



# THE CLUB CAR



Bulletin 677

Pacific Locomotive Association, Inc.

[www.ncry.org](http://www.ncry.org)

January 2020

## The 2019 Train of Lights at Sunol Depot



*Photo by Matthew Cavanaugh*

The Train of Lights leaving the Sunol Depot.

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Once the annual TOL (Train of Lights) begins the WEDMOW (Wednesday Maintenance of Way) team switches gears and joins the other volunteers in making the Train of Lights the wonderful success that it is. The following WEDMOW team members have volunteered for many of the TOL positions: (in reverse alphabetical order), John Zielinski, Mark Whitman, Wes Van Osdol, Doug Vanderlee, Ron Thomas, Pat Stratton, Jim Stewart, Ken Southwick, Bob Pratt, Gregg McNaughton, Sierra

Murphy, Dee Murphy, Steve Jones, Pat Hafey, Henry Baum, and Steve Barkarie. These TOL positions include: Engineer, Firemen, Conductor, Brakeman, Dining Car Host, Parlor Car Host, Electrician, Parking Lot attendant, Docent, Commissary, Caboose Host, and the Jolly Fellow himself.

A special treat this year, was our WEDMOW team lead for many years, visited us from his new home in Ft Collins, Colorado and performed Jolly Fel-

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**OUR MISSION:** To be an operating railroad museum for standard gauge railroading, past, present and future, with emphasis on the Western United States and special emphasis on Northern California

## BOARDING LOCATIONS

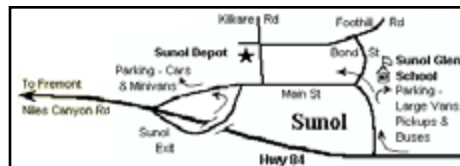
### NILES STATION

37029 Mission Blvd.  
Fremont, CA 94536



### SUNOL STATION

6 Kilcare Road  
Sunol, CA 94586



#### ===== BOARD OF DIRECTORS =====

President	Henry Baum	(925) 447-7358	president@ncry.org
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Station Agent - Sunol	Donna Alexander	(510) 996-8420	station-agent@ncry.org
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Steam Hosteler Training	Jeff Schwab	(510) 734-6890	jeffs@levintterminal.com
Train master	Mark Miller	(510) 502-8521	mmiller510@aol.com
Volunteer Coordinator	Ed Best	(925) 998-8743	volunteers@ncry.org
Yardmaster	Gerry Feeney	(408) 739-9347	spb-gerry@comcast.net

## MEETINGS

Most General Meetings take place at Sunol Glen School in Sunol.

Meetings are held in January, March, May, June, July, and October, but can be subject to cancellation.

### Board of Directors Meeting

Saturday, January 11

3:00 pm

White House

Brightside

### Membership Meeting

Friday, Jan. 17th

7:30 PM

in Niles at the  
Essanay Theater

## CLUB CAR DEADLINE

The deadline for submitting articles and photos for next month's issue of The Club Car is the **20th of this month.**

Submitting articles is easy by e-mail in Word text format.

Send e-mail to:

**clubcar@ncry.org**

Digital photos may also be submitted by e-mail. Electronic images should be saved as PC format .jpg files with minimal compression (i.e., average to excellent quality). A text file with the photo number, description of photo and identifying the people in them is required.

The editor reserves the right to hold or edit material as necessary.

The Club Car is an official publication of the Pacific Locomotive Association, Inc., P.O. Box 515, Sunol, CA 94586-0515.

The Club Car is distributed monthly to members, sponsors and friends of the Pacific Locomotive Association.

The Pacific Locomotive Association, Inc. is an IRS Code 501(c)(3) non-profit charitable organization. Donations are tax deductible to the extent allowed by law.

The PLA's Federal Tax ID is 94-6130878, the State of California Tax ID is 0501445.

General Meetings are held on the 3rd Friday of January, May & July at 7:30 p.m. and the 3rd Saturday of March, June & October at 3:30 pm at the Sunol Glen School, two blocks east of the Depot on Main Street in Sunol, CA. Members, Sponsors & Guests are welcome.

