

# The

November  
2006



# Trainmaster

The Official Publication of the  
Pacific Northwest Chapter,  
National Railway Historical Society  
Portland, Oregon



## Pacific Northwest Chapter Timetable #532

**Membership Meetings:** Nov. 17, Dec 12, 7:30 PM, St. Mark's Lutheran Church, 5415 SE Powell Blvd.

**October Program:** "War Trains" – Part 1 of this 3 part program was shown at the Feb, 2004 meeting. We will continue with part 2 at the October meeting.

**November Program:** Bob Melbo, ODOT, Washington County Commuter Railroad, other Oregon projects

**December:** Elections and Potluck, no official program **Interested in program presentation? See p. 8**

**Board of Directors Meetings:** Nov 9, Nov 30, Room 208, Union Station, 7:30 PM

**Lending Library:** Nov 18 & 25 1:30 to 4 pm, check-out subject to loan agreement.

**Please Carefully Note Change of Date for December Board of Director's Meeting: Nov. 30!!!!**

### **Notable Non-Chapter Events:**

November 25, 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. & November 26 from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m., 28th annual Rogue Valley Railroad Show, Medford Armory 1701 South Pacific Highway (old Highway 99) Medford, OR. Adults \$5, Seniors \$4, Children 14 and under free w/Adult contact Brad Fawcett at 541-535-7952 or Bill Meyer at 541-821-5547.

Feb 17-18 *World's Greatest Hobby on Tour*, Portland Expo Center, 10 AM to 5 PM, [www.wghshow.com](http://www.wghshow.com)

### **NOTICE ~ ~ PROPOSED BY-LAW CHANGE ~ ~ NOTICE**

The Chapter Board of Directors is recommending the following Chapter By-Law change to be voted on at the December Membership meeting:

**Section 2.06. Dues.** Dues shall consist of National dues and chapter dues. Members joining after June 1<sup>st</sup> of any year shall pay one-half of the dues for the balance of the year. Members joining after September 1<sup>st</sup> of any year shall pay full annual dues, which will cover National and chapter dues for the ensuing year. For each family member, dues shall be approximately 50% of full local dues. All memberships shall expire on December 31<sup>st</sup> of each year.

**Recommendation:** Delete the sentence: "Members joining after June 1<sup>st</sup> of any year shall pay one-half of the dues for the balance of the year."

**Board Rationale:** This makes the chapter consistent with the National membership rules.

## **Absentee Ballots for Chapter Elections:**

"The annual PNWC-NRHS election of officers for 2007 will be held at the chapter meeting in December. Those wishing to vote by absentee ballot must submit their request to me, in writing (no phone calls, please) to **James Loomis, 12440 SE Stephens Street, Portland OR 97233-1336**, either by U.S. Mail or e-mail ([james\\_loomis12440@msn.com](mailto:james_loomis12440@msn.com)) by December 1st. You will receive a ballot, with instructions and return envelopes. Ballots will be due, either by mail, or by hand **NO LATER THAN 6 P.M.** the day of the election. Postmarks will **not** count. Plan approximately 3-5 days for mail delivery.

## 2005 *Train Toys for Tots*



Photo courtesy Ron McCoy & Mark Whitson Pictured from left: Sgt. Chris Poe, Al Hall, & Ron McCoy

## **Don't Forget ..... *Train Toys for Tots***

By Al Hall

Before you realize it December will be upon us and it will soon be "train time." And when I say train time that means *Train Toys for Tots*.

2006 is the third consecutive year that our chapter is participating in the Marine Corps Reserve's annual *Toys for Tots* Christmas toy drive. But fittingly we donate train toys. Your donated gifts benefit the needy children in our community who normally would not experience the joy of receiving gifts at Christmas as many of us did when we were kids.

In 2004 we donated 82 gifts, and in 2005 we donated 87 gifts. With your help our goal for 2006 is 100 gifts! I'm not asking our members to donate more gifts. I'm asking more of our members to donate gifts.

Please bring your new, unwrapped train toys and books to the December meeting which will take place at St. Mark's Lutheran Church on **Tuesday, December 12** at 6:00 PM. The Marine Corps will be coming to pick up the gifts and also share in our potluck dinner. **DON'T FORGET!**

Our meeting will not be held on the usual Friday this year due to our involvement in Holiday Express. Contact Al Hall (503-699-5042) if you'd like to donate but can't attend the meeting.



