



# THE CLUB CAR



Bulletin 685

Pacific Locomotive Association, Inc.

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

September 2020

## The Heavy Hauler is Complete!



*Photo by Mike Strider*

Forklift is loaded on the heavy hauler.

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I seriously started working on the Heavy Hauler about two years ago when Steve Barkkarie used the Yard Dog to back the U.S. Army Trailer onto the M.O.W. track with the Burro Base, but the project actually started about 12 years ago. I orchestrated a deal to get the Burro Model 40 we have now from a railroad equipment dealer in Chico, CA. The P.L.A. had to take two Burro Model 40's the dealer owned, a running Burro that M.O.W. uses and a "spare parts Burro" that became the end of the Heavy

Hauler. I had promised Henry Baum, who helped on the deal, that I would one day dismantle the "spare parts Burro". Years passed, one day Steve Barkkarie and I saw a Union Pacific Railroad Excavator on a self-propelled low-level transport piece of equipment in Sunol, CA. We both thought that this piece of equipment was just perfect for what the Niles Canyon Railway needed for ditching. I looked up the manufacturer on-line and saw the piece listed

**Continued on Page 8**

**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

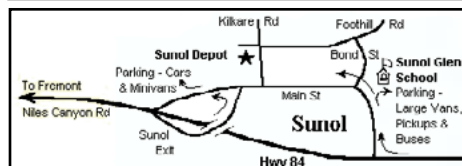
### NILES STATION

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### SUNOL STATION

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## 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

September 12

2:15 pm

=== NEW TIME ===

teleconferencing service

### Membership Meeting

**NO MEETING  
SCHEDULED**

## CLUB CAR RULES

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 **WORD** 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.

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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

## ===== September Activities =====

September 12	2nd Saturday	Board of Directors Meeting, 2:15 pm (Teleconference)
September 12	2nd Saturday	Special Train, 4:00 pm and 7:00 pm, Sunol
September 13	2nd Sunday	Special Train, 10:30 am and 1:30 pm, Sunol
September 19	3rd Saturday	Special Train, 4:00 pm and 7:00 pm, Sunol
September 20	3rd Sunday	Special Train, 10:30 am and 1:30 pm, Sunol
September 26	4th Saturday	Brush Cutting, 7:30 am (Brightside) Steve Jones

**ALL ACTIVITIES SUBJECT TO CHANGE OR CANCELLATION!**

## Brush Cutting Report

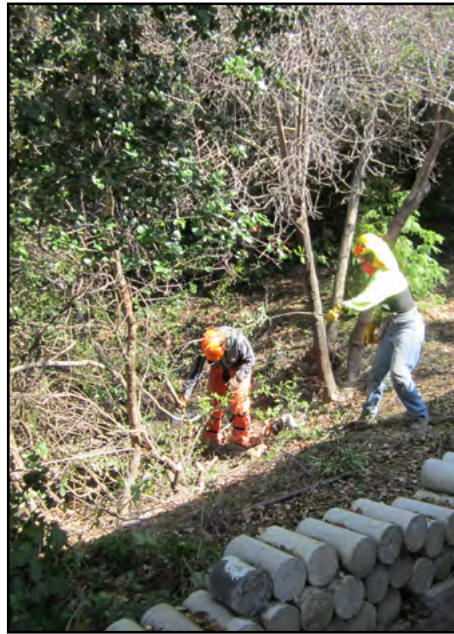
**Steve Jones - Sawdust Manager**

The regular 4th Saturday Brush Cutting Work Day for July was canceled. Covid-19 infections in Alameda County were accelerating at that time, so we decided not to call out our volunteers to cut brush until conditions improve.

Meanwhile, the chainsaw fairies accomplished several solo projects in the comparative isolation of the Niles Wye. The lower branches of the Redwood trees that Henry Luna arranged to have planted alongside the South leg of the wye have been lifted 4 to 6 feet in compliance with the State Fire Marshal's recommendations to eliminate "Fire Ladders" and hiding places for miscreants. The "Niles Cactus Garden" is way out of control and is in the process of being cut way back.

We have received reports that the Right-of-Way is sufficiently clear of encroaching brush to permit trains to operate. We have taken advantage of this situation to concentrate on some "recreational brush cutting" around Brightside. The Marion Harvey Memo-

rial Redwood Tree at the East end of the Signal Yard has been trimmed up,



*Photo by Matt Petach*

**"Steve Jones and Dee Murphy cutting growth on the Stormwater Drainage Pond".**

and the Pine tree overhanging the back porch at the White House has been thinned. The dense population of trees growing on the embankment East of the Track Shed has been thinned, with a little more work yet to be completed. The brush covering the slopes of the Yard Stormwater Drainage Settling Pond has been cleared about 1/2 of the way around. My thanks to Doug Vanderlee, Dee Murphy, Ken Southwick and Matt Petach for their assistance in slash hauling and chipping.