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The Pacific Locomotive Association is a member of the Association of Tourist Railroads and Railway Museums. (ATRRM)



# NILES CANYON RAILWAY

## January Activities

January 4	1st Saturday	East Track Building, 8 am, (Brightside Yard)
January 11	2nd Saturday	Board of Directors Meeting, 3 pm (Brightside)
January 17	3rd Friday	General Meeting, 7:30 pm, (Essanay Theater, Niles)

## Membership Report

FLASH! The first general membership meeting of 2020 will be held at the Essanay Silent Film Museum in Niles on Friday, January 17th at 7:30 PM, with doors open at 6:45 PM to enjoy refreshments and the good company of fellow members. This membership meeting will be an important one to attend. In this issue of the Club Car, President Henry Baum will be reporting on a new organizational way forward that the BOD has been discussing for a few years and this meeting presents an opportunity for members to learn more detail. Either a film short or a presentation of current interest will follow the membership meeting.

When I ran for Membership Secretary, I emphasized that Voting Members should attempt to attend membership meetings. Member involvement and member input is essential to ensure member satisfaction with BOD representation.

The two Volunteer Appreciation Trains of 2019 were well attended. The tickets to ride these unique trains are earned based on the number of recorded volunteer hours regularly reported by an individual in a fiscal year. Of the individuals who turned in requests, a total of 873 tickets were distributed representing 21,325 volunteer hours. Much appreciation to those who attended. It

is the PLA's privilege to recognize you! The Membership Secretary extends an appreciative -Thank You! - to PLA volunteer of 45 years Steve Slabach. Steve, recognizing how busy fellow volunteer Steve Jones is during TOL season and beyond, contacted Steve Jones and volunteered to assume the responsibility of Membership Interest Form follow-up. This task has been successfully implemented by Steve Jones, who volunteered to do so shortly after the new Membership Secretary assumed office. This reinstituted project has been successful in helping to provide new volunteers to come out and 'learn the ropes' from the journeyman volunteers who have performed the essential tasks that have kept the NCRY moving forward over the decades. Kudos to Steve Jones and to Steve Slabach for stepping up and executing this task so critical to PLA/NCRY future success by helping to cultivate the next generation of volunteers.

Ten new members have joined the PLA since last month's report. These new members are: Hiroko Green, the wife of member Jim Green, the family of Christine, Sean, Chase, Katie, and Kevin Clinton, Michael Laccabue, Chris Carlson, Robin White, and Steve Miller. Some of our newest members came out and volunteered for the 2019 TOL!

This demonstrates the true spirit of being a PLA/NCRY member by joining the ranks of almost six decades of dedicated volunteers who have helped the PLA evolve from a fledgling club into one of the premier operating rail museums around. Ongoing membership support and volunteer participation make it all happen on the PLA/NCRY!

All the Best is Wished to You in the New Year -

Linda Stanley  
Membership Secretary

### January BOD Meeting 3 pm

Saturday, January 11  
in the White House

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### Membership Meeting Friday, January 17 Essanay Theater 7:30 pm

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### February BOD Meeting 10 am Saturday, February 8 in the White House



### E-COUPLING INFORMATION

Website: <http://www.ncry.org>

Email: To Join Members Email List, send an Email to: [info@ncry.org](mailto:info@ncry.org)

Twitter: [@toots4ncry](https://twitter.com/toots4ncry)

Facebook: <http://www.facebook.com/NilesCanyonRailway>

YouTube: <http://www.youtube.com/user/NilesCanyonRailRoad>



# NILES CANYON RAILWAY

## Along the Right of Way

For the most part, the month of December 2019 has been focused on the Train of Lights (TOL). Yes, that lighted wonder, that has brought many hundreds of our passengers into the Christmas Spirit, has been on the loose. This year, our passengers have provided many good comments on the way they perceive the train. All that work we put into this train is for them, our passengers. For Christmas Spirit, Dr. Christmas had his Christmas celebration when that test train went out.

This year, I got together with Santa before Thanksgiving, since he was on property with the herd. We shared a glass of Cider for that which we should be thankful. A bunch of turkeys were running around the railyard. They were thankful for Thanksgiving this year, at least for now being over for this year. Wow!, Santa had some down time before his busy schedule on the NCRy. Hope we made a good contract with him for this season since our trains are running nights when we usually stand down. Christmas Day falls on one of our operating days. Next year should be better, but Santa is meeting a lot of nice people on the NCRy. Ho, ho, ho! Merry Christmas!

