



THE SAN LUIS OBISPO MODEL RAILROAD CLUB

SLO TRAINS

Drawing By Norm Hammond



Volume 15, Issue 9

September 2003

Upcoming Events

• 2003

- Sep 6-7 6th Annual Truckee RR Days @ Truckee 10 - 5
- Sep 9 Club Mtg. @ Terry N Taylor's House, 7 PM
- Sep 11-14 PSR 2003 Convention in Phoenix @ Embassy Suites
- Oct 1-5 SP H&TS Annual Convention in Sacramento
- Oct 3-5 SLOMRC 14th Annual Train Show @ Vets Hall in SLO
- Oct 8, SLO RR Museum 1/4ly Public Mtg @ Embassy Suites, 6 PM
- Oct 14 Club Mtg. @ Terry N Taylor's House, 7 PM
- Oct 26 Miniature Live Steam RR Fall Trainfest @ Bitter Creek 10AM
- Nov 11 Club Mtg. @ Terry N Taylor's House, 7 PM
- Nov 22 Daylight Div 1/4ly Meet in Ridgecrest, 9 AM
- Dec 12 Christmas Party @ Margie's Diner, 6:30 PM

• 2004

- Jan 16-19 Bitter Creek Western Live Steam RR MLK Weekend Run
- Jan 17-18 GEHAMS Train show in Bakersfield 10-5 Sat & 10-4 Sun
- Apr 29-May 2 PCR 2004 Convention in Napa

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Modeling The Southern Pacific Sand House At San Luis Obispo In The 1950's

By Andrew Merriam

I was hooked. It was in the early 1970's and I was becoming fascinated with the Southern Pacific Railroad; especially in San Luis Obispo. Part of my fascination was that the engine service area was still recognizable and one could imagine the history of this place and then model it as well! The old sand house was still there along with the 1943 "new" sanding tower framed out of second hand rail. The sand house had a sort of muscular quality created by the outside series of ribs and girts (horizontal ribs). It also had a utilitarian run-down character. Yet what could be more essential to the helpers climbing out of San Luis Obispo up Cuesta grade to Santa Margarita? I photographed it then and finally got around to modeling it thirty years later.

History and Use

Figure 1 by Rod Crossley (on page 3) shows the sand house in all its glory though partially obscured by Northern 4450 on its way up the ready track toward the depot to relieve an incoming Daylight train 99. According to railroad station plans of the San Luis Obispo area,

the sand house was 25 feet wide and 60 long. It was setback 10 feet from the centerline of the adjacent tracks that served both sides. In Figure # 1, one can see a small servicing door and a hatch through the roof with a stair/platform combination which allowed sand to be passed up from the inside of the building to the platform to the engine running boards and ultimately to the sand domes. This was obviously a cumbersome labor-intensive process. Several design proposals to service the engines with sand blown up into an overhead tank were made and in 1943 the overhead structure seen above the tender of 4450 was built. The early station plans also show a large fenced sand bin adjacent to the sand house for storing additional supplies. This structure was gone in later plans dated in the 1940s.

Sand was unloaded from drop bottom gondolas on the "railroad south" side and shoveled into the sand house over the half wall or through the 10 foot wide opening. See Figure # 2 also on

(Continued on page 3)

Helpers On The Cuesta Grade

By Dave Crammer

Trains arrive at Southern Pacific's San Luis Obispo office on the Coast Route at all times of the day and night so there is no set on duty times for the crews working the helper set in the Fall of 1995. Six pm or 6 am may find Trainmaster Jim McEntire checking the computer for what is heading his way in order to get a handle on which ones will need the extra power.

On this September evening it is almost dark as he sits in the office going over paperwork which shows that it will be sometime after 10:30 pm before the Westbound (northbound) train that will need extra assistance after mak-

ing the climb up the short grade from the ocean to the depot. This will be the 1CIBAT-12 (1st section of the City of Industry to the Bay Area Trailers that originated on the 12th): With 34 cars, 5,580 tons, and 7,321 feet (including the power). Its present power is SP #9300 (SD45T-2), SP #9282 (SD45T-2), and SSW #8374 (SD40T-2). On the wall of the Southern Pacific office in San Luis Obispo is the following chart:

LOCOMOTIVE TONNAGE RATINGS IN
EFFECT BETWEEN SLO AND SANTA
MARGARITA

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Presidents Message

By Dave Wilding

Hi everyone,

On Wednesday, August 13th; Terry, Jim and I met at our storage shed and loaded up the two 4'x8' layouts and two 2'x6' modules and took them up to Terry's for that coming weekend to work on. Glenn, Jim, Steve & Terry met Friday to start work. On Saturday, Terry was there but was not feeling well but work went on anyway both Saturday & Sunday. The raffle lay-



out had some new track laid down, the top cleaned off and was painted. The whole layout looked real

nice with a new coat of paint.

Sorry I missed all the fun. On Friday the 22nd, Terry and I loaded the clubs 4'x8' and one 2'x6' module on the old truck and took them back to the shed. The other 4'x8' (raffle layout) needs some more work done on it. Our October train show will be here real soon and I hope to see a lot of the club members to help here and there. Thanks Dave W

August Club Meeting Minutes

By Terry N Taylor

The SLOMRC Club Meeting was called to order by President Dave Wilding at about 7 pm on 12 August in the conference room of the Mid-State Bank on Broad Street in San Luis Obispo. In attendance were Steve Francis, Glenn Geissinger, Jim Jonte, Terry Taylor, and Dave Wilding.

Jim presented some model railroad material donated by a very nice gentleman, Mr. Ted Von Der Ahe. He gave us a few hundred dollars worth of HO equipment including a couple of small locomotives, a power pack, a box of Snap-Track, a few structures, several pieces of rolling stock, a couple of magazines, and a box of miscellaneous material - wire, connectors, couplers, misc. track, screws, etc. Some of the items were set aside to be used for maintenance of our modules and several items were purchased by club members (Jim of course purchased a caboose). We then decided to put the locomotives and the rest in the raffle and door-prize pool.