The next scheduled "4th Saturday" Brush Cutting Day will be September 26th. At this writing, we are hopeful that infection rates in Alameda County will continue to decline and we can once again feel more comfortable about donning our face coverings and venturing out into our beautiful canyon and trim back the vegetation. Meanwhile, stay safe.

Arborerros! Aaaaawwwaaaaaayyyyyyy!  
**Steve Jones**



### 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

## President's Message

Henry Baum - President

Today's "new normal": a week of 100+ degree heat, lightning-caused wildfires around Sunol, horrific air quality, smoke and haze, and still under Stay-at-Home orders and limited re-openings due to Covid-19.

Now, in answer to the question "wad-dya mean no TOL this year?" The PLA had to make tough decisions. Taking into account the state of the pandemic in California and Alameda County and the limited progress made in improving the situation overall, the decision was made to cancel Train of Lights for the 2020 season. This was not a decision taken lightly, but based on the facts at hand, it was the best decision we could make.

The Train of Lights is our primary fund raiser for the year and the monies it brings in fuel the many restoration projects we have underway: Restoring the Clover Valley #4 and the Robert Dollar #3. Bringing the Skookum on property. Acquiring the Ranch car. These are all recent projects funded with TOL proceeds. TOL brings in far more money than everything else combined. We all see that. But here in the 'new normal' that alone is not enough. The TOL has grown into a behemoth. This is the reason it brings in all that revenue. It requires thousands of man-hours to decorate, operate and undecorate each year. The volunteers who do the majority of this work are also the people most at risk from exposure to Covid-19. While we can do a pretty good job of protecting our volunteers while working in the yard, the crews working the trains would be greatly at risk. Then, as our sales point out, folks really like the product we have come to offer. Covid-19 means we cannot offer that product.

We would need to greatly reduce our passenger count to allow social distancing. The TOL is a 'happening' kind of event, where the passengers interact with the families around them, a wonderful part of the holiday season.

We would actively have to discourage that, which is no fun for anyone. The TOL would probably still sell out, even faster than before but that translates into an even greater number of disappointed ticket-buyers. Not a good business model. Santa would not be able to pass through the train. We don't believe our guests want to interact with Santa through a plexiglass barrier. No fun for anyone. And how to do it in a manner that supports Social Distancing. We don't think we can safely provide the commissary products we have had in the past. No Hot Cocoa. No Hot Cider. No bags of cookies. Then there is the whole bathroom situation. We all know what that bottleneck becomes. Sanitizing. Social Distancing. We also had to take into consideration how difficult and disheartening it would be to put in all the effort to put together a less-than-stellar TOL experience only to have the entire program shut down due to a virus resurgence. I can't imagine having to deal with that.

While solutions to all of these issues are possible, it really comes down to the fact that whatever we do, it just won't be the TOL our passengers expect, or that we want to present to them. The decision was made to put on our "big boy pants" and postpone the TOL. This way all of our passengers will be disappointed equally. Our members and volunteers will also not get their trains, but their ability to volunteer has also suffered greatly due to Covid-19.

So where is the silver lining in all this? We will not be able to generate the revenues we have in the past, but we also will not generate the expenses the TOL requires. Thanks to last year's highly successful TOL season, and the pandemic slowing down our expenditures, we are in pretty good shape financially going into next year. The TOL money is paying our significant monthly bills. Once we reopen, the drain on our finances will lessen. We have also been able to minimize expenses since we

aren't wearing anything out or requiring extra maintenance. Some maintenance projects that have been postponed for years have been completed. We will save the thousands of man-hours of labor TOL requires, and hopefully those will go toward other projects that would benefit from this additional pool of manpower.

After months of trying to figure out where we are in this whole 'new normal' we have finally gotten to the point where we can begin to reopen, begin running trains and begin generating revenue. Working within the requirements of Alameda County, and following guidelines generated by the State of California and the Heritage Rail Alliance (the industry organization to which we belong), we have come up with a 'Site-Specific Procedure' that allows us to operate within the County's approval. All members should have received a copy of this procedure, so I won't recap it here. In general, we will run trains on a pre-sold ticket basis, with train capacities set to allow safe operation with appropriate social distancing. We ran one of two 'test trains' (second was cancelled due to smoke) in August to hone our process, and the first public operations should be underway about the time you receive this.

Make no mistake about it. We are running these trains to bring in revenue. Doing so will also allow us to fulfill our mission statement, keep our crews and equipment in top notch working order, and fulfill our commitments to the community at large, but, just like TOL, we are doing it to generate revenue with as little risk to our precious volunteers.

By-Laws Committee is still working on a proposal. SP1744 continues its path to running on the NCRy. Brightside is shaping up with the beginnings of the improvements brought on by having water on property. The PLA is going strong and doing well.

It is still vitally important that you notify Ed Best at [volunteers@ncry.org](mailto:volunteers@ncry.org) to



## President's Message

**Henry Baum - President**

record your hours worked, what you worked on, and where you were working. This will allow us to do any necessary contact tracing should the need arise. Some volunteers are not doing

that, and that is a problem for the organization if we are called to show our records.

