Steam Department volunteers keep on Chugging

As I write this another TOL is running during a busy December of trains. Steam Department volunteers in addition to helping on the TOL have been working on a lot of projects at Brightside. The first order of business has always been our running locomotives and both the Skookum and the #4 have had minor repair work to fix issues written up during their last operations – repairs we need to complete in preparation for this year’s operations. We also finished the extensive amount of work required to prepare the locomotives for winter such as blowing water out of the appliances and everyone’s favorite job – cleaning the smokeboxes. Smokebox cleaning has to be done to prevent acid erosion of the smokebox and front tube sheet but it is one of the worst jobs on the railroad – even wearing a Tyvek suit, mask and goggles does not prevent...
NILES CANYON RAILWAY

MEETINGS
Meetings are held in January, March, May, June, July, and October.

Board of Directors Meeting
JANUARY 13
5:30 PM
In Whitehouse @ Brightside
In-person & Teleconference

General Meeting
JANUARY 13
7:00 PM
In Whitehouse @ Brightside
In-person & Teleconference

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

Submit articles by e-mail in WORD text format. Digital photos may also be submitted by e-mail. Digital photos should be saved as PC format .jpg files. A WORD file with the photo number, description of photo and identifying the people in them IS REQUIRED.

Send to the Editor, Barry Lependorf at clubcar@ncry.org

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

SUNOL DEPOT
6 Kilkare Road
Sunol, CA 94586

NILES STATION
37029 Mission Blvd.
Fremont, CA 94536

This station temporarily closed

= = = = = = = = BOARD OF DIRECTORS = = = = = = = =
President       Henry Baum      (925) 447-7358
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Director-At-Large Warren Haack    (650) 726-7952
Director-At-Large Bob Pratt      (510) 421-7483

= = = = = = = = DEPARTMENT HEADS = = = = = = = =
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Charter Agent/Docents - Jim Evans
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Club Car Editor - Barry Lependorf
Commissary - Doug Debs
Crew Caller - Jackie Vlasak
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Volunteer Coordinator - Ed Best
Yardmaster - Stephen Barkkarie

The Club Car is an official publication of the Pacific Locomotive Association, Inc., P.O. Box 515, Sunol, CA 94586-0515.
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The Pacific Locomotive Association is a member of the HeritageRail Alliance (HRA).
Volunteer Report

The people listed below reported over 4200 volunteer hours for the month of November. Please continue to report your volunteer hours to me by e-mail at volunteers@ncry.org. Train Crew hours are collected directly from the log sheets and meeting attendance by teleconference is reported to me by the Membership Secretary.

HAPPY NEW YEAR

Our Regular Train Operations will begin in

February 2023

Plan on riding our trains and enjoying the views of Niles Canyon!

Ed Best - Volunteer Coordinator
Wooh, dodged a bullet last night. As I write this, we have 5 more operating nights for the 2022 Train of Lights. Looks like we will make it to the end, but not without a cost. I almost had to fill in for Santa, as the scheduled Santa became ill, and wisely opted out for the night. I have done Santa before, and it is not one of my favorite jobs. I have great respect for all who don the red and white fur suit. Paul Davison was able to rearrange his schedule and come out to help, and he will be finishing the Santa runs for the year. I will be eternally grateful.

This year, Covid variants, RSV and seasonal flu have really done a number on our volunteers. It is a total crap shoot to see who falls victim and who doesn’t. Fully vaccinated, fully masked volunteers get sick, but so do unvaccinated and unmasked volunteers. We know the volunteers recognize the dangers of coming out when sick, for themselves and others, and appreciate their decision to stay home. We can’t risk our volunteers, who, let’s face it, are not as young as when we started TOL.

We have had to work shorthanded in some positions because of this but have not impacted the passengers so they would notice. It was shocking to me to see that we were short firemen for the two diesel crews, prompting the fireman to either walk from one locomotive to the other (a quarter mile hike), or if we had sufficient brakemen, we could move a brakeman to serve as fireman. As there is no coal shoveling involved, the fireman position is really about having a second set of eyes in the lead locomotive to watch for dangers on the tracks ahead. But when reversing directions, waiting for a fireman to reposition is time consuming.

Again, I am amazed at the number of new volunteers who are coming out to help with the on-board staffing and at the depots. Also happy to see the number of freshman volunteers from last year returning for another go-round. The couples teams (not sure what to really call them, as they could be any number of combinations, but they come as pairs so I’m going to use the couples term) are really great to see, as they usually work well together and can handle just about anything.