Terry announced that Chuck Paul, one of *SLO Trains* staff artists has finally gotten the break he has been working for. From September 25 through November 4th, he will be the featured artist at the Cayucos Art Association's Gallery in the vet's hall which is at the foot of the Cayucos pier. There will be an artist's reception on Sept. 25th from 1 to 4 pm at the same place.

Originally we were going to use our normally scheduled run time at the Vets Hall last weekend (August 8-10) to test and rewire all of our club modules and whatever individual modules showed up. Then Jim's Doctor scheduled him for some surgery and Jim allowed that he would not be in much shape to do anything that weekend. Terry's wife's relatives decided to get together here in SLO for an extended weekend starting that Thursday and Dave's mother had a problem or two. Not a good start for the weekend if you will. So we decided to postpone our get together to the following weekend (August 15-17). Since we are going to be working on the modules and the lighting in the Vets Hall is not very good, Terry volunteered his garage for the work party. Jim liked the idea as it save the

club a couple of hundred dollars in rental so he canceled the Vet's Hall.

Dave then discussed our plans for the module work party on the coming weekend. Dave, Jim and Terry will meet at Dave's house to pick up the raffle layout, then go to the storage area to pick up the club layout and Paul's module to take to Terry's house. Friday about 6 pm, club members will meet at Terry's to work on the layout: Finish the framing, lay track, wire it, and paint it. We will quit at a reasonable time on Friday night, get back together Saturday about 9 am and go to a reasonable time, getting back together on Sunday etc. We will put the modules back up about 3 pm on Sunday and Dave & I will return them to the storage locker probably on Tuesday.

Terry then went over the show tables reserved so far for the October Train Show. Jim stated that the Vet's Hall will credit us for our August Run reservation since we will be using that time to work over several modules at Terry's house instead. Steve then inquired about maintaining of our present modules and the future of the club. The Train Show takes a lot of effort each year and our runs take even more effort from our remaining club members. Most of our modules could use some maintenance. We have talked about replacing some wiring, making sure the modules meet squarely, relaying some rail, and adding new scenery. The question is - does this make sense for us? Alternatively the club could meet at members homes to operate on the home layouts thus increasing our enjoyment in operating (or for some running) trains while reducing the amount of effort in set up and tear down. At some point our club hopes to join up with the San Luis Obispo RR Museum as they build a layout in the old Southern Pacific freight house.

Jim then asked why not sell or trade the club modules we have and scrap whatever is not wanted by others. We then discussed the status of each of the 25 or so club modules. They range from the yards and throat modules, to the eight 3 track 45 de-

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Modeling The Southern Pacific Sand House continued



Figure 1: The sand house is to the right of daylight painted Northern 4450 (GS-4) which is ascending the ready track and heading toward the passenger depot in February 1954. The wood columns and horizontal girts which give the sand house its distinct character are clearly visible. Photo: With permission from Rod Crossley

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page 3. There is a photo of a GS steel gon where the former track would have been in the foreground of this photograph. The plan in Figure # 3 and photo in Figure # 4 give the setting of the sand house in the engine service area.

Modeling the Sand House

In discussing the modeling process, I will not make this a step-by-step article but rather identify the major focus I took to make this one of those “foreground” structures for my layout.



Figure 2: The sand house from the southeast side showing the condition in the early 1970 when maintenance was not existent. The photo does show the numerous bolted on supplements to the original columns which have dry rotted out at their base. Photo: Andrew Merriam, 1972

Selective Compression and Character Defining Elements. No matter how large your layout, there is never enough space to make the model fully to scale (Even the relatively small San Luis Obispo Yard would take 90 to 100 feet to fully model in HO scale). One of the first tasks is to define how much space can be allocated to the model and how important is it to the overall character of your model. A related question is what are the “character defining elements” of the scene which one is modeling and how can this be best achieved in the space one has. In the case of the sand house, I reduced the sixty foot length to fifty. However the end character of the structure with its seven bays between the weathered 10 x 10 columns seemed essential to the character and would be visible in my particular situation. I redesigned the track plan to keep the full 25-foot width.

Work Effort and Level of Detail: Each modeler has to answer the question of what level of quality is desired for the model and how much time does the modeler have to spend on this effort compared to the total railroad. It is one thing

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Calrailfans Frost Gathering

By Ed Greenberg

Calrailfans is planning a weekend camping gathering in October 10, 11, 12, 2003 at the Mojave Narrows Regional Park in Hesperia, south of Victorville. This is the site of the point known as 'frost' on the BNSF Cajon Pass route.

Unlike most events, this one has a reservation and a cost associated with it. I just got off the phone with the ranger station at Mojave Narrows Regional Park. One of the group areas will be available to us for any weekend in October at the following cost: Vehicle entry fee for dry camping: \$10/night / Vehicle entry fee for hookup camping \$17/night / \$52 deposit required in advance with \$2 as a deposit fee and \$50 as the minimum charge for camping, which is applied to

our camping costs.

To look over area, either go to their web site at <http://www.co.san-bernardino.ca.us/parks/mojave.htm> or check the Teraservers sites at Topo: <http://terraserver-usa.com/image.aspx?t=2&s=14&x=148&y=1193&z=11&w=2> or Aerial: <http://terraserver-usa.com/image.aspx?t=1&s=12&x=593&y=4773&z=11&w=2>. Notes on the aerial photo: About 1/3 from the bottom, you will see the cross-overs. Just above the middle of the photo, you will see a horseshoe shaped lake. The area south of the lake, and east of the crossovers is the group camping area.

Please visit the event web page at <http://www.greenberg.org/frost/> and, after reading the details, fill out and submit the form on the site, to make your reservation. After submitting the form, you will need to send a check for your camping fees to me. The address is on the web form.