As always, if you would like to discuss any topic in further detail, please con-

tact me by phone at 925.447.7358 or by email at [president@ncry.org](mailto:president@ncry.org).

Respectfully submitted  
**Henry Baum**

## Membership Report

**Linda Stanley - Membership Secretary**

Looking back at reports by the Membership Secretary written one year ago portray a vastly different world than the one the PLA/NCRY currently finds itself. Membership, which was soaring on March 15th 2020 when NCry operations were shuttered, is now below 1000 members, still good but shy of where we were. The Membership Secretary expresses appreciation for those who have been able to maintain their memberships, or to even increase their commitment by becoming a LIFE member, through this difficult time for the PLA and our greater community. It is hoped that those who could not -for whatever the reason- will find their way back to Niles Canyon when a return to a resemblance of normalcy occurs once again.

All that said, the PLA would like to welcome Ann Dowling, Al Le-Fevre, Y Rao and Peter Savoy as new members. Your confidence in the future of the PLA/NCry is well-placed for this extraordinary all-volunteer non-profit has survived -and found ways to thrive - through many ups and downs over its almost six decades. All members are encouraged to monitor the website at [ncry.org](http://ncry.org) to learn of the current news affecting passenger operations and special trains that may be allowed.

One hope for the next year is to be permitted by Alameda County to hold membership meetings that include both in-person and teleconference access. The 'social' that proceeded the last few in-person meetings before

the Covid shutdown, along with great presentations given by knowledgeable members, had helped to increase the attendance numbers that match what is documented at current teleconferences. Many members enjoyed the complimentary food and drink and this along with the company of their fellow members had turned the membership meetings into an event for which to look forward. It is important to return to this if and when it can be done safely for all concerned. Ideas to this end are encouraged and the Membership Secretary welcomes your suggestions.

August saw the pandemic-delayed new voting member secret ballot vote -that affects four members/volunteers -mailed to the Voting Members who attended the July membership teleconference. The results of this vote will be announced at the September Board of Directors meeting. In addition, and announced at the August BOD, member-in-good-standing Kurt Olsen has expressed his interest in becoming a Voting Member and is announced here as well as the second step in the process. There is no membership meeting normally held in September with the next scheduled for October. If prevented from an in-person meeting, Kurt's vote may take place via mail if need calls for it. Included in amendments currently being examined by By-law Committee are proposals involved members want a say in and all means must be employed to allow these members the chance to participate if possi-

ble.

Thinking of estate planning? I currently am doing so and encourage those members who have spent a large part of their lives supporting the PLA/NCry to consider this unique non-profit in your future estate plans. Meanwhile,

**Staying Safe – and Looking Ahead**  
**Linda Stanley**



*Photo by Chris Hauf*

**Skookum #7 heads to Sunol light on Saturday, August 15th to take on water before returning to Brightside yard to couple to one of first test trains run since the COVID shutdown.**

# NILES CANYON RAILWAY

## Along the Right of Way

Stephen Barkkarie - General Manager

Time keeps rolling on. Here we are in August, almost 6 months since the war on COVID began and we have not one, but two, test trains under our belts. Our procedures work well, our ambassadors do a great job and the rolling stock is in good order. Our crews have blown off the dust and just like riding a bike, you don't forget how to Railroad.

A matter of deep importance in Brightside, namely the well-project, has taken another step forward. Water is now pumped into the blue tank at the top of the hill and distributed to the whole yard. There is even trackside water at the East Yard Xing (although cool and clear, the water is still non-potable until tested, so don't fill "POTABLE" tanks on any Kitchen car; 6719, ADL, Diner, etc.). Fortunately, I have it on good authority that our water is fully compatible with Charmin, Cottonelle, Quilted Northern and all other major brands.....Hooray!

Brake work at Brightside moves forward as a small group of us tackled the COTS service on the SP2101. It was last inspected in November of 2011 and according to Jim Green's records is the next car in need of attention. Kurt Olsen, Matt Petach, Dee Murphy and yours truly spent several hours going through each step in the procedure, discussing techniques, performing tasks and tracing workings of the rigging under the car. Everyone was able to participate in the steps required to inspect clean and lube the brake cylinder. One last procedure before stenciling the car will be to run another Single Car Test as required any time you work on the air brake system. We would have gone through that phase the same day but I received an alert about the Sunol fire evacuation and had to call the workday early. I consider this a very successful first step into a renewed in-house brake program. I am really impressed with the talent of our members and have every confidence we can tackle the other systems like service valves and rigging.



Matt Petach lubricating the brake cylinder.

Photo by Stephen Barkkarie

Next stop after that will be frames, wheels, axles and brake shoes. If you ever wondered what the underside of a railcar looks like, without finding out the hard way, you are welcome to come on out and join us.