As I said last month, the Alameda County Sheriff Office Deputies continue their tradition of visiting with the passengers waiting for the train in
Sunol. This is popular with the deputies as well as the passengers. One night Sergeant Petrini and the ACSO Media technician came out to join the deputies and take some photos for their website and Facebook page. The photo on the previous page is a screen capture from the video they posted on Facebook. You can see the whole video there.

I think it is fantastic that they enjoy coming out to interact with our passengers, and to show that we all enjoy the holidays. One of our ‘annual family tradition’ passengers, after telling us how fantastic their trip was this year, did express concern to us about the large police presence at the depot that evening, and that she hoped the train was not causing an increase in need for so many deputies. As there is a very small number of deputies assigned to cover the 140 square miles that make up the tri-valley substation district, the fact that they can arrange to be in Sunol as often as they do says a lot about the criminal activity (or lack thereof) that allows them to come to Sunol. It’s actually pretty centrally located, so if a call comes in, they are able to react fairly quickly. Since they have to be somewhere, why not interacting with our passengers? Everybody wins.

I want to thank all of the volunteers who have given so much of their time and risked their own health to make the 2022 TOL probably our most successful ever. I know I can never properly express our thanks for all those efforts. Did you know it takes 38 people to operate the train each night?

5 - TOL Parking lot Crew- Niles
3 - TOL Parking lot Crew - Sunol
2 - Niles Depot Ticket staff
2 - Sunol Depot Ticket staff
2 - TOL on-board Gift Shop
5 - Commissary Crew - Snack Bars
3 - Commissary Crew-Dome Car Hosts
3 - Commissary Crew-Parlor Car Hosts
2 - TOL Caboose Hosts
1 - Electrician
1 - Docent
1 - Santa
4 - Locomotive Crew
1 - Conductor
3 - Brakemen

It can be done with less, as some positions can be staffed by a single person doing double or triple duty. And of course, it can be done with more, as sometimes slots get split for the 2 trains, and we have trainees in some slots. Without those volunteers expressing a desire, the TOL would not be able to run as many nights.

Think about how many fewer people it takes to run our normal weekend operations (it’s around 9 or 10) These opportunities are just as important that they be filled with talented volunteers, and you can see how important it is to have volunteers all year round.

As we go into the holiday season, I want to again suggest that another great way to help the organization besides donating your time is donating your money. As we have to go outside for more and more tasks, the need to hire and pay for getting things done becomes more necessary. That really then translates into how many projects we can get done.

As always, if you would like to discuss this opportunity or any topic in further detail, please contact me by phone at 925.447.7358 or by email at president@ncry.org. I REALLY want to hear your thoughts on what we should be doing to move the organization forward.

Respectfully submitted

Henry Baum

Commissary Department

Commissary Dept staffs the Parlor, Dome, All Day Lunch, and Snack bar cars on the Train of Lights. This requires 11-12 volunteers every night. Storage space onboard is quite limited, so we restock supplies before every train. Everyone has done a great job this season! Each week we serve about 3000 cookies, 1700 cups of hot cocoa and hot cider, 1000 bags of snacks (chips, Fritos, nuts, etc), 500 bottles of water, and lots more. On cold nights it can be controlled pandemonium as orders pour in for hot drinks and snacks, but our fast-working (and fast-learning) volunteer teams do it with smiles and make it look easy. We receive lots of compliments for such friendly and efficient service.

Doug Debs
Commissary Mgr.

SAVE THE DATE
TOL Volunteer Appreciation Party
Saturday February 4, 3-6 pm
All volunteers who helped make TOL happen, both onboard the train and not onboard the train, are invited!
Details to be sent by e-mail.
For info: Doug Debs, 650-704-1487.
Here we are on the cusp of a bright new year, and nothing foretells a better coming annum than a successful conclusion of the last. Though preparations were hurried and came right down to the wire, careful planning and years of experience had us hitting the rails with another brilliant consist. Even given the early start this year, changes to the operations and some holes in the crew calendar, the 2022 Train of Lights (with another sold out season) rang in the Holiday season for thousands of Bay Area families with our usual flair.

Of course, we can’t forget the whole reason we run the TOL. It is a fund raiser to give us the ability to carry out our main mission, the preservation and restoration of our historic fleet and provide the opportunity to experience railroading for future generations. From that perspective, we were very successful, but it does not come without some bumps in the road and some real dedication from our hard-working volunteers. We have been fortunate to have new crew members, service staff and support crews pull up their bootstraps and step up to fill unexpected openings, as well as our veterans supporting each other selflessly throughout the season.