We're hoping for a good weekend and an excellent turnout from both Northern and Southern California. Please forward this to those lists and sites where you think it would be of interest. Questions: Please write me off list at edg@greenberg.org. If they seem like FAQ's (frequently asked questions) I'll post clarifications, and also add the answers to the web page. Thanks Ed

Helpers On the Cuesta Grade continued

(Continued from page 1)

TONNAGE

GP30/GP35/GP38/B23-7/B36-7 540
GP40 810
GP40M 950
SD40/SD45/GP60/B39/B40 1210
MX (MAXI-TRAX) 1420
SD70/C44-9 1990
AC'S 2510

This is in keeping with Southern Pacific's latest method of figuring how much power is needed to get a specific number of tonnage over a specific grade and helps determine whether helper units need to be added. The ratings displayed here are for the Cuesta Grade which trains traveling the Coast Route must cross over between San Luis Obispo and Santa Margarita. The printer in the office is still busily clicking away so that before the crews arrive the paperwork they will need will be ready. Even though it's a cool night the crickets are chirping and occasionally there is the bark of a dog, but missing is the familiar popping sounds of locomotives idling. This is because the three unit helper set sitting across from the depot has been shut down as both a fuel conservation effort and to accommodate nearby residents who SP has worked with to resolve the

idling locomotives issue.

The assigned helper units available today are all 6-axle with SD45T-2R #6823, SD40T-2 #8262, and D&RGW SD40T-2 #5410. Because the D&RGW has Posi-Trak they will add an additional 3,840 to the tonnage rating of any trains they work. As they sit there the yellow lights outside of the Amtrak and SP offices illuminate the tracks and make the orange on the Rio Grande unit stand out more than the white SP lettering on the other units. However, a helper set is not just three engines placed at the point, mid, or trailing end of a train. They also include the people making the actual decisions and at SLO the helper team consists of two of the best on the SP system, Engineer Don Lessie and Conductor/Lookout Charlie Temple. Between them they have over 80 years with the SP. Charlie has been with the SP since 1954 and worked on the Coast since 1955. Don has been with the SP for 42 years. This experience means that they have developed a certain expertise for what head end engineers call providing "a good shove."

By 10:45 a waning 3/4 moon is rising above the palm trees and the old water

tower, and Don is busy starting up his helper units. When the crew dispatcher called this evening, Don was asleep so his wife took the message allowing him a little more rest before he needed to be at the depot since she knew that he might be up all night. Tonight Bruce McKalson will be the engineer on the train we will be pushing against and James Mebane will be the conductor. Bruce is busy going over the paperwork and using his calculator to determine how long it will take his train to clear various switches and sidings in case something should happen to his counter and also to check its accuracy against the mileposts. With his train at 7,321 feet divided by 5,280 he has a factor of 1.37. This means that at 10 mph his train will clear in 8 minutes 13 seconds and at 30 mph 2 minutes 45 seconds. He figures in for several other speeds and enters it on the work sheet for his train. We hear over the radio in the office a detector indicating that our train is about to arrive and shortly #9300 pulls in next to the depot. Charlie and Don climb onto their set with Charlie riding in the rear unit and with the headlight illuminating them we back down past the more than a mile of well cars with their loads. North of us on a hill, a radio tower

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Portola / Rio Vista Equipment Trade

By Rod McClure & Eugene Vicknair

Rail Museums agree to equipment trade. In an announcement made public on Aug 2, 2003, the Feather River Rail Society at Portola, CA and the Western Railway Museum at Rio Vista Jct. CA. approved a trade of equipment that will enhance both museums equipment rosters and allow both organizations to more closely follow their respective Mission Statements.

Equipment going to the Western Railway Museum from the Feather River Rail Society includes; Sacramento Northern 44 tonner 146, Sacramento Northern wood cupola caboose 1632, Salt Lake, Garfield and Western 44 tonner DS-2, Western Pacific maintenance of way flat car 8522, Fairmont Speeder Crane, Wood push car, and a Ballast car for later delivery. Also included will be extra parts for the 44 tonners and one 85 lb. spring frog.

General Electric built Sacramento Northern 146 in November 1946. After being retired by the Sacramento Northern it was sold to Chrome Crankshaft who sold it to the NW Oklahoma Railroad as their number 1 in April 1974. The Feather River Rail Society purchased the locomotive with the intent to restore it.

Sacramento Northern caboose 1632 was re-built from a box car by Western Pacific in the company shops at Sacramento in 1938. It was removed from train service in the 1970s and was assigned to maintenance of way service with wreck train 37 based in Oroville, CA.

Equipment going to the Feather River Rail Society from the Western Railway Museum includes; Western Pacific F7a 917-D, Sacramento Northern GP7 712, TTX trailer flat 475127 with two hitches, Amtrak steam generator 662 converted from an F3b, Union Pacific steel caboose 25732, Western Pacific steel caboose 483, United States Navy MRS-1's 612 and 614, and the maintenance building frame from the New Melones Dam project.

This trade will bring F7A 917-D together again with sister 921-D at Portola, CA. This gives the FRRS the distinction of having two of the remaining "Fabulous Four" F7's. Released by EMD on January 26, 1950 F7A 917-D, serial number 8971, was received by the Western Pacific on February 4, 1950. She was renumbered to 917 on July 1, 1975. The 917 was repainted back to WP's original orange and silver scheme by the Union Pacific at North Platte, Nebraska in July 1983 and donated to the Bay Area Electric Railway Association. It had been displayed at the Western Railway Museum at Rio Vista Junction, California being delivered to them on October 15,

1983 after track repairs were completed to allow movement over the unused branch that connects to the museum's own trackage.

Once on the property the 917-D will receive an initial inspection and any repairs necessary to place the unit in service. The 921-D will then be removed from service for needed maintenance, restoration and painting. The 712 will also receive an initial inspection and repairs necessary to put that unit into service. Meanwhile the search is on for two twenty-foot trailers to place on the TTX flat car for a display of early TOFC loadings. With the addition of WP caboose 483 we now have the sister to 484 and a fairly complete representation of the WP's caboose fleet.



Bill Kluver, speaking on behalf of BAERA, said, "We're really pleased to have joined with FRRS in this historic trade agreement that allows both ourselves and our colleagues in Portola to better fulfill our respective mission statements. The agreement also reflects our mutual commitment to ARM's "Recommended Practices for Railway Museums."

Rod McClure, speaking on behalf of FRRS, said, "This historic trade agreement allows both of our organizations to refine our core collections respective to each organizations goals. This follows our memberships directives to hone our collection and refocus on the preserving the Western Pacific's empire.