The WP 713 is getting a new replacement generator. Installing the generator has become a big challenge. It seems that all parts of the new Generator are not the same as those on the old generator. Really! The recently installed new generator had to be removed so that some of the coupling components could be removed from the old generator and installed on the new generator. Getting this generator installed in Engine WP713 was once again accomplished under eagle eye of master locomotive mechanic, Matt Monson.

Well, the new generator was finally made compatible with the prime mover engine. The new generator was attached to the engine, and aligned for

hook up. This is far from being finished. Other parts are being prepped to be installed. When done, we'll have another road unit on line. Many thanks go out to Matt Monson, Stephen Barkkarie, Gerry Feeney, others, and the crane operator. Got to get his name and Company. He did us a great deed.

Lots of little track work has taken place on our right of way in the past month. Stephen Barkkarie has prepared ballast for future panel expansion at the East end. On my direction, I want ditching done within the next few

months. We need to make sure that the ditches flow storm water freely to culverts along the right of way. Class two railroad you know. Also, Stephen has done several corrections by adjustments to track and switches.

For new members, plan on BRAKEMAN training and certification class in FEBRUARY, late in the month. Brake-man Recertification Class in March. All going to take place. Stay tuned.

That's it for this month, I hope all have a great Christmas and good New Year. Stay tuned for dates. I want to thank each and every one of you who participated in the TOL which is the Flag Ship of NCRy funding. Merry Christmas and Hope to see you along the Right of Way.

**Dexter D. Day**  
General Manager



Photo by Stephen Barkkarie  
New generator going back into The WP 713 under the watchful eyes of Matt Monson contractor mechanic.



Photo by Stephen Barkkarie  
Selfie with Matt Monson and the new generator going in.

# NILES CANYON RAILWAY

## Treasurer's Report

### Happy Holidays are All Around Us –

Our flagship holiday train, the Train of Lights, is over halfway to a very festive and safe conclusion on December 30. The proceeds from this activity funds itself and over half of our other regular operations. If you have been a volunteer worker on any aspect of this TOL program you know how hard everyone works, and how good a time we all have setting the stage for our passengers' holiday family experience. Our riders seem to appreciate the twinkling and bright holiday decorations in every car, the cheerful atmosphere everywhere in the corridors, and the services we provide such as hot chocolate and cookies – all provided by the friendly personnel of the NCRy, who are all volunteers! We may be the only active, volunteer-run railroad in the country, so the fact that as volunteers we provide our customers a merry space for them to celebrate the Holidays in their own way puts them in awe of us.

While in the spirit of revelry and appreciation they often offer us cash tips or gratuities – particularly in the parlor and dome cars, the chartered cabooses, and even at our snack bar and gift shop. Though these tips are physically handed to us, while performing our regular duties on the train we are ambassadors of the NCRy and those tips are donations to the organization and not payments to individuals. PLA policy requires that all cash tips and gratuities be turned over to the railroad,

so thank that passenger but let them know they are donating to the NCRy. Then take that cash to the nearest tip container, label it with the source (i.e., "Caboose"), and place it in the container. You can feel good that your efforts, skills and attitude have resulted in a happy and grateful passenger.

In support of the PLA through formal donations, individuals made contributions totaling \$4,128 during November designated for the diesels KM9010 and WP713, the Steam Dept., our eastward track extension, facilities including Sunol Depot and the new Locomotive Shop, as well as our General Fund.

If you would like to support the Niles Canyon Railway you can donate to the General Fund, or you can designate the use of your donation for any specific project we have under way such as restoration of the new GN1242 Ranch Car which we would like to have in service this summer; or a new paint job for a deserving locomotive, passenger or freight car. For more information look in our Club Car newsletter, ask any uniformed volunteer, or send me an email.

**Pat Stratton, Treasurer**  
**treasurer@ncry.org**  
**650-888-8619**

## TOL thank you to all volunteers

Wow, it's January already; what a fast holiday season! The Train of Lights came in with a roar and is now gone for another few months, except now we have to undecorate the train cars.

We wish to thank all of our volunteers who contributed their time and talents for this big event. It really could not have happened without YOU helping. We had a super great outpouring of volunteers this year, and I'll bet you were happy I didn't send out so many emails begging for volunteers to sign up?

I hope everyone had as much fun as I did. It's so exciting to be a part of this special event, and see all of the people who come and ride, and some have been doing it for many years. I heard stories of how long families have been

coming to ride, first bringing their kids and now bringing their grandkids.