## PRESIDENT'S UPDATE ~ November 2006 by Arlen L. Sheldrake

This is a good month to get your shopping done for our *Train Toys for Tots* donation. Any new train related gift item in the original packaging for a young child is appropriate. These toys will be collected at the December meeting or can be delivered to any Chapter Board member. This is our third year working to help under-privileged children and helping them develop a love of trains. Our first year garnered 81 toys and our second year 85. *Let's continue to improve our record!*

**MARKETING EXPERTISE:** The Chapter is in need of someone with marketing expertise to provide some pro bono advice. If you have this expertise or know of such a person, please contact me: [AShelrake@comcast.net](mailto:AShelrake@comcast.net) or 503.223.7006. Thanks!

Following each excursion that the Chapter is involved with I am always amazed at the amount of effort it takes to deliver a train trip. Most of this activity is done behind the scenes and is never seen nor appreciated by most passengers. The number of hours spent to get rail cars delivered to Banks in the right sequence and facing the right direction. The number of hours spent in planning and obtaining the food and refreshments. The number of hours spent picking up the various food caches and getting it to the depot. The number of hours getting the rail cars mechanically ready for the trip. The number of hours spent cleaning the rail cars before and after the trip. The number of hours spent designing and obtaining the media advertising. The number of hours getting the excursion listed on various free advertising outlets. The number of hours spent ticketing and re-ticketing the canceled Sunday folk. The number of hours spent arranging and then re-arranging the bus transportation. Then there are all the activities that take place immediately before, during and immediately after the excursion. On excursion day the 8 Car Hosts each clocked 13 hours excluding travel time. The four mechanical crew members each spent at least 16 hours excluding travel time. Thank goodness for willing and available volunteers!

Restoration of the Chapter's **Flanger** located at Antique Powerland Museum continues to make progress. Charles Stevens reports that application of the new siding began on October 14<sup>th</sup>. Work parties on the Flanger are normally held each Wednesday and Saturday; additional hands are needed. Contact Charles at 503.692.6611 or [xenophon@teleport.com](mailto:xenophon@teleport.com) if you can help.

Calendar Call: *The Premier Edition, Southern Pacific 4449* calendar for 2007 is on sale at Powell's Books. This calendar designed by Chris Fussell for the Friends of SP 4449 begins with the month of October 2006 so it is useable immediately. Of the 15 beautiful pictures it is difficult to pick one's favorite but the December 2007 picture by Kyle Weismann-Yee showing the 4449 decked out in holiday lights in the snow during the *2005 Holiday Express* is on the top of my list. This calendar is sure to become a collector's delight.

The **Wilsonville to Beaverton Commuter Rail Project** will use 36,000 concrete ties. The P811 track-laying machine arrived in Oregon in late September and is scheduled to begin operations in Wilsonville on October 24<sup>th</sup>.

The Oregon Rail Heritage Foundation's *2006 Holiday Express* runs December 8-9-10 (SP&S 700) & December 15-16-17 (SP 4449) out of Oaks Park on the Oregon Pacific Railroad. Tickets are available from TicketsWest ([www.TicketsWest.com](http://www.TicketsWest.com)), Safeway TicketsWest ticket outlets or by phone 503.224.TIXX (toll-free outside of Portland 800.992.TIXX). We will need lots and lots of helpers. Contact [www.orhf.org/volunteer](http://www.orhf.org/volunteer) to volunteer to help. This is an ORHF fund raising event and, as in 2005, is being strongly supported by the Chapter.

Early in 2007 we will be introducing to you at a membership meeting the excellent work of **Brian McCamish**. Brian is a local fellow who is into multiple facets of Oregon history including railroads. He has an excellent Web site, [www.brian894x4.com](http://www.brian894x4.com), and he has produced a 1 hour DVD covering the *SP&S 700 Farewell to Steam 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary* held on the Oregon Pacific Railroad on June 10, 2006. If you think this is just another amateur video, think again. Brian's work is as good if not better than anything I have seen from Skyfire or Pentrex and will soon be available as a PRPA fund raiser.

Thanks again to Chapter member and historian **Jerry Tanquist** for his willingness to do a book review for Arnica Publishing on the new book *The Deschutes River Railroad War* by Leon Speroff. An excerpt from Jerry's review is listed on the back cover giving the Chapter some very nice PR. This informative and good looking book is being sold by Chapter Concessions guru Al Hall for \$29.95 per copy.