Within the first two weeks we experienced a failure of the main generator during start-up and had to switch off to the back-up system. With some difficulty with cable connections, we made a seamless transition and made it last for both runs, but after that everything flowed like clockwork. (We did have one exception when an enterprising passenger attempted to flush an entire spare roll of tissue which caused an unfortunate mess of things. We learned not to leave loose rolls in the room.) A small change like that really improved the experience and we received many positive comments from that end of the train.

I was particularly impressed with our new crop of brakemen who showed up in force and really were a testament to the fine job of training they received. Keep up the good work. Also, I would point out how our conductor corps adeptly covered for each other when spots weren’t filled, and many filled open Brakeman’s positions as well. (Warren, Ted, John, Jorg, Jon, you know who I mean) In particular, I would hat tip to veteran conductor Brad Jones who seemed to be on the train every night encouraging others to follow suit with his level of commitment in his unique style. I always enjoy working with him myself. When the need arose, Bob Pratt stepped up to conduct the TOL for his first time and did an admirable job. Thanks Bob. I would like to name all our regular brakemen for their dedication, but just let me say I see and appreciate all your hard work.

I would be remiss if I didn’t acknowledge the challenges faced by our engine crews. Without going into detail, I will just say that it takes long hours of duty to pilot our holiday behemoth and I have great admiration for the professional way our engineers got the job done dealing with absences, equipment glitches and inclement weather. You all deserve a pat on the back.

Another group that does a difficult but essential job is those who direct parking. These folks are the first contact with passengers and keep everyone safe and timely rain or shine. This is especially important in Sunol where local businesses also need to use the limited number of spaces. Even working with short crews, they seem to find room for everybody night after night. Thanks, from all of us to all of you.

All the while in the backs of our minds is what comes after the train is put to bed and the possibility of what we can accomplish with our coffers replenished. Right off the bat we plan to pull the #3380 “Bones” out of service to receive a paint job and just the other day work on the South side of the “Ranch” car has begun. I have heard rumors of turbos being readded to the KM9010 and of course work on windows for the #315 windows will continue. We will see progress continue on the Eastern front and this year we will begin to receive donated items from the Santa Clara Co. donations. Just to mention a few items on the radar. If you ever considered getting involved, 2023 is looking like a great year to get involved. We have an expanding number of projects planned and could use all the help we can get. Make a resolution to be a part of the solution and support your local railroad.
Treasurer's Report

Pat Stratton - Treasurer

You haven’t seen much of me since I picked up Covid on 11/30. I’m alive and well, testing negative. However, until a few days ago I have been confined to my home.

Our cash position gets better by the day, as we earn the revenue from the tickets we sold in mid-October. Each day’s runs bring in about $40k. Also, our commissary and gift shops are covering their costs much better than last year, with the increase to $2 per item. I’m trying to do better with our idle cash than the .002% our Money Market account is earning. I was able to put $238k into a 4.75% CD which will pay us $11,200 at the end of one year. I should be able to make a couple more similar but shorter term set-asides by mid-January.

The cost to repair the damage to our new dump truck done by rodents is unbelievable at $11k. We have to find a way to protect it from that - maybe start it up at least weekly? Or build a garage.

I just got a flyer from the Western Railway Museum, their annual project fundraiser. They are starting construction on their Car Barn 4. They have over $1.8 million but need more - how much they don’t say. That scares me, a lot. Will we ever get a car barn built? We are supposed to be all about restoration of this old equipment, then maintaining it. Responsible use of it doesn’t seem as hard on it as the weather - the “warm California sun”. Except maybe the rats.

Short report this month. I hope to see you this week on the last of the ToL’s.

Pat Stratton
Treasurer

Membership Report

Rich Alexander - Membership

By the time this comes out the Train of Lights will be over. Things have been busy and I have fallen a little behind on the Membership duties, but I should be back on track right after the New Year.

For those of you who are having trouble renewing you can always send in a check to:

PLA Membership Secretary
PO Box 515
Sunol, CA 94586-0515

Dues are $48.00 for primary member, $24.00 for secondary member, $12.00 for youths (under 18 years of age). If you are having trouble with the Internet site you can always call me (510-508-0503) or email me at membership@ncry.org and I can walk you through it.

New Members:
Linda Barkkarie; Douglas J. Durtta; Susan Hayes; Keren Meyer; Jeanette Smith. A big welcome to these new members. If you see them around introduce yourself and make them welcome.