After the above announcement was made, further comments by Rod & Eugene included: Please, let's not worry about the WP steam engines right now. WRM has them under cover and they are safe. I have seen them both very recently and the folks at WRM care about them. They will not be scrapped!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

By the way, the FRRS is changing itself completely. Both organizations are getting what they want and things that better fit to each others operations. This trade follows a trade to be completed soon that brings a wood SN boxcar to Portola, the adoption of a comprehensive facilities Master Plan and the determination to refocus on our core WP family mission. More changes to come! We are shooting for the movements to begin sometime late October.

If people like the fact that we are pursuing this refined direction, then they need to help support it. Right now, our level of donations and volunteers is not rising which is causing us some

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Cajon Tales: Part 40 (Bagdad)

By Francis (Pancho) L. Post ex-Cajon Hogger

Southern California was great when my parents took me there in 1941; yes, before the war. It was nice up into the fifties, but then it went all to hell. I was stuck there by my seniority till my great train wreck just east of Summit in '78. I moved to Whatcom county in WA state in the spring of '79. I'm still here and enjoying it. Judging by the growth here, thousands of others like it, too.

In late the summer of '45 I was driving my mother out from San Berdoo to Needles to visit my dad who was firing out of Needles on the old Arizona division then. (When dad traded rights with Art Wallace he worked out of Needles, but mother and I stayed in Berdoo.) I was fifteen then; (yes, in those days a fifteen-year-old could get a driver's license to drive a PARENT ONLY, if they could pass the normal tests.)

As we neared Bagdad, my mother passed out; it was the heat. I think it was a heat stroke. I got a room in the Bagdad Motel, borrowed a large bowl from the Bagdad Cafe; (yes there WAS a Bagdad Cafe) and

tried to cope. It was my worst scare. Imagine a fifteen-year-old boy in '45 removing his mother's shoes, hose, and dress while she is unconscious in a dingy motel. So there she was, in just her slip, with the "swamp cooler" running and me bathing her forehead and her arms with a damp washcloth trying to cool her off.

Eventually she came to, and the next morning EARLY we went on in to Needles. She was a fine woman and dad was a fine man. I was very lucky to have them as parents.

As another side note: I've often wondered why they called evaporative coolers "swamp coolers"; the only place they work is a desert. The 'mesh' (which the water trickles through) was made of excelsior, the wood product used in shipping, etc. Incidentally, dad built a cooler in the spring of '43 which ran all summer. The wood (which had been white when installed) had gone to orange in the fall when we took it out of the window. In the '70s when I put new excelsior in the cooler every spring it would be black

within a few days...smog. In the Desert, the evaporative cooler was better than air conditioning. DESERT air is really too dry for healthful breathing; the evaporative cooler not only WASHED the air, but it brought it up around 40% humidity. In summer in the desert we hung our clothes to dry and went right back to the beginning of the line and took it down again....DRY!

I worked on the LA Division of the Santa Fe from '48 to '78 and never heard of a locomotive called Jacks or mules. We did call switchers "goats", probably because kicking cars resembled a goat ramming into things. We called tiny OLD steam switchers "teakettles". When we wanted to criticize a fireman we would say, "he couldn't boil water for a one-armed barber".

I'm Francis L. "Pancho" Post. Also an old geezer. Passed my promotion to engineer in the last steam class on the LA division in January '52.

F.L. Post, exhogger

August Club Meeting Minutes continued

(Continued from page 2)

gree curve modules, to the balloon loop, to a variety of standard modules to several transition modules (1 to 2 tracks), to fitter modules. Some are in reasonable shape and some need a lot of work. After some discussion, it was agreed that Terry would ask the Free-mo groups if they are inter-

ested in our modules - especially the yard throat and balloon loop sections. Remaining modules would then be put up for silent auction at the train show in October.

Terry volunteered to have the next club meeting (on September 9th) at his house

where we can finish up what ever work is needed on the club raffle layout after our work party this weekend. We then discussed the upcoming Daylight Division meet in Santa Barbara on the 23rd of August to plan car pooling.

Dave adjourned the meeting at 8:35.

Portola / Rio Vista Equipment Trade continued

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concern. We want to paint the 705 soon (probably in Perlman Green), put the 921-D through a complete rebuild, make the next big step on the Silver Hostel (windows!) and do some other, much needed restoration work, including beginning to restore freight cars.

We just started restoration of a Union Pa-

cific caboose and a WWII Pullman troop sleeper. We have a second UP caboose in the wings, hopefully to start in the next week and we hope to have the repainting of them done for Portola RR Days. And I hope to be placing the first new walkways at the museum next spring. But a lot of this depends on people giving us money.

Also, I forgot to mention the two WP hopper cars and Western Pacific GP7 705 that we acquired recently as part of this realignment. The 705 is operable so this gives us two operable WP GP7s, the 705 and 707, and the SN GP7 712 which needs a little work, as well as very dead WP GP7 708.

For more information, please go to <http://www.wplives.org/>

Helpers On the Cuesta Grade continued

(Continued from page 4)

sits with two red lights on top and a white one below. The revolving yellow light atop our unit flashes on the container we are stopped next to and then Bruce pulls his train forward. With him on the move west we continue to back down to where we can switch over behind. In the course of our short trip we pass briefly lit containers marked "Maersk", "CSX", "Sealand", etc.

"SP detector MP 248.2 no defects...no defects." There is a train coming from the north. "This is the helpers...need you to pull up 5 cars." From the rear unit

Charlie is sitting right next to where the switch we must use to move over is located. "You need us to pull up 5 cars?"

"That's correct." There is the creak of cars moving slowly past us in the night. "3 to go SP 9300" "Only 2" "1 car." "That'll do...you're clear."

Charlie sets the switch for us to cross over and as we back down a crossing gate descends behind us stopping traffic. Pulling forward the rear car with its flashing ETD device stands out starkly in our headlight and Charlie makes the connection. There is room between the car and our forward unit for the ETD to remain in place and as he passes in front of the headlight to enter the door Charlie's shadow looms up against the end container. "We're all hooked up now." Don calls the head end to let them know we are set, turns off the headlight, and settles down for a cup of coffee from his thermos. "Got some cookies Don." "Got an apple turnover for you Charlie."