The October 12<sup>th</sup> Columbian newspaper reports that the **Portland-Vancouver Junction Railroad** so far in 2006 has hauled about 300 carloads of food products, flour, sand, plastic pellets, rail material, steel piping and other freight, which is up from the 65 carloads that the previous operator hauled in 2003. The 2007 target is 1,000 rail cars. The Portland-Vancouver Junction Railroad is part of the Columbia Basin Railroad Company and has a 30-year lease (to 2034) from Clark County Washington for 33 miles of track from Vancouver through Chelatchie Prairie. Freight is currently being hauled on about 8 miles between Rye Junction, in the Fruit Valley area, and Battleground. The

easternmost part of the line is used by the Battle Ground, Yacolt and Chelatchie Prairie Railroad Association (BYCX) for passenger excursions.

Not able to attend the **Buckeye Rails 2006** NRHS convention.....Order a video that has more than 90 minutes covering the Convention trips and activities. \$19.95 for DVD or VHS format plus \$3.95 shipping for the first item, plus \$1.25 for each additional item to the same address. Send your check or money order payable to Joe Harper and specify DVD or VHS format: Joe Harper, PO Box 1110, Centralia WA 98531. This is a fund raiser for NRHS.

Many thanks to **Jim Loomis** for repairing the ailing dehumidifier that is used to control the humidity in our room 1A primary archives storage area.

The publication of a **2006 Chapter Membership Directory** has been delayed until 2007 due to our wanting to take the time to validate the information being published and the possibility of a change in the By-Laws. Summer of 2007 is our revised publication schedule.

The **2005 Chapter Audit** was completed by Bob McCoy in early June and accepted by the Chapter Board on October 12<sup>th</sup>. The delay was caused by the audit report being lost in a Chapter office mail mis-shuffle. Bob's recommendation paragraphs: "The financial data provided by Mr. Peters appears to accurately reflect the financial condition of the Pacific Northwest Chapter of the National Railway Historical Society. Therefore, no recommendation is made. I would like to commend Mr. Peters for his service to the Pacific Northwest Chapter of the National Railway Historical Society as Treasurer. I appreciate his cooperation in performing the audit of the Chapter." Any member wishing a copy of the four-page audit, please see me at a membership meeting or send your request to me at the Chapter office with a stamped #10 self-addressed envelope. Thanks to Chapter member Bob McCoy for again performing the Chapter audit!

The bulk mailing efforts of George Hickok, Maxine Rodabaugh, and Janet Larson result in our mailing of *The Trainmaster* to local addresses for 14.3 cents each and 17+ cents each to non-local addresses. This is a good postage savings for the 280 mailed *Trainmasters* even after factoring in the cost of the yearly bulk permit. This unit cost is the same for an 8, 12, and the 14 page October issue. First Class postage would be 39 cents for the 8 page and 63 cents for the 12 and 14 page issues.

An October 16<sup>th</sup> article in the Coos Bay *The World* newspaper hints that the **Oregon International Port of Coos Bay** may be working on wooing container traffic from Post-Panamax (too large for the Panama Canal) vessels. The article says that currently no Oregon port can handle these new generation ships which are 100 feet wide, 1,300 feet long and have a 49 foot draft. The proposed container yard would be in an area called the Henderson Marsh and would have rail access. Keeping this potential alive is the \$12 million Phase II Coos Bay Railroad Bridge long-term rehabilitation project funded with \$4 million from *Connect Oregon* and \$8 million from SAFETEA-LU that will get underway shortly. Stay tuned.....

The Chapter has sent a letter in support of the City of Portland's application for a Transportation Enhancement Grant to replace the **Union Station** north roof tiles and seismically attach the roof to the walls. This grant request is for \$1.1 million with a \$400,000 City match; grant awards announced in March 2007.

BNSF Railway has announced that a new 2 mile long siding costing nearly \$10 million will open on the **Fallbridge Division** near Lyle WA on or about November 20<sup>th</sup>. This siding will improve train movements on the single track mainline.

## **VOLUNTEERS NEEDED – *Holiday Express 2006***



The Oregon Rail Heritage Foundation (ORHF) will be holding its annual fundraiser, the *Holiday Express* on December 8<sup>th</sup>-10<sup>th</sup> & 15<sup>th</sup> -17<sup>th</sup> on the Oregon Pacific Railroad (OPR). This excursion includes Santa Claus, his elves, his reindeer, and two of Portland's famous steam



locomotives the Spokane, Portland & Seattle No.700 and the Southern Pacific No. 4449! The train will be traveling from Oaks Amusement Park Station north along the OPR to the Springwater Trail Gateway near OMSI and back.

