

# SWANTON PACIFIC RAILROAD

Number 71

Cal Poly

April 1999

## On Track

With your director,

Ed Carnegie



This past weekend we were all getting ready for the upcoming sixth annual Al Smith Day. Mark your calendar and get your reservations in for Sunday., April 11, 1999. The major project was ballasting and aligning the main-line and siding in front of the station. A little more work is required to have it completed, but it will all be in place by the next workday (4/10).



As Al Smith Day approaches it seems appropriate to reflect on some of my memories about Al. First I wish that we could have permanently recorded his greetings from his answering machine. Many times I found it enjoyable to not have Al answer his phone so that I could just enjoy his humorous greeting. Most of the time Al would compose his own lyrics to well known camp-songs. Believe it or not, Al had a good singing voice and enjoyed singing his message.

When I close my eyes and think back, the picture

that stands out most in my mind is a large smiling round face with a Santa Claus twinkle in the eye that especially lit up when working on or around his railroad. Some of the most memorable times occurred after a good day's work sitting around the potbellied stove in the roundhouse or on warm afternoons down in College Park (meadow) around the picnic tables. Al would always have an interesting story to tell and he had a way of making everyone feel a part of the story. Many of which have already been shared in earlier additions of our newsletter. Yet there are many more to hear and share -- FFA initiation, purchasing two railroads, the numbering of the 502, a secret to Al's success, and many more. Come to Al Smith Day to hear some of them.

Charlie Hoyle, one of the early volunteers and engineer of SPRR, was a long time friend of Al's. His favorite locomotive was the 1913 and after his death Al had a plaque placed on its tender for Charlie. If you haven't noticed this plaque, check it out sometime.

Another time we were sitting around in the meadow and asked Al what he contributed his success too. Whereupon he had a big grin on his face and just said, "Never getting married! I was always able to do exactly what I wanted to do, and never had to worry how those decisions would affect another person."

Final cleanup details for getting ready for the Al Smith Day will be done on the Saturday before the Sunday event. We will need lots of help getting ready so please come and help out.

