:

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## 1999

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Saturday	February 13	Workday
Saturday	March 13	Workday
Sunday	April 4	Easter
Tuesday	April 6	Al Smith's actual birthday
Saturday	April 10	Workday in preparation for Sundays run
Sunday	April 11	Al Smith Day/Run
Saturday	May 8	Work Weekend

No other events setup at this time. The possibility of an extraspecial Y2K run was mentioned.

Fred reported he has an appointment with Pete Scott, Exhibit Designer for the State Railfair , on Saturday, November 21st and requested direction from the Board as regards to our participation. [See New Business]

Discussion ensued including such topics as:

- The 1912 under fire compared to the 1915 on static display
- A passenger car run on panel track
- A static display booth with videos
- Monies and manpower needed for various displays
- Operational display of the crane car loading and unloading a flat car
- Display the original McDermot car.
- Observation that 'motion' attracts the publics attention, much more so than static displays.

## SAFETY - Andy McLean

Noted, with the increased attendance at various events, we need safety fences around the turntable and around the station area. Ed and Andy to plan for same.

## OPERATIONS - Bill Engelman

With regret Bill announced that John Tomlin has resigned his position on the Operations committee.

[See New Business]

Bill asked for recommendations to fill the vacancy and discussion of the duties and responsibilities involved.

Topics of discussion:

- Administration of training not necessarily an instructor's duty
- Having a Lead Instructor [principal] and ad hoc instructors as opposed to one instructor teaching all classes
- Additional training specifically for dispatcher and the 502
- Steam loco training to include drawing schematic of valves
- Mentor training and qualifying instructors

**MACHINE SHOP** - Geoff Tobin

Thanks to Ed we have a digital readout on the milling machine quill. The wheel on the machine shop grinder needs replacement. Repair, refurbishment, and usage plans for the shop on hold pending the MOU and 1999 budget.

**OLD BUSINESS**

**Sleeper cars** - Marty. Nothing currently on the market that meet our needs. Still looking.

**Roundhouse Committee** - Fred. The committee is still developing concepts into a harmonious plan before presenting the Board with various options and budgets

**Video of Signals** - Fred. Deferred due to bridge construction and operational duties.

**Railfair '99** - See New Business

**Caboose restoration.** No work has been done as yet. Jones noted that 'Peel Stop' works well in preventing wood casements from damage. Noted that Niles Canyon restored their caboose a small section at a time using a needle gun to clean a section, then priming and painting. Ed to check availability of scaffolding, rent or buy.

**NEW BUSINESS****By action of the President:**

Directed the **Publicity and Events Coordination committee** to proceed with developing plans and budget for a State Park style bulletin board to be located between the personal and main doors of the car barn.

Called the next Executive Board meeting on Sunday December 13, 1998 and established a **primary agenda of defining the Society's various projects, establishing priorities, and means of implementation.**

**Railfair '99** Bob Morehouse moved to authorize Fred Vertel, co-chair Publicity and Events Coordination committee, to negotiate with Railfair '99 for an exhibit consisting of a booth, the 502, a passenger car, the crane car within about 80 feet of display area. Seconded by McLean. Approved by unanimous consent.

**Boxcar usage** FitzPatrick presented as a motion a proposal by Cosmo DiFrancesco to use the boxcar, once refurbished, for storage and transportation of Maintenance of Way equipment and supplies. Morehouse - moved to table motion until December meeting. Motion to table approved by unanimous consent.

**GOOD OF THE SOCIETY**

**Crew meetings.** Morehouse noted that there should be crew meetings on runday's prior to the makeup of trains. Marty stated that 0800hrs should be the standard meeting starting time. All agreed.

**Radio usage.** Morehouse observed that radio usage is sporadic. Others observed that the radios are not always available as the batteries are not charged; the various loco's, 502, and motor car could have permanent mounted radios not requiring batteries; the car barn and/or roundhouse should have a radio to monitor for 91 calls. Ed to contact dealer re: equipment/costs.

**Steam loco training** The need for additional locomotive engineers and the conflicts with scheduled workdays was discussed. Where possible combining scheduled run days and training. Officers and Committees. Mary Ann opined that officers and committee members should be proactive involving members in projects and reporting status of projects. There was agreement in the need for more participation in various projects as well as routine maintenance.

**ADJOURNMENT.** The meeting was adjourned at 3:00PM. The next scheduled meeting is Sunday, December 13, 1998, Redhouse

Respectfully submitted: RGB FitzPatrick, Secretary