The ORHF is looking for volunteers in many positions – from ticket taking, to site preparation, to train decorating, to station hosting, to safety patrols, to selling concessions. We will also be holding two work days on November 4<sup>th</sup> and December 2<sup>nd</sup> on the OPR, as well as a special volunteer orientation train on the evening of December the 7<sup>th</sup> at 7:00pm. Please come enjoy the satisfaction of spreading Holiday Cheer and supporting a great cause!

All proceeds from the event will go directly to acquiring property and starting a capital campaign for our proposed Locomotive Restoration Facility for Portland’s three heritage steam locomotives and their dedicated volunteer groups. We appreciate your help.



Look for updates at [www.orhf.org/volunteer](http://www.orhf.org/volunteer). At the prompt enter the login is “orhf” and the password is “volunteer.” By November 1<sup>st</sup>, we will have an online sign-up available, along with the volunteer position descriptions, and the volunteer schedule.

In the meantime, please send emails to [gkamp@mwaarchitects.com](mailto:gkamp@mwaarchitects.com) or call 503.997.4148. Thank you for your interest.

*Holiday Express* tickets are available exclusively beginning in late October from TicketsWest online at [www.TicketsWest.com](http://www.TicketsWest.com), by phone at 503.224.TIXX (toll-free outside of Portland 800.992.TIXX), and at all participating Safeway TicketsWest Ticket Centers. Ticket prices, subject to convenience fees, are \$14 adult and \$8 for children. Safeway Family Package (2 adults, 2 children) is \$39 and exclusively available at all participating Safeway TicketsWest Ticket Centers.

## 2006 Meeting Snack Sign-Ups

The following members have graciously volunteered to prepare the monthly membership meeting snacks funded by attendee contributions:

November = **Jan Schaeffer**  
 December = Everyone (annual Christmas Potluck)  
 January = *available*

February = *available*  
 March = *available*  
 April = *available*

To volunteer for *available* months, contact Arlen at 503.223.7006 or [ASheldrake@comcast.net](mailto:ASheldrake@comcast.net).

## Elections Statements for 2006

**POSITION: President 2007**

**Candidate: Arlen L. Sheldrake**

I have enjoyed serving as your President for 2006 and would like to solicit your vote and support for the position again in 2007. In addition to President I am concurrently serving as the Chapter’s representative on the Oregon Rail Heritage Foundation Board of Directors and as the interim, until a new one is found, Chapter Car Host Manager. I am also a member of the Antique Powerland Museum, the Oregon Historical Society, and the Association of Railway Museums.

Following what I believe was a very successful Visioning processing I will work to keep the Chapter moving into adopting a Mission Statement and a Collections Policy. I will also work to move forward on the Chapter obtaining a permanent home and will continue to work in partnership with the other rail related organizations in the Portland and surrounding area. I will also continue my work to keep *The Trainmaster* an informative and essential membership benefit.

In addition to your vote, I ask that you also devote some of your valuable time to support the various Chapter functions.

**POSITION: Director at Large**

**Candidate: Bill Hyde**

My name is Bill Hyde, running for the position of Director at Large. I have been a member since 1999. I have served the past 3 years as a Director at Large and am willing to serve 3 more years. I believe the time to build a permanent home for the chapter is now and I will work to implement a new storage location for our varied pieces of rolling stock and work to raise funds for the construction of a permanent home. I urge all chapter members to help in whatever way you can on a committee with anything from rolling stock to archives or concessions. We have unfilled committees that need your help.

Sincerely, Bill Hyde

**POSITION: Director-at-Large**

**Candidate: Al Baker**

I am probably not the most widely known guy in our chapter. That's partly because I am a relative new-bee having joined just two years ago. Since then, much of that time has been spent in just trying to understand our organization and what it is all about.

Railroading has always been an interest of mine, but I had little time to pursue it until I retired recently. As I am learning more about NRHS, I am quickly becoming aware of its importance. To me, railroading history needs to be preserved and appreciated for the huge impact that it had on our country and its history. Perhaps most important is that we not only preserve railroading history, but also communicate to younger generations so that they appreciate it. I would like to be a Director-at-Large so that I can do what I can to further our club's work in accomplishing these things.