**Redhouse Reservations:**

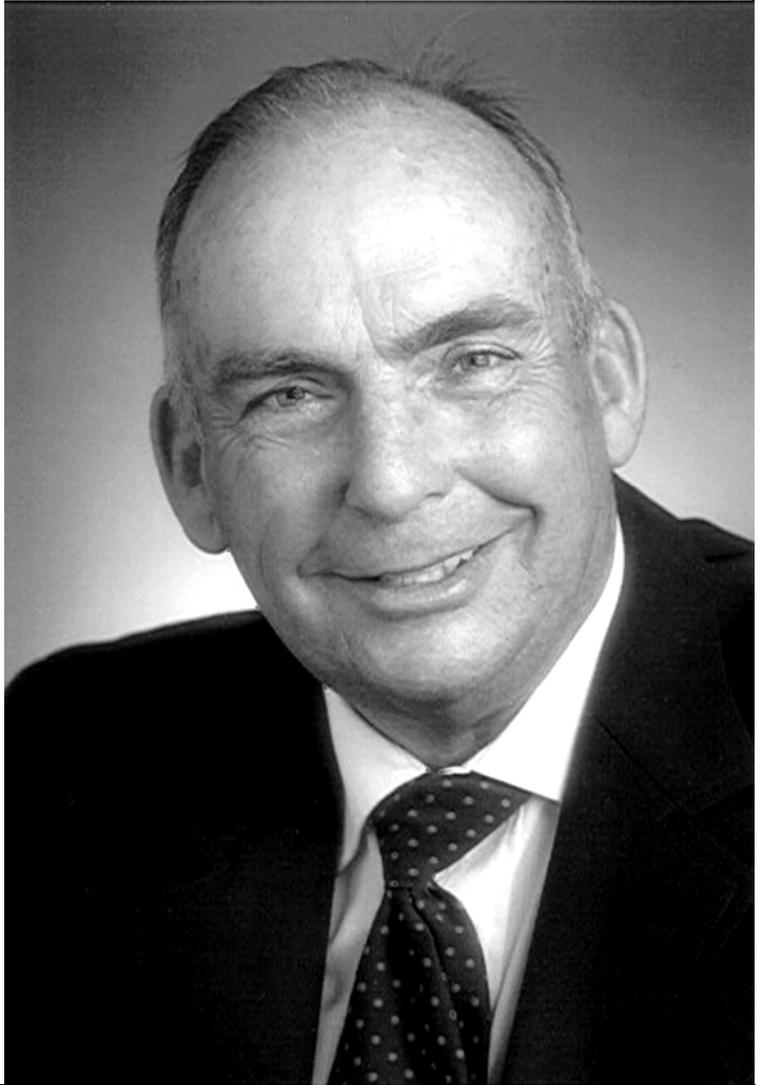
*(Continued on page 7)*

### Recollections of Al Smith

The following are recollections of Al Smith, by Elmer Stone, who with his wife, Frances, were long time friends of our benefactor and his family. Elmer is a retired Southern Pacific District Maintenance of Way Manager. He did much of the original trackwork on the Swanton Pacific for Mr. Smith. At 74 years young, he continues to this day to supervise trackwork for Swanton. On Saturday, March 13th, Fred Vertel of Swanton Pacific, interviewed Elmer as he quietly sat in Al's home, in the beautiful rustic all redwood living room, with its massive stone fireplace, overlooking the Swanton Ranch...Al's Railroad and the blue Pacific Ocean in the distance. Here are excerpts from that conversation:

"You know, Fred, This house was environmentally conceived. Nothing was disturbed when this home was built...no wells were drilled, only spring water was used. Al wanted it that way...in fact the entire house was built from a single redwood tree...a large one...look at them big timbers in the roof. Al really loved the peace and quiet of this spot. Al didn't originally have plans to build the Railroad where it is now. He wanted to build it here...have it go around the hills over there. I suggested that this would be a wonderful sight for his home...of course, he hadn't built it as yet, in fact me and Frances came up here with Al and Martha before Al had even closed escrow on this property...and he already had his plans...his mind made up... and was very excited about his getting a Railroad to build here.

I had pointed out that the site was beautiful, he could see his neighbors and the ocean...with much less wind and fog. So Al built this home right here. It was jokingly called the "Hilltop Hilton". Look around, it is still filled with his beautiful memories and stuff he collected through the years. Just before he died, I sat with Al right here in this room. It was December 11, 1993. He was in his wheelchair, a big fire in that there fireplace. He had just been awarded Cal Poly's (Outstanding Alumni Commemorative) Award (during Cal



It was my good luck to have Al Smith for a friend for twenty-five plus years. He had a marvelous sense of humor and was a great story teller.

One of his most endearing qualities was his concern for others. I remember when a young boy lost part of his leg when he fell under a train behind our San Carlos Street Store. Al went to visit him at the hospital to show him his leg and give the young boy some encouragement.

Another time he found out it was the birthday of the Fire Captain at the Forestry station. It was a work day, so we got together a cake and drinks and went by the station to surprise the Captain with our beautiful rendition of 'Happy Birthday'.

When Al was very ill and many of his friends were stopping by, he asked me why everyone was coming to see him as he was no one special. Those of us who knew him knew that wasn't true, he was indeed someone very

I feel the following quotations underscore the legacy of Al Smith so very well. They are from speeches delivered at Swanton on Cal Poly Day, Oct 18th, 1998.

Fred J. Vertel, Co-Chairman  
Publicity and Events Coordination,

"It is so marvelous to see a place where vision and history come together as clearly as they do here at Swanton. The theme of recovery and celebration of 1915, where San Francisco had the opportunity, after the 1906 Earthquake, to show itself... and in celebration of recovery....to celebrate the opening of the Panama Canal...so important to San Francisco in respect to Asia, the Orient and the Pacific. The same themes are (represented here) at Swanton...obviously the theme of recovery is what the bridge represents... the recovery from El Nino...and celebration is obvious. This is an occasion for friends to come together with the Swanton Pacific Railroad Society and Ranch...to underscore the wonderful partnership that exists with Cal Poly. That marvelous train over there...this entire facility...such a terrific expression of the basic education philosophy which here is focused on hands on learning. It is an opportunity to literally see history (through) these locomotives and the entire operation. We learn through so many ways...of the opportunity to see, to touch, to smell...here the experiences are unparalleled. This facility, in particular, so beautifully represents the legacy and memory of Al Smith."

Dr. Paul Zingg,  
University Provost

The Swanton Pacific Ranch and Railroad is a living testimonial to the spirit and heritage that Al Smith has left to the University and the State of California. What is particularly wonderful about the Railroad and its members, is that they represent a significant tribute to the importance of volunteerism. Alexis de Tocqueville, an early 19th century French writer, upon visiting America, wrote, what still is in so many ways, an unparalleled account of American culture. The thing he emphasized was the special and unique place of volunteerism in our community...the importance of the selfless giving of oneself to public spirited causes.... and there is no better example of that then what we see here today in the sustaining of the Railroad and Ranch. It is marvelous.