Its 12:05 as we pass the station again where an extra Amtrak is sitting in the dark. This is the southbound train we heard trip the detector earlier. "9300 west calling WS60." "9300 calling WS 58." "WS 58." "We'd like all of the blocks you can give us." "Got the helpers on the rear end?" "Yes on the rear end." "11 blocks Santa Margarita through Bradley and runs through Rios." "Releasing 1 block...San Simeon."



Photo #1 - From the helper set one can see the head end climbing the grade headed west towards San Francisco. Dave Crammer Photo Fall 95 on Cuesta Grade.

We pull out onto the CTC controlled territory over bridges with streets crossing under them in the dark. Above us are the moon and stars and the hills are illuminated around us. As we climb past the men's prison the light from its towers and open spaces reflect off a fog bank and we watch it also reflecting off the containers curving and climbing ahead of us. See Photo 1 below. Charlie mentions that every once in awhile the guards will shine a searchlight on a passing train. Ahead of us signals are red eyes staring out of the night and fence posts appear as black ragged teeth on the pale snow like grass lit by moonlight. Down in the valley below us lights from houses create the illusion that from some hidden hollows there are pools of lava.

Now we are traveling through Tunnel #11 with the echo from our three working units filling the night and once out at MP 245.0 get a no defects from the detector. Above us the head end units with headlights reflected against the hills look more like fireflies than locomotives. Once past the black covered maul of abandoned Tunnel #10 we can look far down below to the headlights of cars traveling Hwy 101. Traveling in and out of tunnels from darkness to moonlight our containers reflect the pale glow in front and the shrubbery beside us appears as ghosts in the night. Once inside a tunnel we can really appreciate the tight fit that needs to be anticipated in planning the loading strategies. Arriving at Cuesta we will be cutting off from the rear and as Charlie is cutting us loose Don is on the radio requesting permission from the dispatcher for us to return as light engines. As they leave us to continue on north Bruce calls out over the radio, "Thank you guys very kindly for your help."

Don changes the head end to #5410 walking through the units as Charlie makes the trip on the ground with his flashlight lighting the roadbed that crunches under his safety shoes. It has been 13.1 miles from the depot to Cuesta, and on the return trip we will be able to see where we are going without any containers blocking the view. A work train is on the siding to our left and we pass it knowing that there is a shortage of sidings on the hill. The Hwy 41 fire knocked out one and SERRANO washed out as a second removed from service. Now the only siding on the mountain is at CHORRO (MP 246.3) at 5,100 feet. Signal #2390 is displaying a red aspect because of the train that we were part of passing through its territory but since we have permission from the dispatcher, Don pulls up to it, sounds the horn and we proceed.

At Tunnel #6 the signal is green and we enter its ribbed concrete walls. Tunnel #7's walls resemble the walls in Disney's Matterhorn toboggan ride. This is because in 1987 its wooden beams caught fire and the coast route was closed for 6 weeks. It was reopened through the efforts of 2 crews working 12 hours each 7 days a week making the repairs. As we approach the western portal of Tunnel #8, the searchlight signals guarding it stand facing outwards since they are no longer valid as they are being replaced with the triangular style of signal.

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2003 FRRS Railfan Day

By Frank Brehm

The Feather River Rail Society Announces 17th Annual Railfan Photographer's Day on September 20, 2003.

Tickets are now available for the 17th Annual FRRS Railfan Photographer's Day. If you enjoy vintage diesel action or are a fan of the Western Pacific, this is your event. The Portola Railroad Museum will be closed to the general public Saturday, September 20th for dedicated railfans to photograph classic WP equipment in action. Tickets are \$15 for adults, \$10 for ages 5-12 and free for children under 5.

Noted railroad photographers and authors will be on site to sign their work or just to chat including Ted Benson, Adam Clegg, Norm Holmes, Ken Rattenne, Virgil Staff and Dave Stanley. The FRRS also notes the return of Railroadiana to the event organized by Ken Meeker. Vic Neves will continue his tradition of unique night photography opportunities and after

dark slide shows. Tickets are available at the gate the day of the event, or in advance with payment by check or money order to:

FRRS Railfan Day Tickets
P.O. Box 608
Portola, CA 96122

The volunteers and staff at the Portola Railroad Museum look forward to seeing you there. All proceeds benefit the FRRS and Portola Railroad Museum - Where the WP Lives!

The Feather River Rail Society is a not-for-profit organization dedicated to preserving the history of the Western Pacific Railroad and its people. They are responsible for the operation of the Portola Railroad Museum in Portola, CA.

Please note: Events and participants subject to change.

Helpers On the Cuesta Grade continued

(Continued from page 7)

Continuing upwards tall weeds beside the track are bending in the wind and appear in our headlights as marine type animals such as sea anemones illuminated by a deep submersible. Now we are downgrade once more with brown hills reflected in the headlights and by MP 245 dynamics 3 has us at 23 mph for a no defects at MP 245.0. As we emerge from tunnel #11 we are greeted by the wisps of a fog that we will be traveling in and out of and as we descend towards San Luis Obispo. Again the moonlight has the effect on the hills around us that the fog appears as white bands hugging the peaks. Finally back in SLO, we are again among the trees and face a double red bringing Don top a halt and requesting authority to enter the yard.

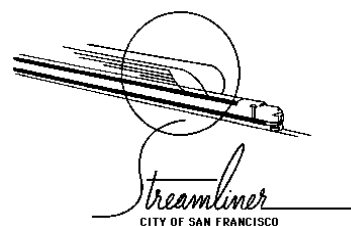
The bottom signal turns green, "We can go." and we pass the sign that reads BEGIN SAN SIMEON BLOCK. Charlie is down to line us into the siding and once we are clear resets it and gets on the rear unit. Don pulls us in next to the station and shuts down the units. To the sound of hand brakes being racked on and air venting the fog continues to roll in past the moon and at 1:45 am Charlie calls the dispatcher from the office and releases, "One block...San Simeon."

It is morning now. Again Jim McEntire is involved in checking to see what is headed his way and if his helper team will be needed. The computer system relies on both visual sighting which is entered manually and automatic updating through AEI scanners across the system. It allows crews to keep a check on what they may be called for. "CIBAT passed Raymer at 8 am." This means that the train that originated at SP's City of Industry Yard in Los Angeles headed for Oakland passed CP Raymer (MP 453.1) at 8 am and it will be some time before it reaches East San Luis Obispo (MP 252.1).