I did volunteer putting in quite a few hours during our recent Go-By-Train 2005 NRHS Convention. And I have been volunteering by doing security checks on our rolling stock stored in Beaverton, and a day of car maintenance. I would like to do more as time becomes available.

I am a retired electrical-electronics engineer working mostly in computer related industry, most recently for Intel. I recently joined the Pennsylvania Rail Road Technical and Historical Society and I am a member of the Train Collectors Association. I am also on the Board of Directors as Vice President for another non-railroad related organization.

I am looking forward to this opportunity to serve our organization if elected.

**POSITION: National Director**

**Candidate: George Hickok**

My name is George Hickok, I'm running for re-election to the position of National Director. This is an interesting time for the NRHS, with many chapters questioning the value of the national organization, as well as asking many questions about why publications are so late, why recordkeeping seems to be such a problem, and what the future holds for National?

As Regional Vice President of the NRHS for the Pacific Northwest region, I attend the RVP and National Board meetings. As National Directory for the PNWC, I'm able to represent our Chapter at the same time. I'd appreciate your vote, and look forward to exploring these issues on your behalf. Thanks in advance for your support."

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## GOLDEN PACIFIC 4-8-4 STEAMS AT TACOMA

by Tom Smith

It was deja vu all over again!!! I was standing in Tacoma, Wash. watching a 4-8-4 storming into Freighthouse Square over a long wooden trestle. It was almost exactly 46 years and a continent away that I stood trackside in Reading, Pennsylvania, to photograph the same 4-8-4 storming out of Reading's Outer Station, on its first excursion outing.

As an eastern teenage railfan in the 1950's and '60's I was very close to the Reading Company's Iron Horse Rambles. The Reading, which had long run off-the-beaten-track "Rail Rambles," brought one of their Class T-1 4-8-4's out of storage in October 1959 to power a Ramble from Philadelphia to Shamokin.

In 1945 Reading Company shops built a fleet of 30 modern 4-8-4's using boilers and other parts from older 2-8-0's. The locomotives had a clean, semi streamlined, typically Reading appearance with an off center headlight, and were capable of hauling heavy tonnage at high speeds. The last engines were used in 1956, when the entire



class was placed in storage, but were kept ready for use if traffic volume required.

By 1959, it was clear the 4-8-4's would never be needed, but still had some boiler time left. No. 2124 was pulled from storage to pull the Shamokin Ramble that October. The trip was such a success that over 50 steam powered Rambles would follow in the next 5 years. A ticket for a full day of sooty steam railroading in open window coaches only cost between \$10 and \$15, so I was able to ride many trips, and chase others.

A year later demand by over 1400 passengers for tickets on an autumn leaf Ramble resulted in a second T-1, 2100, pulled from storage to doublehead with the 2124 on a 22 car train.

The T-1's took me and other passengers to the far reaches of the Reading's system, places like Williamsport, Gettysburg, Shamokin, and Wilmington. They taught fans outside the east and Monopoly players how to pronounce "Redding" and brought the regional railroad national attention.

Fast forward 40 years. The Reading is gone, folded first into Conrail, and then Norfolk Southern, much of it abandoned or turned over to short lines. I live in Washington. And here is the same Reading T-1 that filled my viewfinder 46 years earlier!!

The original "Ramble" engine, 2124, was sold to F. Nelson Blount for his Steamtown collection. It is now at Scranton, Pennsylvania, a city not served by the Reading. The 2101 did a stint on the American Freedom Train in the east, and then hauled the "Chessie Steam Specials" in the late 1970's. It is now on static display at the B&O Museum in Baltimore. The 2102 has found a home on the Reading Blue Mountain & Northern near its birthplace in Reading. The 2100 has been on a journey that has taken it to Canada, and now to Tacoma. Although it now burns oil

instead of anthracite coal, it is the only one of the 4 remaining T-1's that is active.

The Golden Pacific RR has had false starts, advertising trips that never came off. In early August, however, it became a reality--Golden Pacific's 2100 began public trips from Tacoma's Freighthouse Square to Frederickson on Tacoma Rail's exMILW trackage on Saturdays and Sundays. The season was very short; it ended two months later, with the last scheduled trip on October 1. I barely made it to Tacoma to catch the last day.