One more milestone reached this



month, Doug Vanderlee completed the construction of the Heavy Hauler Build. Doug, Mike Strider, Bob Bradley and I hooked it up to the Car Mover, pulled the Heavy Hauler out to Blake's Palace Xing and loaded the Case Forklift. It worked perfectly, what an awesome sight. I love it when a plan comes together. In other MOW News, joint lubing and tamping has begun again, spot spraying for pesky weeds goes on, Fire Extinguishers are serviced (Thank goodness because we had several fires in our area, not on ROW, but one which nearly had Kilkare Rd evacuated), over 50 brake hoses have been upgraded (Thanks Dee, Matt and Pat. Also John Z.), the Battle of the Brush continues (Blake's Pond looks great, Thanks Steve Jones) and track has been checked (only a handful of bolts



# NILES CANYON RAILWAY

## Along the Right of Way

**Stephen Barkkarie - General Manager**

found broken and replaced). We are ready for some "Fall" train runs. Now there's a new concept, Trains in October....Can you say Halloween Train? Hey, we're already wearing masks right?

During the Operations Meeting in July we were looking for a way to avoid glove-handing our passengers up and down a vestibule. A mobile stairway was one idea to allow people to self-board safely. Although cost and availability were uncertain, the wheels in my head started turning. During the yard clean-up, we found all manner of oddities in the weeds. Here is a part of a stair, there are some big casters and over there is a piece of handrail. Like puzzle pieces things started to fit together. Before long I had a plan. The result is the rolling stair seen in the photo. Even in high-heels, long gowns and carrying a beverage, our most fetching test subjects were able to board the "Park Car" with little trouble. Likewise, de-boarding was smooth and efficient. This should give us another option for providing a safe and comfortable boarding experience for our passengers.

Mike Strider, Doug Vanderlee and I have stacked panels at East E.O.T. in preparation for laying track at MP39 and a plan to complete the Niles WYE is in the works for the near future. These are both areas we can work on Saturdays while trains are operating.

Since we suspended our TOL efforts this year, I would like to join Dennis Mann in encouraging folks to take advantage of the time to kick start a restoration. This is a rare opportunity. Come on out to Brightside. We're getting pretty good at working safely and there is a lot to do. See you there.

**Stephen Barkkarie**

*Photos by Stephen Barkkarie*

Upper photo:

**The bride and groom detrain-  
ing.**

Lower photo:

**John Sutkus and Henry Baum  
help passengers from train.**





# NILES CANYON RAILWAY

## The Heavy Hauler is Complete!

### Continued from Page 1

for around \$287,000. Ouch! A lot of us talked about the piece and alternatives. Dexter Day had mentioned that Cal Train had a piece very similar in the Cal Train Yard in San Francisco, CA. I went to investigate and take pictures. I contacted and then went over to Cal Train Headquarters to ask about their self-propelled low-level transport, but they said they still use the piece. I began measuring the "spare parts" Burro base and weight capacity. I came across an Ag Magazine that had Central Valley Farm and other equipment dealers. One ad caught my attention for a used U.S. Army Tank Transport goose neck trailer. After traveling down to the dealer in Madera, CA and taking some measurements of the trailer, this piece would become the other end of the Heavy Hauler.

The Burro Base had a Gross Weight capacity of 72,367 lbs. and the U.S. Army Trailer (Built 7-65 Model M 172 A1) had a capacity of 60,000 Lbs. and 9'6" wide. The P.L.A. had an old piece of M.O.W. equipment that was going to be dismantled for scrap that had two heavy duty axles (pillow blocks rated at 17,400 lbs. each = Total 69,600 Lbs.) to replace the rubber tires on the trailer.

Steve Barkkarie drew up some plans for a set of walker beams that the four pillow blocks (two axles) would mount to from the old M.O.W. piece of equipment. I measured the clearances and made three separate plywood models of the walker beams to test fit. Now came time for Melrose in San Jose, CA to fabricate the two walker beams. Some of the left over 3/4" plate steel I made into a central cover plate on the Burro Base with 16 qty. 1" holes drilled. The old axle which was mounted to the trailer was worn out. Columbia Machine in Oakland, CA, made a new main axle. They also made two large spacer blocks that fit between the walker beams and the main axle ends. Melrose machined two new bushings for the walker beam center bearing using material from Specialty Pipe and



Photo by Douglas Vanderlee

Walker beam. (Note: Beam is positioned up side down)



Photo by Douglas Vanderlee

Hand brake pulley wheel.