Meanwhile the 1-BACIT (1st section of the Oakland/City of Industry Trailers) has arrived without helpers since it is a short train and the new crew takes a bag of ice out to the cab. They contact WS60 in Denver and receive 5 blocks Glover through Devon and are on their way. By the early afternoon things are starting to become more complicated than they were with this morning's solo train. This is partly because both the north (#14) and southbound (#4) Coast Starlight are due in and also because both the 2-CIBAT12 (2nd section that originated on the 12th) and the 1-BACIT12 are already in place to climb the mostly single track between SLO and Santa Margarita. The BACIT is sitting at Santa Margarita on the siding and the CIBAT has dropped off its train in the yard. It then came up to the depot as a 3-unit light engine set (9656/8352/8093) and because of the noise restriction moved west next to the helpers already parked there silent, and shut them down too.

After the shutdown Engineer L.D. Nelson and Conductor Dean Russum come into the office giving a report on their journey thus far, tying up with the dispatcher, and letting the next crew know how everything has handled so far. Now everyone waits for both Amtrak's to clear. This doesn't result in any downtime because the crews can take advantage of the wait to go over all of the paperwork and familiarize themselves with their trains. It is also necessary for the helper crew to figure out where they want to place the 3 engine set since

(Continued on page 9)



Line Art

Many of the line art items used in this newsletter are courtesy of Ken Houghton Rail Images or came from www.rhstorical.com



Chuck adding some weathering touches to his scratch-built Oceano model train station.
June 2003 Photo.

Chucky's Trivia Corner

By Chuck Paul



Well, howdy railroaders. Are you up on your railroad terminology? How about railroad slang? Let's just see how well you do on this collection of terms from the glossary of Lucius Beebe's book, "High Iron, A Book of Trains":

1. When a piece of equipment is referred to as "link and pin", what does that mean? A) Operating properly; B) Needing repair; C) Old fashioned or obsolete; or D) Traditional, but serviceable.
2. What is a lizard scorcher? A) A very hot day; B) A train cook; C) A hot box; or D) A fireman's shovel.
3. The term "Main Pin" refers to which of the following: A) An executive; B) The yard tower; C) The conductor; or D) Chicago.
4. Who is the monkey? A) The dispatcher; B) The call boy; C) A mechanic; or D) A brakeman.

5. What is the monkey house? A) A roundhouse; B) A caboose; C) A yard tower; or D) A train crew's dormitory.

6. What or who is the mop? A) A passenger station janitor; B) Mainline operations personnel; C) Maintenance occupational pool; or D) Missouri & Pacific Railroad

7. What does "pull the pin" mean? A) Knock off work; B) Head for home; C) Jump off a moving train; or D) Both A & B.

8. What or who is an ornament? A) Marker light; B) Station manager; C) Engine flags; or D) A railroad's CEO.

9. What is a rabbit? A) A fast freight; B) A bullet train; C) A derail iron; or D) A hotshot.

10. What is a red ball? A) A fast freight; B) A bullet train; C) A derail iron; or D) Same as a stop sign.

The answers are on the back page.

Helpers On the Cuesta Grade continued

(Continued from page 8)

they will be operating mid train. The BACIT which will be our second task has 38 cars, is 6,480 feet in length, 4541 tons, and 288 axles including the units. The reason it will require helpers is because it has come down with only SD40-2M #8610 and SD45M #7458 with a combined tonnage rating over the grade of 2420. The CIBAT is at 7,651 feet with the units and 6,984 tons. Its units are GP60 #9656, SD40T-2 #8352, and B40-8 #8093 with a combined tonnage rating of 3630.

Finally the speaker outside the office announces the imminent arrival to the waiting passengers and then the Southbound Amtrak pulls into scoop them up. During the brief stop water is taken on from the hose marked "potable" by the crew manning the dining car. First the hose is run to wash off where it will connect to the car and then the holding tanks are filled. The northbound follows in a few minutes and after its departure Don and Charlie head out to start their units. While they accomplish this the CIBAT crew is already backing down to their train and the BACIT crew is headed for Santa Margarita over Hwy 101 by Renzenberger van. As the CIBAT swings around on the track to our left it is coming out of the yard with its cars as we sit at signal #2519. Charlie is down on the ground watching the cars and in position to cut the train. After he has made the cut short of the signal the rest of the cars pull forward and we come out of the siding. Don will back down against the cars to our rear and then pull forward so that Charlie can connect us to the rest of the train which is now sitting

down by the highway bridge under eucalyptus trees that hang over the tracks.

"SP 8262 calling WS60." Contrary to popular opinion the unit that a consist is called by is not necessarily the lead unit. In this case #8262 is the middle unit. This makes it easier to designate helpers since they will be working back and forth in the course of the day, and it would be very confusing to have to change the designation for each directional change. To aid in the pronunciation of our block, strips of paper are taped to various sections of the cab such as ceiling, control stand, stating: "SAN SIM EON" "SAN SIMEON" "SIM-E-ON" "TAJIGUAS (just in case) GOD FORBID

Just past the switch is CTC territory which means that Don must have the dispatchers permission before he can pull forward clearing the switch and coming out on the main. We get the signal and make our move with Charlie resetting the switch and back down towards the waiting cars. "OK Don, back em up about 4 to a hook." Since Don has Charlie in sight, Charlie uses hand signals rather than the radio to guide him in and we make the connection with a slight jolt. There is the sound of the air as we make our test and ahead of us are the signs designating the left track as the El Camino Block and the right the San Simeon Block. Over the radio we "WS58 Amtrak #14 over." San Luis is the spot where WS60 to the south hands over control to WS58 for those continuing north. Don eases up against the flat-

(Continued on page 10)

Helpers On the Cuesta Grade continued

(Continued from page 9)

car ahead of us with Charlie making that connection and then he joins Don in the cab. "OK you're all hooked up." Now it is up to the head end to make the next decision which is when to continue north (west). "OK, let's go." and we start to ease out with Don placing the throttle in position #2 and then #3 as we round the curve ahead. We are climbing out of the pine trees that along with palms make up a lot of the vegetation around San Luis.