If de Tocqueville were here today, I'm sure he would say that volunteerism is still an important part of our American culture."

Mr. Dan Howard-Greene,  
Executive Assistant to University President,  
Dr. Warren Baker

"On behalf of the Cal Poly Foundation, we certainly want to thank Ed Carnegie and his wife Mary Ann and all the volunteer friends of the Swanton Pacific Railroad Society, for their excellent stewardship of this operation. There is no question in my mind that the Swanton Pacific Railroad is the signature piece of the Ranch that attracts many people. We have a beautiful place here that I think exemplifies the belonging between the Railroad, Ranch and University. "

A. W. "Al" Amaral,  
Executive Director,  
Cal Poly Foundation

We are pleased to have the following comment expressed by Al Smith's nephew, Mr. Steve Spafford.

**Musings on the Swanton Pacific**  
from Steve Spafford

Some of my most memorable moments have been helping Al with the railroad.

It began way back with the Billy Jones Wildcat Railroad in Los Gatos and of course, continued with the Swanton Pacific. While I did not have the "pleasure" of helping move the railroad from Calistoga – Greg Jones and Al did that one very hot summer – I did help out laying track, etc. One day we laid almost 450 feet of track.

It was really great working with the "railroad gang" of Warren King, Charlie "Cosgrove" Hoyle, Neil "Coach" Vodden, "Rotten" Robbie, Elmer and others. While we did work hard, there was always a lot of storytelling, which included some unbelievably funny stories about working on the Southern Pacific.

Al really worried about what to do with the SP after he was gone and he went through quite a few ideas before settling on what is now the Swanton Pacific Railroad Society. I am really pleased to see how well the railroad has done since the inception of the Society. There is a real organization with leadership and energy and a big "Thank You" is deserved for all those involved in keeping the dream going. As long as there is the energy and the time invested, Al's legacy will continue. Al Smith Day is a great way to remember Al and to remind ourselves of all that he left. We look forward, as always, to enjoying a great train ride and picnic – and for more storytelling.



**PUBLICITY  
AND  
EVENT COORDINATION**

Mary Ann Carnegie      and      Fred Vertel

Dates to mark on your calendar:

Tuesday	April	06	Al Smith's actual birthday
Saturday	April	10	Workday in preparation
Sunday	April	11	Al Smith Day/Run
Saturday	April	17	Cal Poly OPEN HOUSE-
Saturday	May	08	Workday
Saturday	June	12	Workday

Depending on the weather, and projects that we may undertake, we will hopefully start having our two work weekends a month beginning in May/June. That means the second and fourth Saturday/Sunday of each month. We will keep you posted. However, if any of you want to contribute time other than on the work weekends you are more than welcome to come when it best fits your schedule. Just be sure to let the Director, Ed Carnegie know that you will be on the premises.

April is not that far around the corner and our "Opening" railroad event of the year will be Al Smith Day. Mark your calendar for April 11--Sunday. There will be lots of sprucing up pre-preparations to do the day before at our scheduled workday.

Safety Simon says:

"The skate goes on the downhill side of the bottled railcar."

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

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 the deal 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.

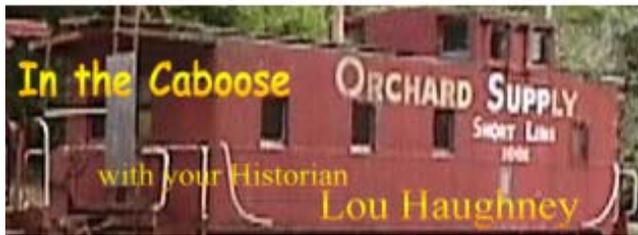
Once, during the last year of his life, I remember Cindy and I chatting briefly with Al. We were thanking him for letting us have the opportunity to work on his railroad. Al turned it around, and thanked US for being willing to help. It made us feel good to know that he appreciated us, and our meager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



## AL SMITH'S STUDENT YEARS AT CAL POLY

The Mustang Roundup of June 1944 tells not only about Al Smith's years at Cal Poly (1940-1944) but also about the conditions and the enrollments there during World War II. Entitled "The Year in Review" that issue was devoted to "recording the cast and the characters of the 1944 student body".

It was a small-scale version of the usual, annual yearbook. Al was the editor of this monthly magazine, published by the Associated Students of the California Polytechnic College, as Cal Poly was then known.