Rich Alexander

Notes from the Hazmat Sheds

This Fall Bob Bradley, Brad Jones, and I disposed of 3 loads of miscellaneous hazwaste (empty and partially-full aerosol cans, old paint & sealers, old adhesives & Bondo, used solvents, small batteries, fluorescent light bulbs, old grease, used beadblast media, etc) using the Alameda County CESQG program for small business hazwaste. CESQG is far more economical for small quantities of hazwaste than any other option, and we get a detailed manifest proving that everything was legally disposed of (very important).

The new roof over Hazmat Sheds #1 & #2 works perfectly. After ToL, we’ll finish connecting underground power to these sheds, install interior LED light fixtures, and build a screen wall under the roof to keep critters out. In the Spring we’ll prep and paint Hazmat Shed #3 (the 3-door shed). Please contact me, Bob Bradley, or Brad Jones if you’d like to help.

Thanks!

Doug Debs,
Hazmat Mgr., cell 650-704-1487
Continued from Page 1

you from ending up covered head to

toe in black soot that really does not

wash off the skin until several showers

later.

A substantial amount of work was

also done on the suspension and frame

of the SP #1744. Art Randall continued

machining suspension components

and completed the fireman’s side spring

pack bars – next up are the engineer’s

side spring pack. Unfortunately, to start

this work the milling machine required

repairs which took over ten volunteer

hours to finish. Please … DO NOT

USE the machine tools in the shop

unless you are cleared to use them as

other volunteers do not have the time

to fix what is broken because someone

“assumed” they knew what they were
doing. PLA has spent a substantial amount of money and volunteer time setting up the shop and cannot afford unqualified operators to damage the machines. If this issue continues, we are going to lock all the machines so they can’t be used without first being qualified as a competent operator.

John Blaine continues the weld repairs on the SP #1744 frame and is nearly complete with repairing the furnace bearing wear on the frame – a huge amount of time welding by John and Emiliano went into this repair – thanks guys! While not directly working on the 1744, other volunteers are working on cleaning out one of the boxcars loaded 37 years ago during the move out of Castro Point. The car is filled with five-gallon buckets and milk crates filled with bolts and nuts – moving them is a backbreaking but necessary project. The bolts are being moved to the shop – if you would like to volunteer to help sort the hardware into our existing bins – please call Alan Siegwarth as we need the help! The goal of all this work is to clear space so material can be moved out of our steam boxcar and into this boxcar. The space gained in the steam boxcar will be used to empty the containers used to ship the 1744 parts from Alamosa and organize them to expedite the rebuild. Once emptied, at least one of the containers will be used to move SP #2479 parts from San Jose – a win-win project for both our SP locomotives under rebuild. Another win when complete is we will finally get the containers off the flatcar they are sitting on so it can be used for other purposes – the shell game continues in the limited space we have at Brightside!

Alan Siegwarth

John Blaine prepping for welding the furnace bearer area of the 1744 frame.
At one time not too long ago as time goes, we ran a nice little railroad called the Castro Point Railway at Point Molate in Richmond. It wasn’t what you would call a large operation, but it was a nice run along the water. We also ran shorter and lighter weight trains which are not in use today.

The cars used were a Southern Pacific Railroad Coach and two home built open cars and a wood Caboose. The open cars called Adams cars which were built from flat cars which date back to the early 1900s. They had Arch Bar trucks and Truss Rod supports for strength since the cars did not have a steel center beam from coupler to coupler. These cars worked out fine for the operation at Point Molate, but now these cars are operating on the Niles Canyon Railway which have grades throughout the railroad. A problem for using these Adams open cars were heading our way. This is where this Tale begins.

The Adams open cars were left behind at Castro Point due to the status of the cars and major railroads will not handle that type car as they sat. When we started to expand the operation on the NCRY, we trucked these cars in from Castro Point and trucked the SP 1949 coach in from the Oakland Terminal Railway. The 44 tonner engine ATSF 462 was also trucked onto the NCRY. For the time being, this little train made a great addition to what we had been running which was the M200. The little train ran that way until we trucked in another Coach WP 315. The little train was starting to grow and we had to position the two Adams cars on the uphill end of the train. At that time in the operation we pulled the train down to the end of the track and then it was shoved back to Sunol. At no time was there weight being supported from behind on the two open Truss Rod cars. It was time to start thinking of a new type of open car. We had a steel beam flat which would fit what we needed. Now to get the material. Just by luck, one of the Hardware stores had ordered and lumber was received to have the job canceled.