Trailing behind us are more containers and pigs past the strange sugarloaf shaped hills. By the time we have reached the high trestle Don has us at throttle #8 and we are doing 18 mph at GOLD TREE. Coming around the horseshoe curve we spot our lead power over to our side. By CHORRO the tail of our train is below us and we can look far down below at the high trestle with the track snaking back towards town. Curving around the hillside we are up to 20 mph at SERRANO and the rather parched grasses are a light gold in color with red signals popping out over the tops of containers signifying that our head end, which can occasionally be glimpsed ahead, has already activated. Cruising along on the top of a mountain with even Hwy 101 far below us would seem to be rather isolated



Photo # 2 - Passing the head end of the eastbound we will be helping that is sitting on the siding at Santa Margarita. Dave Crammer Photo Fall 95 on Cuesta Grade.

territory, but ahead we spot a solo cyclist on a mountain bicycle cruising along at almost the same speed as our train. We catch up to him just before the entrance to Tunnel #11 which would be a rather tight fit for both of us along the walls which sit quite close to the side of the trailing containers.

We start the downside meaning a switch to dynamics and continue to wend our way through tunnels finally emerging from Tunnel #6 and pass under the two bridges supporting the south and north lanes of 101 at Cuesta. The work train glimpsed last night, with GP40-2M #7290, sits on a siding with among other items a crane and a little farther cows are grazing to our right. Coming into Santa Margarita the track is much flatter than the up and down grade of the hill and we pass the sign declaring SANTA MARGARITA-END CTC- BEGIN SANTA MARGARITA BLOCK. To our left is the 19,015 foot siding and as we continue, we pass the head end of the Eastbound (away from San Francisco) stack train we will be working on our return journey over the hill. See Photo #2. Our train continues down until the helpers are sitting next to signal 234.1 where we stop and Don calls out to the head end his appreciation for how accurate their counter was, "Coming in on a wing and a prayer we made it." Head end, "Did we make it?" Don, "Well, we're about a half car off but good job."

Stopped next to the crossover we will deftly move out of the way after disconnecting like a bullfighter swinging his cape at the bull as it charges by. Actually there is a bit more to it than that. Charlie is again down on the ground disconnecting us from the head end which then pulls forward leaving us a space. He then disconnects the rear and we pull past the switch which Charlie aligns for us so that we can move over to the siding and then sets it back so that the head end can back up against its train for Charlie to reconnect the two halves back into a whole. See Photo #3.

"OK, come on back Darryl." This to the engineer on the head end. Charlie finds that the car to the east of us which we would be shoving against is an empty. Since helpers are not allowed to push against an empty though they are allowed to pull them we must make some switching moves before any action can take place. Since reconnecting the two halves means that we must move back onto the main, Don must get permission from the dispatcher before we reoccupy space on it. He calls WS58 to request working time and we are granted it until 6:15 pm jointly with the Amtrak that has already passed, the train that we have just left, and the train that we are about to join.

As we get the permission, the last pig on the end of the westbound passes us and we watch it disappear around the curve to our right. Charlie lines the switch out to the main again and we pull out onto it and then he calls to the head end to let them know we are out of the way and to guide them back. "7 to the crossing." "SP detector milepost 230.3 no defects...no defects." The CIBAT is on its way after leaving us behind. "7 more to a

(Continued on page 11)

Helpers On the Cuesta Grade continued

(Continued from page 10)

hook." "4 more." "One more." "That'll do."

They connect with just a whisper of touching metal. Charlie connects the cars and then disconnects so that we will be shoving against a load, and Don walks through the units to change head ends to D&RGW 5410 while retaining the designation of the center unit. He calls the dispatcher and releases the Santa Margarita Block since we are no longer a separate entity but are again part of a train. Charlie makes the connection for the air test on the rear including the empty, and we pull forward against the rest of the train pushing against the slack. "Calling the helper...come in Don." "Don" "We're ready when you are." "We're ready." "OK, here we go."

As we start up the grade out of Santa Margarita we can see the smoke from the lead units against the hill as it is back lit by the late afternoon sun. This is because we are not as far behind the lead as we were earlier, since this is a much shorter train. The speedometer has us at 10 mph and we will be climbing into the

sun which will be ducking in and out of the hills for most of the climb leaving us in the shadows except for moments of bright yellow shining directly into the windshield. "Engine #6869 East to the helpers...we've got a green Don." This is to let Don know that we will not be stopping but will continue on where the siding switches onto the main.

We are into the trees now with that back lit smoke above us showing the head end location and the dispatcher gives us working time until 8 pm in the San Simeon Block. The helpers finally reach the crossover onto the main where the sign reads "BEGIN CTC" and throttle #5 has us at 10 mph. By the time we hit Cuesta we are up to 18 mph at throttle 7, steadily climbing the grade and can see a green signal poking out over the containers ahead of us which the head end hasn't quite reached yet as we pass the still parked work train at MP 239. As we once again pass under the highway bridges we can hear the echo from our power and then again plunge into the darkness of tunnel #6. With the lights off in the cab except for the gauges and the ditch lights reflecting off of the car in front, going through it is like an amusement park funhouse with the noise and swaying, but no real sense of movement until suddenly there appears up ahead the entrance with containers outlined as we do a twist towards the left and emerge through the portal and into the light.

Coming down we are once again in dynamics at #8 by SERRANO and below our head end is across from us ducking into the shadow of a hill. Even though it is only late afternoon, some of the coastal fog has started to climb the hillside and some of those above us appeared to be draped in cotton candy or angel hair. On the horseshoe curve, dynamic 7 has us at 25 mph and over the high trestle its takes a setting of 8 to keeps us to this speed. By the detector at 248.2, our speed is determined as 23 mph and we are passing the horses that are corralled here. The helpers come to a stop at MP 251 outside of the yard and Charlie is down to cut off from the front section. "Calling helper on the SP 8610." "SP helper is cut off." "He's just moving Don."

We follow the head end that we are now cut off from and watch as they pull forward of the switch. Charlie is off again to "SP6810 bring 'em back 4 to a hook...4....2....that'll do." As he is directing this final involvement of the team, Don is busy shutting down the helpers that have enabled the SP to bring two trains over the grade. Through dark of night, heat of the day, inclement weather, and anything else that may be thrown against them, the helper team of Lessie and Temple have done it again and earned the "Good shove!" In the office the computer is already showing what will probably be the next job headed their way.