I loved seeing the train going through the canyon as I traveled from the Niles/Fremont Station to the Sunol Depot every night we operated. The colored lights were bright and popping, and to see it travel behind the trees and over the bridges was awesome. It even slowed traffic down a bit, since after the cars passed the train, the traffic sped up on Highway 84. We definitely had an effect on the commute traffic in the canyon.

Just one more big thank you to all of you for everything you do for the railroad; and now we can rest a little before moving on to our 2020 schedule.

**donna alexander**

## Want to Volunteer? Department Contacts are listed below:

**BRUSH CUTTING** - Clearing the RoW of bushes and trees - Steve Jones - fcocompost@aol.com  
**CAR MAINTENANCE** - Maintenance and repair - Tom Crawford - tom@thecrawfordfamily.net  
**COMMISSARY** - Food service on the trains - Bob Bradley - ncry.commissary@gmail.com  
**GIFT SHOP** - Work in the Sunol Gift Shop - Gail Hedberg - giftshop@ncry.org  
**MOW CREW - (WEDNESDAY)** - Work on track repair, etc. - Ron Thomas - rsthomas@sbcglobal.net  
**MOW CREW - (SATURDAY)** - Work on building track East. Michael Strider - mstrider67@gmail.com  
**SIGNALS** - Install/Maintain signal systems - Curt Hoppins - curt@ncrysignal.com  
**STATION - (NILES)** - Work parking, ticket sales, set-up, etc. - John Fenstermacher - johnnsherif@aol.com  
**STATION - (SUNOL)** - Work parking, ticket sales, set-up, etc. - Donna Alexander - station-agent@ncry.org  
**STEAM DEPARTMENT** - Work in all aspects of steam engines - Alan Siegwarth - sieggy667@hotmail.com  
**STEAM HOSTLER TRAINING** - Prepare a steam locomotive for service - Jeff Schwab - jeffs@levinterminal.com



## President's Report

Once again, I want to thank everyone who volunteered for our 2019 TOL operations, making it a huge success. I especially want to thank the first-time volunteers who dove right in and made a huge difference to our passengers' enjoyment. Without all our volunteers helping out, the TOL would not be the amazing experience it always is.

As I mentioned in last month's column, the first meeting of the Operations Committee will be scheduled for Saturday, January 11th at 10AM in the White House at Brightside. There have been many requests from many people who want to evaluate changing our operating schedule. Items to be discussed will take on the questions of: more special runs, more nighttime runs, no wine and beer trains, more wine and beer trains, shorter operating days, more steam days, less steam days. Change departure times? Should we go to all online ticket sales? Caboose charters. Whole train charters. And more. We have limited crews and need to address ALL the issues. If you are interested in serving on this committee, are familiar with our operations, and know our history and mission, drop me an email at [president@ncry.org](mailto:president@ncry.org).

A major change will be coming to the PLA on January 1st. At that time, the functions currently being performed by our General Manager Dexter Day will be turned over to an outside contractor of Professional Services, Western Management Services (WMS).

This is a difficult but necessary step in assuring that we continue to function at the high levels that have become expected of us. We are taking this step now to ensure we have a calm and simple transition and have the backups in place to resolve issues as they arise.

The PLA board has been looking for a General Manager for 3 years now and an Operations Manager since Jack Starr stepped down. I have spoken to members who would be competent to fill these positions, based on my knowledge of them as volunteers, and their

experience. I have even cast a net outside the organization speaking to people recommended to me. None of them were interested in doing it as volunteers, nor in doing it except as direct employees. Direct employees are inevitable, but we wish to postpone making that leap as long as possible. Direct employees fundamentally change the organization and change how we are perceived by the government and the non-profit community. We are proud of our all-volunteer status, and we justify saying that because we have no paid employees.

PLA has been contracting with outside Professional Services for many years now. We have contracted with Track Services Inc. to do our federally required Track Inspections for as long as I can remember. We contract with H&H to perform MOW services, and American Railroad Engineering to do our required annual Bridge Inspections. Adding WMS into the mix is not anything new. What is new is that this will be the first time an outside service will provide the General Manager duties for the PLA.