At the start of the 1943-1944 school year, President Julian A. McPhee and his wife, Carol, together with their six daughters, hosted the entire undergraduate body of about 50 students, all male, at the traditional freshmen reception.. During the school year, many of these students "were forced to leave in mid-year" as military service called them. By the end of that school year, only Al and eight classmates remained in the 1944 graduating class. During his four years there, Al was busy with studies, extracurricular activities, and part-time work at the Southern Pacific's railroad yard in San Luis Obispo. He served as feature editor of the El Mustang in the 1940-1941 school year, and was a member of the Crops Club and the Young Farmers.

His first railroading career was abruptly ended when he became entangled in 1943 (?) with a moving freight car that removed the lower part of his right leg. That injury did not demoralize Al nor prevent his maintaining a hectic pace with his studies and campus functions. In his senior year, he was the Student Body President, the Editor of the Mustang Roundup, and a member of the SAC. (Does anyone recall what the SAC was?)

References about Al's prosthesis are found in the

articles and sketches of the Mustang Roundup. Here is the pithy paragraph about Al.

"This lettuce eater is the sole senior in the Crops Production Department. Hopes to be an AG teacher. An S.P. employee for three years, he likes to talk about his experiences as an r.r. brakeman. Always giving character analyses. Our Student Body president, he has lots of school spirit. Deathly afraid of termites, he claims to be the only wooden-legged 'cat skinner'.. Sticks up for northern California and the C.I.O."

Recently, a current resident of Santa Cruz told how he and his parents were escorted around the Cal Poly campus in the spring of 1944. Al did a good job of promoting the College because that high school senior enrolled in Cal Poly that fall..

Despite its small civilian student body, Cal Poly was a busy campus as it had been selected by the U.S. Navy as one of seventeen sites for a prep school for its aviation cadets. The Cal Poly Faculty were busy teaching in that school as well as in their civilian classrooms. The Mustang Roundup describes that part of Cal Poly life.

"More than 2500 naval aviation cadets have graduated from the California Polytechnic College Naval Flight Preparatory School since the program began in January, 1943. Although the entire Naval Flight Preparatory school program throughout the United States is being discontinued [June 1944], Cal Poly, in recognition of the excellence of its training, was selected as one of three colleges in the United States to conduct a new training program for aviation candidates from the fleet."

Although many of the regular Poly faculty members were on full-time Navy jobs, they found time to teach Poly special classes. The teaching staff necessary to handle the Poly students near the end of the year was calculated at eight instructors, more than that number were conducting Poly classes on split Navy-Poly schedules."

*Many thanks to Al's sisters and their families for finding these mementos of Al's college days and for presenting them to us.*

(Continued from page 1)

The Ranch Director has been working with the Railroad to ensure that we have some space available at the Redhouse for our workdays. However, I do need to know at least one week in advance whether room reservations are needed or not. That way I can better coordinate with Wally Mark to make sure that things move smoothly. If you do not call in to reserve a room you may not have a place to stay.

New membership received over the last month were as follows:

Carleen Foreman	San Jose	Joseph Miller	San Leandro
Charlie Allen	Los Altos	David & Sally Moore	Walnut Creek
Harlan Barr	San Lorenzo	Michael O'Rourke	Berkeley
Gene Beyeler	Fremont	Kermit Paul	Pleasant Hill
Kenneth Bradshaw	San Jose	C.J. & Donna Pearson	Morgan Hill
Gary Broeder	Morgan Hill	Ray & Beth Phillips	San Mateo
Ron & Angie Carter	San Jose	Edward Przemielewski	San Jose
Gary Dwyer	Davenport	Preston & Kathy Reynolds	Alameda
William Felker	Hayward	Dick & Gerda Robertshaw	San Jose
Butch Floyd	Santa Rose	Chuck Sanfilippo	Sunnyvale
Bill Floyd	Santa Rose	Anthony & Jeanne Saporitotte	San Jose
Charles Garbett	Los Altos Hills	Leo & Phyllis Schlocker	San Mateo
Anne Graf	Newark	Michael & Nancy Schneider	Los Altos
Wayne Gravelle	Sunnyvale	Tom & Rose Shumard	San Jose
Rosse Hemeon	San Jose	Roy Soetikno	Union City
Richard Johnson	Castro Valley	Bruce & Loree Stevens	San Jose
Arnold & Gail Jones	San Luis Obispo	Eric Struck	Palo Alto
Leonard & Elaine Leavitt	Hayward	Glenn & Jeanine Swanson	Capitola
Todd Levy	San Francisco	David Towle	Los Gatos
Larry & Gayle Lund	Pleasanton	Ray Turner	San Jose
Ken & Pat Martin	Castro Valley	Jack & Pauline Verducci	San Mateo
Jim & Nan Maurer	San Jose	Bruce Walton	Morgan Hill
Glenn & Bonnie McGhee	Los Altos	Gary Whaley	San Leandro
David McGuinness	Oakland	Bob Wilkinson	Burlingame
Richard Edward Mehr	San Mateo	Richard Wright	San Jose
		Chuck & Phyllis Zailer	Santa Clara
		Joseph & Irene Zajac	Medford, OR

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.