# NILES CANYON RAILWAY

## The Heavy Hauler is Complete!

Tube in Mineral Ridge, OH. They also made two large brass spacers that fit between the walker beams and main axle ends. The two coupler pockets on the Burro Base both had shattered cushion springs. I was able to get a used Semi-Truck fifth wheel mount to place in the center of the Burro Base for the U.S. Army Trailer to couple into from Specialty Truck Parts in San Jose, CA. I had Melrose again bend two 3'X 3' X 1/2" steel plates for covering the openings of the former rubber tire wheel wells. Channel Lumber in Richmond, CA was able to mill the Douglas Fir needed for a new deck (2" Tall X 7



*Photo by Douglas Vanderlee*

**Old and new coupler pocket springs.**

3/4" Wide X 22' Long) and 184 holes drilled for bolts to fasten down the wood to the trailer frame. Both the trailer and Burro Base have been stripped, cleaned and a new coat of John Deere Yellow paint applied. I cut an old 20 foot "I" beam into two pieces to make two 9' ramps for the end of the trailer. I also made a detachable mount for a hydraulic hoist to lift the ramps on and off the trailer end.

The first parts I started to get replaced on the project and last parts to go on the Heavy Hauler were the two Hand Brake chain pulley wheels. The two parts were on the "spare parts" Burro when it arrived in the Brightside yard, but had since walked off. I investigated where to find used replacement parts or have new ones fabricated. I traced some original parts to a Burro Model 40 up in Willits, CA at Roots of Motive Power. They were kind enough to let me borrow one to have a fabricator duplicate. Hawks CNC in Oakland, CA had a 5-axis CNC machine that did the job.

Last Thursday August 6, Steve Barkkarie and I used the Yard Dog to pull the Heavy Hauler out from the back of the M.O.W. line of equipment to the road crossing in front of Blake's Palace. We tested the hand brake, air brake and put the ramps down to load the 8,000 lb. Case Forklift onto the Heavy Hauler. I want to thank Rich Alexander, Ryan Wood, Howard Wise, Chris Campi and others for their help on the project. A special thanks to Steve Barkkarie for all the help to make this piece of M.O.W. equipment happen. He helped design the walker beams, weld some ramp pieces, torch cut the bearing ring from the Burro Base and weld pieces together for the detachable Hydraulic Hoist base. I hope the Heavy Hauler will provide many years of service hauling Forklifts, Man Lifts, GradAll's, Backhoes and supplies along the right-of-way.

**Douglas Vanderlee**



*Photo by Douglas Vanderlee*

**Plywood template of Walker beams.**



*Photo by Douglas Vanderlee*

**Original Burro model #40 and U.S. Army tank transport trailer.**



# NILES CANYON RAILWAY

## Tales of the Past

Dexter D. Day - Operations Manager

This month's tale:  
**"THE BERM"**

In 1941 with the attack on Pearl Harbor and the U.S. entrance into the war, Rear Admiral Ben Moreell, Chief of the Navy's Bureau of Yards and Docks, was given the go-ahead to establish Naval Construction Battalions (CB). That designation was changed to "Seabees". The first battalions were recruited from the civilian construction trades and were placed under the leadership of the Navy's Civil Engineer Corp. Because of the emphasis on experience and skill rather than on physical standards, the average age of Seabees during the early days of the war was 37. In the Pacific, where most of the construction work was needed, the Seabees landed soon after the Marines, and built major airstrips, bridges, roads, docks, warehouses, hospitals, gasoline storage tanks and housing. Yes! The Seabees were (and are) for real. Their slogan; "We Build, We Fight".

This is where this tale begins. It was 1986 and the rail had been removed from the right-of-way by the Southern Pacific Railroad. We decided to make the old Kilite facility on Niles Canyon Road our new home. There were large holding ponds on one side, and the mainline right-of-way torn up on the other. We knew how the Pilgrims felt after landing on the shores of their new world. They had to make it through their first winter which they barely did. We just hoped we would have a chance to rebuild this railroad. All we had was what we brought with us from Castro Point.

We also had another problem. There was a very large earthen berm situated on each side of the Tipple (aggregate storage silos). The berm was there to protect Highway 84 from an over flow of the ponds or a breach from a man-made lake up at FIRMA Company which was directly above our facility.



Photo by Ed Ryan

In the beginning, this was Brightside. The road that the Seabees graded, Blake's palace being rebuilt and the compound with three big holes to be filled.



Photos from: History link 101

It wouldn't be the Seabees if you didn't have some action shots.

The berm was too much for us to handle with the equipment we had. Also, at that time, we didn't have extra money laying around to have a construction company remove the berm. We were looking at a lot of dirt. The berm had to be about 8 Ft. high and 20 Ft. wide and very long. We had to get it out of there before we could ever think about building any track.

Mike McQuaid was the President and Peter Schulze was the GM. Mike came up with a solid solution to the problem. We would contact the Seabees out at Camp Parks. Since there weren't too many air fields to build on lonely Pacific

islands, and they had to maintain training status, they would perform work for Non-Profit groups who requested the battalion's help. On our request, we had to describe what work was needed to be done and reason we needed their help. We wrote up our request and sent pictures, then we just had to wait it out.