It is the Board's responsibility to regard the organization's best interests. That is why we are taking this exceptional step – and we have found a way to do it without having direct employees. Contracting with outside management services is extremely common in the railroad industry. Herzog Corporation, which started as a regional track maintenance contractor, has grown and expanded in a manner where they now manage the operations of many passenger railroads across the nation, notably Altamont Corridor Express and Caltrain (providing services to Amtrak). By contracting with a management service, the necessary tasks get done, without adding employees. While I did discuss the potential for handling this with Herzog (I can still hear them chuckling), it did seem that an in-house approach would be the best way to implement this.

After months of discussions with the Principal Owner, WMS was formed as an entity. So who is WMS? You will all be happy to know that the Principal Owner of WMS is our own Steve Barkkarie. Steve (along with his wife Bev) are long-time volunteers for the PLA. Steve also has been a Professional Services Contractor to the PLA through his business unit Western Gradall Rentals. Those of you who have worked with Steve over the years will agree with me in that he is one of the most talented, no-nonsense straight shooters we have volunteering at PLA. He gets things done. I cannot think of a department where Steve has not dived in and worked on projects wherever needed. He is well versed in what goes on at the NCRy, and I cannot think of a better person to take on this challenge. Of the many I talked to about making this change as we were formulating the plan, everyone agreed Steve was an excellent choice.

Some of the outside services we are contracting today, such as Track Inspections and AirBrake certifications will be turned over to WMS. Our contract with WMS outlines the tasks he will be expected to perform, the most significant of which will be the managing of the various departments. It will be great to have a dedicated full-time focal point to work with the Department heads to resolve issues as they arise, especially in the areas where cross-department activities are needed.

Dexter Day will continue to serve as Operations Manager until such time as we either find a volunteer willing to take on that responsibility or hire a professional service to perform this function. It may be practical to have Steve B trained to take on that role and add it to the WMS responsibilities. Of course, Dexter will be able to help Steve resolve any issues that may come up during the transition process.

I want to express my sincerest thanks to Dexter for sticking it out for as long

Continued on next page

# NILES CANYON RAILWAY

## ----- President's Report -----

Continued from previous page

as he has. I know he is looking forward to seeing this transition go smoothly. I know he has been instrumental in working out how best to handle this transition.

Our experienced volunteers continue to age. It is becoming more and more difficult to capture all the knowledge necessary to pass on to new volunteers. The Board sees that in the coming years we may also have to farm out additional services. We see the need for a Chief Mechanical Officer to manage all the maintenance activities on the rolling stock. This could be contracted out. We may need to turn management of commissary over to an outside service. Many museums use outside services to manage their Gift Shops and other museum programs. The Board is constantly trying to stay attuned to the needs of the organization and finding solutions before they become issues.

As we continue to grow, we will eventually have to make the leap to having at least one paid employee. The position of Executive Director is, by definition, a salaried employee of a non-profit. Typically, the ED is responsible for bringing in 2 to 3 times their salary into the organization treasury, and having one is a requirement for many grants. We just are not ready to make that leap.

As this is a new solution to the PLA, the contract with WMS requires quarterly reviews to ensure that the PLA's needs are being met, and that WMS is getting the support they need to do their job. We hope you will give us all of your support to make this transition a success.

As always, if you would like to discuss any topic in further detail, please contact me by phone at 925.447.7358 or by email at [president@ncry.org](mailto:president@ncry.org).

**Respectfully submitted**  
**Henry Baum**



Santa and Mrs. Claus.

*Photo by Bob Pratt*



# NILES CANYON RAILWAY

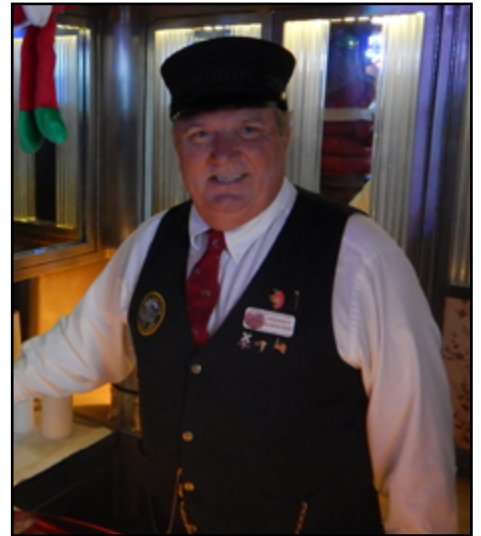
## TOL Volunteers enjoying working and entertaining

Continued from Page 1

low duties for 4 evenings. Even more special, Nancy Harden joined him one night as Mrs Claus.