# Have you sent in your 1999 Gift?

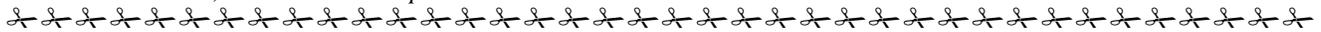
Dear Member,

If you have not as yet made your membership contribution for the year 1999, we hope that this was an oversight. We do not like to lose our good members!

We have a number of special events planned for 1999, another Family Fun Day and not the least of which will be our very special New Year's celebration to welcome in the year 2000. It is and will continue to be an exciting year of growth and expansion of our mission. We have already signed up over 60 new members this year. We are growing and need your continued support to fulfill our educational mission on behalf of Cal Poly.

**Al Smith Day** is Sunday, April 11th and is our next scheduled major event. It will be our 6th annual event celebrating the birthday of our benefactor. We hope you will join us. Send in your membership renewal and Al Smith Day reservation at the same time. It promises to be a great Barbecue and Train Ride.

*Fred Vertel, SPRS Membership Chairman*



## 1999 New & Renewal Gifting



Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Spouse/Partner's Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Children names & ages: \_\_\_\_\_

Home Ph: ( ) \_\_\_\_\_ FAX: ( ) \_\_\_\_\_

Business/Other Ph:( ) \_\_\_\_\_ Page: ( ) \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

*[ want to support The Swanton Pacific Railroad Society with a gift of \$25. or more*

- |                           |                                 |                                 |
|---------------------------|---------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| Gandy Dancer: \$25./year; | Attendant: \$100./year;         | Inspector: \$500./year          |
| Conductor: \$1,000./year; | Station Master: \$5,000. /year; | Engineer's Club: \$10,000./year |
| New Application: _____    | Renewal Application: _____      | My 1999 gift is \$ _____        |

Please make checks payable to **Swanton Pacific Railroad Society**  
and mail to: **BioRes. & Ag. Eng. Dept., Cal Poly State Univ., San Luis Obispo, CA 93407**

In addition, as time permits, I would like to assist as a volunteer and I have checked areas of expertise or interest in which I would like to be of help.

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Barbecue & Food Service/Event Days  | <input type="checkbox"/> Food Service /Work Weekends                 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Archives & library Management   | <input type="checkbox"/> Newsletter                                  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Membership Services   | <input type="checkbox"/> Docent/Event Days                           |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Gardening & Grounds   | <input type="checkbox"/> Concessions/ Event Days                     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Infrastructure Improvements & Maintenance; (i.e. painting, carpentry, etc.) |  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Locomotive Repair & Maintenance   | <input type="checkbox"/> Car Repairs and Maintenance                 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Track Maintenance   | <input type="checkbox"/> Train Crews/Training & Educational Programs |
| Shop Skills (Machinists, welders, etc.) _____  |  |

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

*We sincerely thank you! Your gift may be deductible for income tax purposes.*

Come Join the Swanton Pacific Railroad For the Sixth Annual

# Al Smith Day

A fun-filled Sunday to remember and honor our friend.

Sunday, April 11, 1999

Longer than last year's Train Rides	10:00 - 2:00
BBQ Lunch/comments	12:00 - 2:00
Ranch Tour/Dog Demonstration	2:00 - 4:00
Train Rides	1:00 - 4:00

Hear an update on Swanton Ranch activities and tour the Ranch, or see a sheep dog demonstration.

A casual Western style meal will be served; soft drink provided.

To cover the cost of the BBQ and train rides

Adults \$10.00

Children \$5.00

**RSVP by April 3, 1999**

To: E. J. Carnegie  
 BioRes & Ag Engineering Dept. or Phone in at: (805) 995-3659  
 Cal Poly  
 San Luis Obispo, CA 93407

Please return this form, with pertinent information, and your check made payable to:  
**Swanton Pacific Rail Road (SPRR)**

=====  
 ===== Detach or copy and return information below with check =====  
 =====

Celebration of **Al Smith Day** 1999

From: Name (s) \_\_\_\_\_

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