One day in October, 1986, we received a phone call from the Chief Petty officer of the 302nd Regiment of the Naval Construction Battalions. They would like to look over the project and conduct a training program the following Saturday. This is what we had been waiting to hear. Chief Petty Officer Ken



# NILES CANYON RAILWAY

## Tales of the Past

**Dexter D. Day - Operations Manager**

Johnson came out and looked over the required work to be done. After seeing what was needed, he said this would be good training for the 9 members of "A Company". We were required to provide a hot lunch for the Seabees.

Saturday came along and the Seabees landed at Brightside. They brought in heavy dirt moving equipment along with a compactor, dump truck, and grader. A road was graded between the driveway and the Tipple and compacted. Tree branches were removed and hauled off with Craig Wilson helping. The big berm on the East side of the Tipple was removed and hauled in dump trucks and dumped in one of the big holes. The Chief let us take the driver down to Shinn St. to pick up the Hough front end loader. Tim Flippo loaded the Hough loader onto the truck and it was brought back to Brightside and unloaded.

It was lunch time. Jeff, Kim and Janet Williams prepared the lunch. It was served and the Seabees really liked it. After lunch, work re-commenced. The Chief had one of the drivers go back to Camp Parks to get the water truck so we could knock down some of this dust. The driver headed out of Brightside and back to Camp Parks.

After arriving at Camp Parks, the driver filled the water truck and started back to Brightside. On the way out of Camp Parks, the Lieutenant stopped the wa-

ter truck. (If you were there, this is what you might have heard). He asked the driver where he was going with the water truck. The driver told him Niles Canyon Railway. The Lieutenant started to get a little excited. "You were supposed to be at Niles Station on Mission Blvd. making a parking lot". The driver replied, "Sir! We

are at Niles Canyon Railway moving a lot of dirt and leveling." The Lieutenant went with driver back to Brightside. After arriving at Brightside, the Lieutenant and the Chief were seen having a few words with a lot of pointing going on. It seemed that the Lieutenant had the request from the Niles Depot on Mission Blvd. project on his desk, and the Chief had the request that we sent in sitting on his desk for Niles Canyon Railway. The Chief thought Niles Station was part of Niles Canyon Railway. Also, the scope of work was similar but in a larger scale. The Lieutenant told the Chief to pack up and get down to Niles Depot. The water truck made a pass down road to knock down the dust. The big loader was loaded onto its truck and headed down the canyon. At Farwell Bridge, they had to stop short of the bridge to let some air out of the tires so the loader would not hit the bridge.

The next day, The Niles Depot on Mission got its parking lot dug out, smoothed, and compacted. Having the Navy Seabees helping out on the Niles Canyon Railway was a great boost for us getting a rail yard started so we could get some more equipment brought in.



*Photos from: History link 101*

**The Seabees in action cutting a road.**



*Photo by Brian Wise*

**Tipple with track removed and the dirt berm East of Tipple at Brightside.**

For the short time they were there, the Seabees did a great job for us and left us in good shape so we could handle it from there.

With that said, ANOTHER TALE ENDS.

(Remember, this is a Tale, not a Documentary. The story is true).

**Dexter Day**



*Photo by Dexter Day of insignia*

**USN-Seabees insignia.**

# NILES CANYON RAILWAY

## Treasurer's Report

Pat Stratton - Treasurer

The bad news. During July the PLA earned \$0 revenue from Operations. The last operating revenue we had was in early March. So, it was the fourth month of \$0 operating revenue. August will be better if our two "Covid-19 practice runs", previously scheduled charters for this weekend and next, come off as planned. (Late breaking news: The 8/15 charter came off very well by all accounts!) Now for some good news: We have scheduled "Special" runs for two weekends in September. To the extent these are successful for both safety and ticket sales we will build on them to keep us busy running trains and earning revenue the rest of the year and into 2021.

More good news: Our volunteers, members and friends stepped up to donate \$11,442 this month. Thanks to all of the 58 individuals who made donations of up to \$1,000 to the following Funds: SP# 1744 Restoration; General Fund: SP# 9010 Restoration; and Bucket Truck Repair. These are covering a significant portion of our monthly expenses right now.

Those donated funds included \$3,916 in "In-Kind Contributions", where the vendor of materials or services necessary to advance a PLA project is paid directly by a person involved in the project, usually one of our Volunteers. This means the PLA and its project gets the direct benefit of those expenditures without spending its cash; and the person paying the bill has made a documented charitable contribution to the PLA. These transactions provide us significant support for the Bucket Truck Repair and completion of our new Heavy Hauler - Thank You!

We also received \$2,250 from CenturyLink to pay for ROW Watchman services related to repair of the fiber optic line over Arroyo de la Laguna Bridge; and our monthly \$3,000 in fees from GGRM for equipment storage. Also, the CA Dept. of Transportation

sent \$4,687 to fund our maintenance of grade crossings. This is a significant increase over last year, since we have placed in service another major crossing at Verona.

