



# THE CLUB CAR



Bulletin 714

Pacific Locomotive Association, Inc.

February 2023

## East Build Effort Keeps Moving Forward, Slowly but Surely



*Mike Pechner Photograph*

Track extends across the Happy Valley Bridge which has been an important milestone for the track crew.

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On January 7th, 2023, the first Saturday of the new year, a crew of 5 was on hand to raise track near the end of our east track extension to keep the momentum going in our effort to build toward Pleasanton. A day that was thought to have a little rain turned out to be one of the best days of the year to work on track. No rain, no wind, no sun and nice cool temps in the low 60's. On hand were Brad Jones, Steve Hill, Steve Knoeck, Bob Gilbert,

Mike Pechner and Mike Strider. While mud slide repair activities were taking place near MP 34.6, the east build crew with its MOW train carefully worked its way past a muddy track to get out to the east end. Another weather-related issue during our trip to/from the east end was the new scouring of the track embankment just east (north) of the Arroyo De La Laguna bridge (MP 36.9) that has never occurred since we

**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

# NILES CANYON RAILWAY

## MEETINGS

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

### Board of Directors Meeting

**FEBRUARY 10**  
**5:30 PM**

In Whitehouse @ Brightside  
In-person & Teleconference

### General Meeting

**MARCH 10**  
**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.**

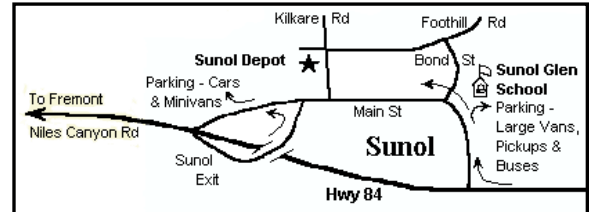
Send to the Editor, Barry Lependorf at clubcar@ncry.org

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

## BOARDING LOCATIONS

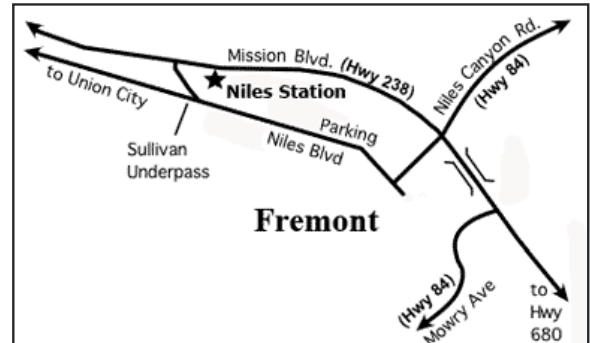
### SUNOL DEPOT

6 Kilcare Road  
Sunol, CA 94586



### NILES STATION

37029 Mission Blvd.  
Fremont, CA 94536



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

President	Henry Baum	(925) 447-7358
Vice President	Mike Strider	(707) 318-2633
Recording Secretary	Matt Petach	(408) 256-2883
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General Manager	Stephen Barkkarie	(510) 368-1733
Director-At-Large	Justin Legg	(510) 717-4944
Director-At-Large	Warren Haack	(650) 726-7952
Director-At-Large	Bob Pratt	(510) 421-7483

### ===== DEPARTMENT HEADS =====

Brush Cutting - Mark Whitman	Operations Manager - Dexter Day
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Member Communication - Linda Stanley	Train Master - Mark Miller
Museum Curator - Dennis Mann	Volunteer Coordinator - Ed Best
New Member Orientation - Glenn Fountain	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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General Meetings are held on the 2nd Friday of January, March, May, June, July and October at 7:00 p.m. in the Whitehouse at Brightside Yard. Members, Sponsors & Guests are welcome.

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The Pacific Locomotive Association is a member of the HeritageRail Alliance (HRA).



# NILES CANYON RAILWAY

## February Activities

February 5	1st Saturday	MoW Building East, 8:00 am - Brightside - Mike Strider
February 10	2nd Friday	Board of Directors Meeting, 5:30 pm - Brightside - Henry Baum
February 26	4th Saturday	Brush Cutting 7:30 am to 4:00 pm - Mark Whitman

=== Trains will start running in March ===

## Volunteer Report

Ed Best - Volunteer Coordinator

The people listed below reported close to 6,700 volunteer hours for the month of December. A special thanks to all who volunteered on the TOL. Please continue to report your volunteer hours to me by e-mail at [volunteers@ncry.org](mailto: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.

### Administration

Henry Baum  
Mike Strider  
Matt Petach  
Rich Alexander  
Pat Stratton  
Steve Barkkarie  
Justin Legg  
Warren Haack  
Bob Pratt  
Chris Hauf  
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Brian Hitchcock

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Dennis Mann  
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Amanda Best  
Benita Harper  
Bob Pratt  
Bonnie Harrington  
Brenda Ducharme  
Bruce Compton  
Cam Chan  
Cathy Harrington  
Crisand Giles  
Dave Best

### Commissary

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David Chan  
Dee Murphy  
Dexter Day  
Donna Alexander  
Doug Debs  
Ethan Torres-Zapata  
Frankie Ross  
Jack Harrington  
Jacques Verdier  
Jeanne Digel  
Jeff Mockus  
Joan Francis  
Joe Romani  
John Link  
Laura Bajuk  
Linda Best  
Mark Kennard  
Matt Petach  
Matthew Mokus  
May Chevallier  
Pat Buder  
Peter Midnight  
Ron Thomas  
Sally Mills  
Steve Harrington  
Sue Thomas  
Susan Wood  
Tom Crawford  
Wendy Cooper