The train consists of 3 ex C&NW/METRA gallery coaches, and an exAmtrak F40PH to provide HEP to the cars. The 4-8-4 leads the train out of town and up the stiff grade, working hard. A luncheon is served to passengers at the Frederickson stop under the Military Rd. bridge, after which there is a runby, and the train returns to Tacoma in push-pull fashion using the control cab on the rear gallery coach.

If you want action photos, one of the best shots is the empty train coming into Freighthouse Square to load passengers as it passes over the long timber trestle. After that, chasing is difficult due to city traffic. Most of the numerous grade crossings are tight except at 56th St. If you plan to chase, study a good map carefully, then scope out the line beforehand. Although the first part of the trip is mostly urban landscape, it becomes more rural as it nears Frederickson, but there are few open vistas.

Although the regular season has ended, there may be special trains later in the season. You can obtain information on their website, [www.goldenpacificrr.com](http://www.goldenpacificrr.com), or call 253-272-2558. Hopefully, they will have a full season in 2007.

The Northwest can now claim 3 big active 4-8-4's. We know two of them well. This new addition is a great show!

## KATY BAR THE DOOR



The Chapter's two S-2 locomotives with George Hickok welding a metal strip across the engine access doors.

Metal thieves have discovered the Chapter's two S2 Alco locomotives stealing the wires feeding the traction motors. The theft is believed to have occurred during the August 12<sup>th</sup> weekend. A police report was filed on August 19<sup>th</sup>. Working August 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> to harden the locomotives and repair the chain link fence were: George Hickok, Pete Rodabaugh, Keith Fleschner, and Jim Long.

### ***THE AMTRAK COAST STARLIGHT by Joe Wright***

At the recent steam up in Brooks and the society meeting that followed, Arlen and I talked and I let him know that I was getting the chance to ride the Amtrak Coast Starlight for a business trip. We all know that most business trips don't allow the time for train travel so this was a special opportunity. And it hadn't been since 1957 that I got to take a long distance domestic train when I got to ride the Super Chief from Phoenix to Chicago.

Now if you look in the dictionary under the term rail fan it says see me and has my picture. I'm like a kid in a candy store when I have the chance to ride a train, any train!

So it was with extremely glad anticipation that I looked forward to the trip and going somewhere that I go quite often. And having taken the trip actually gives me ammunition for one or two more articles later. Like I said, I haven't traveled on a long distance domestic train for quite a while. Normally a trip on Amtrak is a run up to Seattle for a day trip or a ball game and long train trips are something that my wife and I have taken in foreign countries.

Amtrak must have known somehow that they had a real rail fan getting ready to travel with them. First of all the ticket agent that I talked to was extremely courteous and honest and was a great customer service representative. Of the different things we discussed regarding my reservations was the fact that the Coast Starlight had been running 8-10 hours late all summer. And this has been due to track work and lack of cooperation by the host railroad. The average arrival has been 9 hours late on the Southbound run. So with this in mind I left a day earlier than originally planned so that I was in San Diego ready to go to work when I was supposed to. The reservation process was done and my tickets came to me in the mail a few days later.

One sad thing that the agent and I talked about after the reservation process was completed was the fact that the next time I call for reservations it is very possible I will be talking to someone outside of the U.S. Kind of like calling for



technical support from Microsoft, I will very likely be talking to someone in India or someplace like that. The other sad thing is that there are attempts being made to find a private party to purchase the railroad and the best bidder right now is from the Middle East. Kind of like the Port of New Jersey. The one feeling is that this might not be bad as some people think that they would invest a lot of money and make the railroad work. Of course we all know the opposing opinions regarding the possibilities. But that's a conversation for another time.

Getting back to customer service, Amtrak impressed me again as they called me to make sure that I was aware of the possible delays and later arrivals that they had been dealing with all summer. To me they took customer service a step further, which is something you don't hear that often when talking about Amtrak or any passenger carrier of any type.

On September 2<sup>nd</sup> all of the anticipation and waiting finally paid off but not before one last warning about the possible delays from the agent at the station and at the baggage claim. And while on the subject of baggage there's a new rule to tell you about. Now just like the airlines the maximum weight of your bag is to be 50 pounds. We didn't get into what the surcharges or consequences of your luggage being over 50 pounds might be. I was just glad that I had packed the same way I do when heading to the airport and my bag was only 46.5 pounds.