On the expense side we had to pay our insurance bill which is about \$42,000 up front for the year; \$1,700 for annual maintenance of our many and varied fire extinguishers; and \$4,983 for our annual permit from the Alameda County Department of Public Health. Backing out these annual expenses, as well as the fees generated and paid for by the Endowment, our cost for July of normal monthly activities and bills was about \$20,700. Historically for the PLA this is a reasonable monthly cost of doing business.

Our current cash position is good, and will cover this kind of monthly loss for a short time. I will feel so much better when we have train operations going again that we can count on to pay our monthly costs and fund our priority

projects, and get us all back to doing what all our riders enjoy - running historical trains through beautiful Niles Canyon.

Remember to use Amazon Smile when possible to further benefit the PLA in a painless way - particularly if you are buying something on behalf of the PLA!

**Pat Stratton**

treasurer@ncry.org

**TAX DEDUCTIBLE:** The Pacific Locomotive Association is qualified under Internal Revenue Service code section 501 (c) (3) as a tax exempt organization. Thus, donations to the PLA are tax deductible as CHARITABLE CONTRIBUTIONS to the extent allowed by law. Our mailing address is P.O. Box 515, Sunol, CA 94586-0515. The PLA's Federal ID is: 94-6130878, CA ID is: 0501445.



*Photo by Chris Hauf*

**Alan Siegwarth has the controls of #7 as it pulls out of the engine shop lead on this very hot summer day. At this time, thermometers were registering 107 degrees F outside of the cab.**



# NILES CANYON RAILWAY

## Repaired and Reinstalled Mile Posts

June and July saw the maintenance and repair of several Mile Post (MP) markers on our right-of-way. The MP markers for 37 and 38 east of Sunol have been gone for as long as I can remember. In June, Mike Strider and Steve Barkkarie installed a new MP 37 marker on a salvaged pole. In July, Steve and Mike (and with the help of Doug Vanderlee the week before digging the hole) installed a new MP 38 marker on a salvaged pole. The hole could only be dug 35-in deep due to solid rock, so fencepost concrete was used for setting. The same day, Steve and Mike reset the leaning telegraph pole holding up MP 39 using the backhoe and a replacement guy wire. The pole is now plumb. In July, Steve and Mike installed a replacement with the salvaged MP 32 marker with a salvaged pole. Vandals destroyed the original telegraph pole way up on the hill. The replacement pole is closer to the track and easier to see. All of the holes for the replacement poles were dug by hand. The poles were inserted using a chain and backhoe. Future MP Marker replacements include MP 36 and 40.

**Mike Strider**



*Photo by Stephen Barkkarie*

**Re-straightened existing pole with new guy wire.**



*Photo by Stephen Barkkarie*

**Reinstalled MP 32 on reused pole.**



*Photo by Stephen Barkkarie*

**New MP 37 on salvaged pole.**



*Photo by Stephen Barkkarie*

**New MP 38 on salvaged pole.**



# NILES CANYON RAILWAY

## Learning the “ins” and “outs” of air brake cylinders

At the last Board Meeting, General Manager Steve Barkkarie reported that while coach car 2101 passed its single car air brake test, the stencil on the side of the brake cylinder said its last COT&S (Clean, Oil, Test, and Stencil) was performed in 2014, making it high time for it to be re-checked. Kurt Olsen took up the call, and with input from Doug Debs, Steve Barkkarie, Jeff Haslam, Stephen Coon, and others, a plan of action was formulated. We checked the air brake supply reefer, and could not find any 16” packing cups, but we did find 16” packing rings. Checking with some suppliers confirmed that “Universal” air brake cylinders no longer use packing cups, as the mold that was used for making them broke years ago; now, packing rings are used instead.

Armed with that knowledge, Kurt Olsen, Steve Barkkarie, Matt Petach, and Dee Murphy showed up at Brightside on Aug 17th, ready to unbolt the cylinder end, remove the piston, clean the cylinder and piston thoroughly, re-pack the ring with grease, and reassemble the whole kit and kaboodle. We borrowed a hydraulic lift table from Howard’s 9010 work area, found some stout plywood and blocking to make a platform, and in short order, we had the piston assembly supported, and ready to roll back for cleaning. Steve B located a chain hoist to use as a come-along, and after moving some rigging out of the way, we were ready to start pulling.

The entire piston slowly emerged, and a visual inspection showed the existing packing ring was still in good condition. Using a rag soaked in mineral spirits, we carefully wiped down and cleaned the entire inside of the cylinder. We also blew compressed air through all the pipes feeding into the cylinder to ensure they were clean and free of any debris. Then we applied a thin film of grease to the outer ½ of the cylinder, and liberally packed the backside of the packing ring with fresh grease. We



*Photo by Matt Petach*

**“After greasing it all up, a tense Steve Barkkarie guides the piston and ring back inside the cylinder”.**

maneuvered the piston back into position, and used a portable hydraulic jack to push it slowly back into the cylinder, trying to make sure the ring tucked fully into the cylinder as we went.