I want to thank Jim McEntire, Charlie Temple, Don Lessie, Bruce McKalson, James Mebane, Ken Waage, Robert Nagle, L.D. Nelson, Mike Furtney, and Jack Martin for their help in preparing this article.



Photo #3 - After our helpers are connected Charlie Temple gets back on board. Dave Crammer Photo Fall 95 on Cuesta Grade.

Modeling The Southern Pacific Sand House continued

(Continued from page 3)

to create a model that might involve over 1000 individual pieces in a “board by board” type of construction; it is another to buy for example an old Plasticville structure as a representational stand in. Most of us fall somewhere in between. This choice will evolve from three basic components that are unique to each individual. 1) How important is historical accuracy? 2) What are your levels of modeling skills and patience – really where is modeling the most “fun” for you? And, finally, 3) How important is the model to your overall railroad operation?

In the case of the sand house, it was important to the scene and I wanted to push some modeling frontiers for myself. I would allow myself some compromises, however, to conserve time. The visible detail would be accurate, but since my personal philosophy is that trains run through a stage set, this would not be a board-by-board model where the detail would not be easily visible.

Base Plans and Selection of the Modeling Material: To my knowledge there are no SP plans available of the sand house itself. However, we can come close based upon the photographs and the given dimensions from the railroad station plans. There were seven bays on the ends of the structure that equated to approximately 3.5 feet per bay. Checking on the long side of the photographs, I could count 21 projecting rafter tails, which would equal twenty bays (panels between columns) at roughly three feet wide each. Since I was condensing the structure, but wanted to keep the overall character and proportions, I reduced the sides to 14 bays (and on the south side a combination of 5 bays, an opening of 4 bays and then 5 bays to retain the symmetrical character). Generalized elevations were then roughed out and a mock up made to see if the final structure would “fit” well in the scene being created.

With the basic model size selected, the next question was what modeling materials to use. While styrene is an easy and obvious option (and one that I like to use), the heavy beaten-up and weathered character of the building dictated that distressed basswood would be ideal in this situation. I also felt that the columns with their dry rot at the base and often supplemental supporting wood posts bolted adjacent to them would be enhanced by using wood where the splits, knotholes and broken boards could be authentically reproduced. Figure #5 shows the sand house framed out based upon the information I could glean from the photographs.

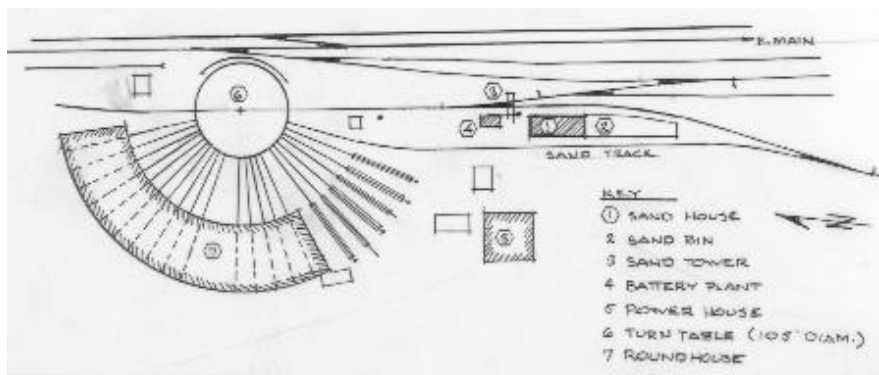


Figure 3: Engine servicing area, San Luis Obispo. The sand house is shown center with dimensions of 25 by 60 feet. The 1943 sand tower is shown to its left straddling the switch to the ready tracks. Graphic: Andrew Merriam (composite of 1930 to 1950 documents)



Figure 4: Sand house area from the southwest side. The photo also shows the related structures such as the sand tower, the battery plant and the numerous other poles, water hydrants and supports for the steam lines that were so characteristic of the SLO engine service area. Photo: Andrew Merriam, 1972

Next time we will talk about some wood working tricks that I have found useful as well as weathering and detailing the structure.



Figure 5: Framed model of the sand house after completing the basic structure. Andrew Merriam

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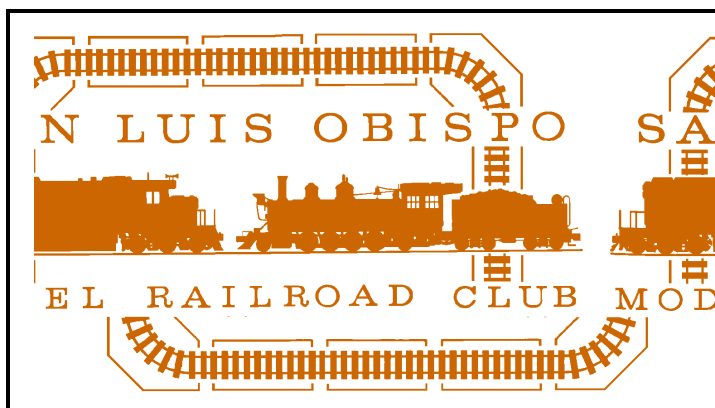
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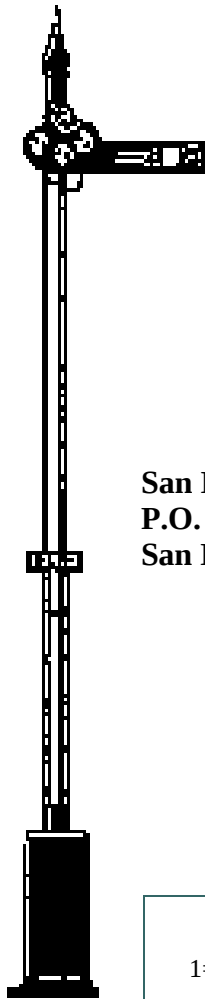
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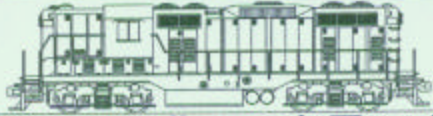


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