The customer service continued as the process of checking in and checking my baggage took almost no time at all. There were plenty of people at the ticket counter to check you in and they answered questions with a smile and courtesy. The same thing was true at the baggage counter. As a matter of fact, the person that checked me in at the baggage counter stopped and visited with me a couple of times while I was waiting for my train. You see, I'm used to the process of checking in at the airport and going through security besides being excited about taking a train trip so I was a little over two hours early and I was already done and ready to go.

When the appointed time came we were issued boarding passes and sent to our train. And we left on the advertised, right on time. My trip had begun and I was in heaven! The train crews were kind of a mixed bag. There are some obvious reasons why many people have had enough of the poor service and bad attitudes on Amtrak and that's a shame because there are a lot of very nice people working for Amtrak that enjoy their jobs. But that is one of the topics for another article. Our conductor for one of the segments of our trip was absolutely great! As we went along he made announcements about different areas that we were passing through. Does anyone know where the Artichoke capitol is? I do!!

Anyway, at one point he came on the PA and announced that he had just gotten off of the phone with Amtrak headquarters and that he had been informed that there would be a total eclipse of the sun at precisely 1:29PM. Well that had a lot of us wondering how we missed the news so we were all looking around in anticipation of this event. And the conductor was absolutely correct because precisely at 1:29PM we entered a tunnel. And of course after that he could not help pointing out the "California Horse Shoe Curve" which is located just East of San Luis Obispo and above one of California's many beautiful prisons. The prisoners watched us watching them as we navigated over this famous spot. And once past San Luis Obispo we occasionally saw the beach along with seeing the sights of Vandenberg Air Force Base until we got further South. Along the way we saw Elk near Oakridge, Coyotes near Vandenberg, and Deer near Santa Barbara. And a few people saw Grey Whales making their way South like us.

Of note for train watchers we saw three late model engines in the yard at Albany. They were decorated in vintage paint schemes for Western Pacific, Union Pacific, and SP Daylight colors. And while in California we saw coal trains and the famous tank train carrying that stuff they call Black Gold from one of the oilfields down to one of the refineries near L.A. At Davis California we also saw two vintage UP observation cars. If I had thought about it I wouldn't have thought too much about seeing these cars with the upcoming excursion behind the 4449. However, the event was brought back to me when I boarded my train home and I found that we had three vintage cars coupled onto the back of our train that were private cars heading from L.A. to Portland for the event. And during the night in Oakland we picked up a 4<sup>th</sup> car. I sent pictures that I took at Klamath Falls during one of our stops along with this article. There was the Pony Express baggage car, the Pennsy Pullman car, the Overland Trail 1949 Club Lounge car, and the California



Zephyr Round End Observation Car. What a way to bring up the end of a train.



I wanted to point out another little known fact. If you want to have 120 volts available to run your computer or charge your cell phone, or watch movies after dark like I did, there's a plug, (the only one), at seats 15 & 16 in the coach cars. I had one of my power strips with me so that I could run more than one thing at once along with sharing power with some of my neighbors.

In respect to the food on board it was relatively tasty and not that expensive in the scope of things. The cost ranged from around \$8.50-\$18.00. Of course that didn't include desert which I also sampled a couple of times. But the food is not bad for the money. Depending on the train, the Dining Car staff isn't always the most friendly. The crew Southbound were very personable. But the crew Northbound was rather rude which is something I will write about for another article. I will only say that our waiter Northbound looked somewhat like Teller of Penn & Teller fame and he had the personality of a brick! I also wanted to mention that I was glad that I was not one of the people riding in the handicap car either direction. On the Southbound trip the passengers in the handicapped car were basically ignored by the car attendant, and on the Northbound trip there was only one attendant for all 3 of the coach cars. He was definitely spread a bit thin. He didn't even get angry with me for opening the door at stops and helping people on and off of the train. You see they forgot the step for our car in L.A.

In reference to the equipment used for each train, that too is a mixed bag. On the Southbound train the cars were relatively clean on the inside. The outside and the windows were another story. The windows where I was sitting were dirty and the tint was cracking so the view was very distorted. The AC was also working very hard to keep up with the warm temperatures that we were encountering. Of course at night they didn't turn the AC back up so it got kind of chilly. Make sure you take something warm to cover yourself if you're traveling overnight and want to get some sleep. Of course after about 10:00PM the lights get turned down and there are no further announcements until 8:00AM or later the next morning so make sure you're ready to wake up if you are getting off somewhere during the night or if you want to get breakfast in the morning. Breakfast starts at 6:30AM!