We were in the right place at the right time. They gave us the lumber for a fraction of the cost. The car that would become known as the Herder was a 40 ft. flat built and put into service. It had no seats, but it did carry people. That car worked out so well, the next 40 ft. car was being built the same way as the Herder, but this one was being fitted for a portable cover. We also received some seats from a church which were set up to go into the new open car. Thus, this new car was called the Chapel Car. Although those two cars were a big addition to the train, there was a need for a new design that would be built from a heavier and bigger flat car. So, the plans for a 52 ft. flat were drawn up and approved to be built. This car was going to be built from steel supports welded for strength. The search was on for the best deal on steel tubing which was found but we had to cut to fit. We bought it and now we needed a contractor to build the car for us so we can have it ready sooner than later. The car chosen was the Navy 52 ft. flat which was all steel. This was going to be a strong car.

The construction was done by a cut to fit method from the blueprint we had. As the car continued to be built, it started to take shape and it should be a great...
car to operate with our heavyweight passenger cars. As the steel work concluded, the finishing work began by our crews. Carlo Borlandelli took on the task of leading the helpers in what to do with the part of the car our members were helping to build. Although the frame was steel, the roof and sides were still wood. The roof beams had to be cut to match and the roof also had to be pieced together to fit. This new car turned out to be a big project. The flooring was a new material which we decided to use for the flooring of the car. The TREX floor turned out just what the doctor ordered. The cost of this car was beginning to add up with all the material that had to be bought. The decision came down that the car should have benches put into it. Something like you find in the park to sit on. The benches were bought. It was discovered if we put the benches in as bought, there would be a narrow aisle. It was decided that the benches would be cut for a bench...
Pullman green. This car really looks great. It even has a side gate cut into the car on one side for ADA loading. Of course, the car needs a name, “THE PARK CAR”. It being the latest addition to the NCRY fleet at that time. While not the most expensive rebuild PLA ever did, it’s probably become the most expensive flatcar in existence. The car has been in service since 2003 and it has seen many miles and been through many storms. This last year, 2022, it was decided that the Park Car was due for a rehab so it can serve the PLA for many more years. This year, Steve Barkkarie arranged for “The Park Car” to be pulled out of service and start a rebuild process for the car. The new addition to the car is a new gate to the opposite side to the original one and all new TREX siding to replace the wood sides which were failing fast. The car will have a complete new paint job and the roof will be reworked and sealed. The work on the car is complete and the car is back in service again and should be good for another 20 years before any major repairs will be needed. With that said, another tale comes to a close.

The new bench seats for the Park Car that have been cut in size to fit.
A very successful Commissary Department training session was held on Saturday, November 12th for all interested volunteers. Here the workings of the SP #10040 car are explained. The #10040 is setup as a chair car for first class ticketed passengers.

Train crew awaiting departure. Brad Jones (left) and Mason Denton (right).

The newly reworked and repainted ‘Park’ car really shines in Niles with all of its TOL decorations.

Your hot cocoa crew in the kitchen of the All Day Lunch!

TOL Conductor, Jorg Linke, is all smiles as he walks the Niles platform prior to departure.
On the first Saturday of December, 2022, a few dedicated volunteers gathered to perform work on the east build project and replaced 17 crossties that were not suitable for track. PLA members Matt Petach, Chris Campi, Doug Vanderlee, Steve Hill, Steve Knoeck and Mike Strider braved the cold drizzly day to advance the east build progress. No track surfacing was done but will continue in January. The crew made it back to the yard in time to avoid the Train-of-Lights operation. Other than wet gloves, the crew stayed relatively dry with the required rain gear. Generally, more work per person gets done when the weather is cool. Also, some of the best work days are in the cool winter, and not in the hot days of summer. Hopefully our first Saturday in January will be a cool productive work day. Come out and join the fun.

Mike Strider
Build East Crew Working in any kind of Weather

The Build East crew was back out for the first Saturday of November. While Matt Petach watches the level, Chris Campi gives it his all on the track jack bar.

The crew has a series of track jacks deployed to bring the process of jacking the track to the proper level for that location before the tamper comes in to set the stone under the ties.

Project lead, Mike Strider, tends to some ballast as the tamper waits to continue its work.

Pat Stratton carefully operates the tamper under instruction from Mike Strider.
The Train of Lights pulling in to the Sunol Depot in the rain.

Mike Pechner Photograph