Unfortunately, we weren’t quite careful enough; we could hear some air hissing past the ring as we pushed it in, so we pulled it back out, and discovered that part of the ring hidden under the car body had folded back on itself as we inserted the piston, and had torn off. So much for re-using the original packing ring! We had to pull the piston

back out completely, unbolt the retaining ring around the front face of the piston, remove the old packing ring, put a new packing ring on, bolt the retaining ring back into place, and then re-pack the new packing ring full of grease.

This time around, when inserting the piston with the new packing ring, we made sure to have a second person underneath the car with a bright worklight to make sure the packing ring tucked properly inside the cylinder all the way around before we slowly pushed it in with the hydraulic jack. No sound of air hissing past was heard, so we were much more satisfied we’d gotten it right the second time around.

With the “Clean” and “Oil” parts of the COT&S procedure now completed, it just remains to re-perform the single-car test, verify it still passes, and then we can re-stencil the cylinder with a current COT&S date on it.

Many thanks to everyone who pitched in on this effort; in spite of a few hiccups, we’ve learned a tremendous amount about how to do this, and we’re confident we’ll do it even better next time!

**Matt Petach**



*Photo by Dee Murphy*

**“Matt Petach, Steve Barkkarie, and Kurt Olsen, planning the attack”.**



# NILES CANYON RAILWAY

## Volunteer Report

**Ed Best - Volunteer Coordinator**

The following is a list of the people who volunteered supporting your railroad in July. All volunteer hours on projects related to the railroad during these restricted periods are eligible to be registered. Please send your hours to me by e-mail at: [volunteers@ncry.org](mailto:volunteers@ncry.org). One member of a working group can send me the data for all members of the group. Meeting attendance by teleconference is reported to me by the Membership Secretary

### ADMINISTRATIVE

Henry Baum  
Mike Strider  
Jim Evans  
Linda Stanley  
Pat Stratton  
Steve Barkkarie  
Jim Stewart  
Kent Hedberg  
Gail Hedberg  
Dennis Mann  
Ed Best  
Joe Scardino  
Mark Miller  
Mary Asturias  
Steve Jones

### ARCHIVES

Brian Hitchcock

### CAR DEPARTMENT

Dee Murphy  
Dennis Mann  
Jeff Haslam

### DEPOT CREW & OPERATION

Donna Alexander

### ELECTRICAL & SIGNALS

Curt Hoppins  
Jim Stewart

### FACILITIES

Rich Alexander  
Steve Barkkarie  
Wesley Van Osdol

### MECHANICAL

Bill Ross  
Chuck Kent  
Dave Burla  
Dee Murphy  
Gerald DeWitt  
Gerry Feeney  
Henry Chandler  
Howard Wise  
Jeff Schwab  
John Zielinski  
Karl Swartz  
Linda Stanley  
Rich Anderson  
Steve Jones

### MEETINGS

Bev Patterson  
Bill Strahle  
Bob Bradley  
Bob Pratt  
Charles Gullo  
Charles Navarra  
Charles Smith  
Charlotte Ferree  
Curt Hoppins  
Dan Mills  
Dan Sarka  
Dave Burla  
Dave Ernest  
Dave Hipple  
Dee Murphy  
Dexter Day  
Donna Alexander  
Doug Debs  
Doug Vanderlee  
Ed Best  
Gail Hedberg

### MEETINGS

George Childs  
Henry Baum  
Jackie Vlasak  
Jason Kazarian  
Jim Evans  
Jim Gilmore  
Jim Stewart  
John Zielinski  
Justin Legg  
Karen Kadaja  
Kathleen Olander  
Kent Hedberg  
Laura Bajuk  
Leslie Smith  
Linda Stanley  
Lou Bradas  
Mark Miller  
Marshall Williams  
Mary Asturias  
Matthew Petach  
Mike Strider  
Pat Buder  
Pat Stratton  
Patrice McDonald  
Paul Veltman  
Peter Midnight  
Rich Alexander  
Roger McCluney  
Rosanne Strahle  
Sally Mills  
Steve Barkkarie  
Steve Ferree  
Steve Jones  
Steve Slabach  
Thomas Libbey  
Tim Flippo  
Tom Eikerenkottor

### MEETINGS

Zona Fowler

### MOW & TRACK

Bob Pratt  
Dee Murphy  
John Zielinski  
Mark Whitman  
Matthew Petach

### MOW & TRACK

Pat Hafey  
Steve Barkkarie  
Steve Jones

### OTHER

Barry Lependorf  
Bob Pratt

### OTHER

Brian Hitchcock  
Dave Ernest  
Dennis Mann  
Ed Best  
Mark Miller  
Patrice Warren  
Steve Jones  
Zonker Harris



*Photo by Donna Alexander*

The Lerro Production charter on February 8, 2020.

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*Photo by Chris Hauf*

**Skookum #7 sits at Sunol just after taking water on Saturday, August 15th.**