On the Northbound train the windows were cleaner as well as the inside being clean. However, the condition of the cars left something to be desired. At one point it almost took a crow bar or me to get through one of the connecting doors between the cars. The conductor finally secured the door in the open position. And the PA system was terrible! When we got on the train announcements could not be heard in our car. Someone made an adjustment somewhere and the eventual outcome was that everything was ear splitting that came over the PA for the rest of the trip. In addition, there is supposed to be an intercom feature to the system that was malfunctioning so we heard everything that was going on between the crew members.

One of the funniest things I've ever heard was an announcement by one of the sleeping car attendants. She came on to announce that the bathrooms in car 32 were not working due to the altitude we were at. People in car 32 had to use



the bathrooms in other cars until 2:00 or 3:00PM when we were to be at a lower altitude near Oakridge. This announcement was made at 9:00AM as we were nearing Klamath Falls. I didn't know you could adjust the bathrooms for varied elevations and I got a chuckle out of several of my neighbors when I commented that the announcement was like telling cruise ship passengers that the toilets wouldn't work at sea level.

While on the subject of Klamath Falls, there was a thief on board somewhere. It was not clear whether the guy had snuck onto one of the private cars or was hiding between the end of our car and the first vintage car. The only thing that was clear is that the guy had stolen someone's laptop computer and guys from the private cars were after him. And the Klamath Falls police were called and were there at the station in no time. I didn't hear any more about the incident but I was impressed with how quickly everyone responded.

Well, as of Klamath Falls we were running about 2 hours late. And I had enough of trying to work through the earsplitting announcements so I gave up on this until our arrival in Portland. The scheduled performance of the Southbound had been amazing. At one point during the trip we were as much as 59 minutes late. But through the efforts of a very good crew we pulled into Los Angeles just 10 minutes late. You could really see the elation on the faces of all the Amtrak personnel. The train crew, the station crew in L.A., and the crew in San Diego were all delighted and proclaimed the train on time! Which in comparison to the expected and usual arrival times was great! Our train may have been on time due to the efforts of the Northbounds a little bit too if they did what ours did. I left San Diego to come home on Tuesday, 9/12/2006, and we were due in Portland on Wednesday, 9/13/2006 at 3:30PM. However we wound up 2 1/2 hours late and arrived around 5:30PM. Approximately an hour of that time was spent waiting for the Southbounds. On Tuesday we waited for about 40 minutes at San Luis Obispo for the Coast Starlight. And on Wednesday we waited at Albany for about 15-20 minutes for the Coast Starlight. But the delays didn't matter since my trip was coming to an end way to soon. And I have to mention one thing about the baggage handling on Amtrak. I checked my bags both directions and both directions I had them back in my hands within about 5-10 minutes after arrival. That beats the airlines by 35 minutes minimum. Did I have a successful business trip? You bet! Am I ready for another trip with Amtrak? You bet! I just hope I get the chance to take the train sooner the next time!

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presenting a meeting  
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Johnson at 503-654-1930.*

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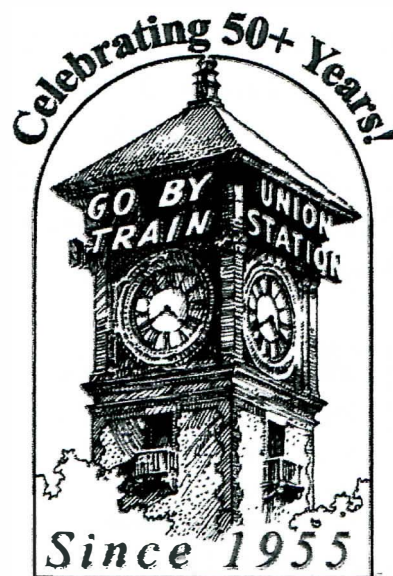
## > DECEMBER MEMBERSHIP MEETING <

**DATE = December 12<sup>th</sup>, Tuesday**

**TIME = Set-up @ 6 PM, potluck starts @ 6:30**

**LOCATION = St. Mark's Lutheran Church, 5415 SE Powell Blvd., Portland**

**PROGRAM = Potluck,  
2007 Board and Officer Election,  
By-Law change vote,  
2007 Budget Approval,  
*Train Toys for Tots***



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