We really do enjoy the fruits of our January through mid-November labor as we glide along the best maintained right of way of any Museum/Tourist railroad in California.

**Bob Pratt**





# NILES CANYON RAILWAY

## TOL Volunteers enjoying working and entertaining



Photos on Pages 8, 9 & 10  
by Bob Pratt



# NILES CANYON RAILWAY

## TOL Volunteers enjoying working and entertaining



## ATTENTION VOLUNTEERS BRAKEMAN TRAINING

For those of you who always wanted to  
work in the crew aboard the train,  
there will be a

### BRAKEMAN TRAINING CLASS

for two days on

Feb 22-23, 2020

It will be held at

Brightside in the White House

from 9am to 4pm

Wear boots and

bring something to take notes with.

We will teach you how to work with trains  
and do the duties of the brakeman.

What is required is that you are in good  
physical shape, can do substantial walking,  
some lifting and that you are ready to learn  
the basics of railroading.

Time will be spent in class learning the  
rules and basics of safety on the railroad.

There will also be time spent in the yard  
learning how to safely move cars, apply  
brakes, throw switches, signal  
the engineers, and get a feel for  
how a railroad works.

This is an exciting opportunity to get  
involved in your railroad, and to pursue  
hands on activity of something many of  
you have always dreamed about!





# NILES CANYON RAILWAY

## TOL crew enjoying dinner between runs



*Photos by Zonker Harris*

Thank you, Mrs Best, for the stew tonight (and Donna Alexander for the mints for dessert)! The All Day Lunch makes for a cozy dinner on the Train of Lights between revenue runs.



# NILES CANYON RAILWAY

## ----- Bushwackers Report -----

### December Brush Cutting

Ahhh HA! Fooled you. There is no regularly scheduled Brush Cutting Day in December.

I remember an incident, maybe 16 years ago or so, where the Maintenance of Way Gang was working on the main line on a Saturday when the Train of Lights was running. We were rolling Westward about MP-30.25 when the engine on "The Pumpkin" (later painted yellow and renamed "Big Bird") failed. We were headed to the Niles Wye where we planned to pull onto the South Leg and allow the train to pass going West into Niles, then pass us again heading East before we followed to return to Brightside. There we were, dead in the water with the Train due to overtake us in about 30 minutes.

Fortunately, member Peter Stewart was in our ranks that day. Peter was a mechanic for CalTrans in San Jose. He determined that something in the distributor had failed. He fashioned a shim from the aluminum foil in a cigarette pack and temporarily fixed the problem long enough for us to limp to Niles to let the train pass, and to get us safely back to Brightside. Ever since that day, we have vowed not to do anything in the way of brush cutting or MOW on a Train of Lights operating day. After that withdrawal from our Karma account, we figured our good Karma was pretty much exhausted for life. In December, we turn our attention away from tree trimming and toward guiding our Niles TOL passengers to appropriate parking spaces. Success in this endeavor is critical to prevent traffic coming to our parking lot from backing up onto Mission Blvd. and causing a rear end accident. We park from 157 to 193 cars in the 1-1/2 to 2 hours before the train leaves. The lot in Niles is about 3/8-mile long and most of it is less than 50 feet wide. It is possible to park vehicles in 7 different spots at the same time. At our peak, we will

park a car about every 12 seconds. That's faster than launching jets off of a Navy aircraft carrier.

This year, we have been fortunate to have a great group of experienced parking lot volunteers and a fresh crop of new volunteers. It takes 6 people to staff the Niles parking lot on any given afternoon. At the time of this writing, the following members have rotated in and out of our crew: (in alphabetical order), Bob Bailey, Ray Crist, Rhonda Dijeau, Glenn Fountain, Pat Hafey, Brian Hitchcock, Steve Miller, Dan Mills,

Sally Liska Mills, Ken Southwick, Linda Stanley, Wayne Stoddard, Mark Whitman, and yours truly. Mark Whitman would finish his duty in Niles then roll up to Sunol to help control traffic in that lot. We are the first and last faces our passengers see during their TOL adventure. My thanks and deep appreciation for your work and professionalism to all who have served in this capacity. Remember, always back in. It makes it safer, easier and faster to leave. All those fire trucks can't be wrong.

**Steve Jones**



Warren Haack watching the train EB between Dresser and Farwell bridges.

*Photo by Zonker Harris*



# NILES CANYON RAILWAY

## ----- Saturday MoW Report -----



*Photo by Matt Petach*

**ABOVE:** Maintenance-of-way train headed East near current end of track. Saturday, December 7th.



*Photo by Matt Petach*

**LEFT:** Steve Hill riding Big Bird in MOW train in the rain at Verona contemplating next move. Saturday, December 7th.





### Thermite Welding of Bond Wires

The Signal Department, the members of which are affectionately known as the Signaleros, performs tasks that include monthly signal inspections and signal repairs and improvements, including sometimes installing bond wires using thermite welding (photo). The bond wire is placed in the bottom of a thermite welding crucible, one end pressing against the outside of one rail and the other end against the outside of the adjoining rail, and above each end of the wire are containers holding powder that is ignited so that it melts and flows over the ends of the wire and welds it to the outside of the rail.

For a slow-motion video of a thermite weld, visit the Signal department web site at <http://www.ncrysignal.com/>, under Learning Center, Videos.

For those of you who don't know about thermite welding, below is a brief description of why they are needed.

When one of our trains approaches a crossing, the bells and lights start to work and the arms come down (if the crossing has arms), and after the train passes through, the lights, bells, and arms turn off. Some of our crossings are just "island" crossings, like Sunol's Kilcare Crossing, meaning that the crossing is activated only when the train comes to the crossing, whereas other crossings, like Brightside Crossing, have an east approach and a west approach in addition to the island, so the signals activate up to ¼ mile before the train reaches the crossing and go off when the train leaves the island.

To create a crossing with, for example, an east approach, west approach, and island, the track has to be electrically partitioned into those three sections. That is, all three of the partitions have 1-1/2 volts applied across the rails (north rail to south rail), and when a train enters a partitioned section the axles on the train short the 1-1/2 volts and this causes the relays in the signal cabinet to activate the crossing signals.



*Photo by James Stewart*

**Logan Rubasky, Joe Romani, and Curt Hoppins setting off a thermite weld.**

The relays "see" which section the train is in and operate the signals as required. An electrically isolated section is created by inserting insulators between the ends of the rails (on both the north rail and the south rail).

Within each electrically isolated section, FRA rules require bonding wires, to assure a good electrical connection along the rails within a section, to make sure an entire section has a solid consistent electrical connection; if it didn't, the signals might go off and on and/or confuse the relays. (We are often

asked why the signals sometimes don't work properly for maintenance trains; this is because maintenance trains often do not have a good short through their axles.)

In general, the times that bonding is required include initial installation of a crossing (unless the crossing is just an island); or when someone forgets to remove a skate under a train wheel and the train pushes the skate over a bond wire, disconnecting it; or when a bond wire just wears out; or when the length of an approach is changed.

At our monthly inspections, we check proper operation of all of our six crossings.

Modern railroads don't need bonding wires because they use continuous welded rail, requiring fewer rail joints. The crossings are computer controlled and the position of the train is known (provided by the axles on the train).

**Jim Stewart**





# NILES CANYON RAILWAY

## ----- Volunteer Report -----

By Ed Best

The following is a list of the people who helped run your railroad in November. Please print your name clearly on all sign in sheets so it can be read. If you find that your name is misspelled, please inform me of the correct spelling. You can also send hours by e-mail to [ncryvolunteerhours@gmail.com](mailto:ncryvolunteerhours@gmail.com).

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Jim Evans  
Linda Stanley  
Pat Stratton  
Dexter Day  
Jim Stewart  
Kent Hedberg  
Gail Hedberg  
Ed Best  
Jackie Vlasak  
Joe Scardino  
Mark Miller  
Rich Alexander

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Doug Vanderlee  
Jim McDaniel  
Steve Barkkarie

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Randy Johnston  
Steve Coon

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George Turner  
Jim Stewart  
Joe Romani  
Logan Rubasky  
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### MEETINGS

Bob Bradley

### MEETINGS

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Dexter Day  
Donna Alexander  
Doug Vanderlee  
Gail Hedberg  
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Donna Alexander  
Patrice Warren  
Paul Veltman  
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Dee Murphy  
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*Photo by Chris Hauf*

**#7 rolls over Farwell Bridge during one of the training runs with crews from the Roots of Motive Power.**