### Depot Crew & Operations

Allison Wright  
Bob Bailey  
Bob Gilbert  
Bruce Burke  
Dalip Bahati  
Dan Mills  
Dexter Day  
Donna Alexander

### Depot Crew & Operations

Hal Briar  
Jackie Vlasak  
Jerico Tala  
Joan Weber  
Kristina Parkison  
Linda Randolph  
Linda Stanley  
Madeline Briar  
Mark Whitman  
Sally Mills  
Steve Miller  
Rich Alexander  
Tom Miller  
Vicki Witt  
Wayne Stoddard

### Docents

Rich Alexander

### Electrical & Signals

Bryan Beck  
Curt Hoppins  
Jacques Verdier  
Jim Stewart  
Steve Knoeck

### Facilities

Bob Bailey  
Bob Bradley  
Dee Murphy  
Doug Debs  
John Zielinski  
Linda Stanley  
Matt Petach  
Steve Jones

### Gift Shop

Charlene Murrell  
Cynder Niemela  
Donna Alexander  
Doug Vanderlee

### Gift Shop

Patrice McDonald  
Sue Thomas

### Mechanical

Bill Stimmerman  
Charles Franz  
Dee Murphy  
Gerald DeWitt  
Gerry Feeney  
Henry Chandler  
Howard Wise  
Jeff Haslam  
Karl Swartz  
Linda Stanley  
Rich Gove

### MOW & Track

Bob Bailey  
Chris Campi  
Dee Murphy  
Doug Vanderlee  
Matt Petach  
Mike Strider  
Rick Cory  
Steve Hill  
Steve Knoeck

### Other

Alan Siegwarth  
Barry Lependorf  
Curt Hoppins  
Dexter Day  
Ed Best  
Linda Stanley  
Matt Petach  
Mike Strider  
Patrice Warren  
Steve Jones  
Tom Eikerenkotter  
Warren Haack  
Zonker Harris

### Train Crew

Adam Weidenbach  
Alan Siegwarth  
Bent Christensen  
Bob Pratt  
Brad Jones  
Charles Franz  
Chris Chisom  
Chris Hamilton  
Curt Hoppins  
Dave Burla  
Dennis Mann  
Don Shaffer  
Donald Kirker  
Doug Vanderlee  
Dylan Olson  
Ed Best  
Eric Wright  
George Mednick  
Gerald DeWitt  
Gerry Feeney  
Jackie Vlasak  
Jamie West  
Jim Stewart  
John Link  
John Sutkus  
John Zielinski  
Jon Williamson  
Jordan Hamilton  
Jorg Linke  
Justin Legg  
Kent Hedberg  
Kurt Olsen  
Liam O'Leary  
Mark Miller  
Mason Denton  
Matt Petach  
Michael Stockwell  
Nick Zamora  
Pat Stratton  
Peter Savoy  
Ron Quilici  
Ron Thomas  
Sanjay Bhandari  
Scott Crislip

### Train Crew

Steve Barkkarie  
Steve Coon  
Ted Unruh  
Tim Flippo  
Warren Haack  
Wesley Van Osdol

### Train of Lights Other

Al Ducharme  
Annie Giannini  
Barbara Underwood  
Benita Harper  
Bess Wood  
Betty Ellis  
Bev Barkkarie  
Bob Pratt  
Bonnie Harrington  
Brenda Ducharme  
Brian Schott  
Clark Fuller  
Connie DeGrange  
Crystal Campisi  
Dan Sarka  
Dan Thomas  
Daniel Salazar  
Dave Best  
Donna Alexander  
Doug Debs  
Doug Vanderlee  
Gail Farwell  
Garret Farwell  
Gerry Dewees  
Henry Baum  
Jacques Verdier  
Janeen Brumm  
Janet Smith  
Jim Ellis  
Joan Francis  
Joe Romani  
Jorg Linke

### Train of Lights Other

Karrey Benbow  
Katie Rothe  
Kelly Linke  
Kylie Montgomery  
Laura Bajuk  
Laura Witt  
Lauren Fuller  
Lee Finlayson  
Liam O'Leary  
Linda Best  
Linda Stanley  
Lindsay Witt  
Logan Rubasky  
Lou Bradas  
Lynn Kozma  
Mason Denton  
Mike Pechner  
Nancy Dewees  
Nel Lally  
Nick Zamora  
Paul Davison  
Peter Bradas  
Peter Midnight  
Phil Montgomery  
Rebecca Schaffer  
Rich Alexander  
Richard Smith  
Rob Giles  
Roger McCluney  
Ron Conover  
Roy Benbow  
Rudy Kelley  
Stephanie Rubasky  
Steve Barkkarie  
Sue Thomas  
Susan Hayes  
Susan Wood  
Theresa Pena  
Tim Rumholtz

# NILES CANYON RAILWAY

## President's Report

Henry Baum - President

What do an Atmospheric River, Alameda Creek, Sinbad Creek and The Arroyo De La Laguna have in common? Water. Lots and lots of water. An atmospheric river brought a number of storms through the canyon since New Years Day, and record amounts of rainfall led the aforementioned creeks to overrun their banks and do some serious damage to the town of Sunol, including the Sunol Glen Elementary School and the homes up on Kilcare Road as well as homes along Foothill Road to the East.

In all the years I have been with the railroad, this is the first time I have seen Sinbad Creek run with any volume. I do not know if a flood stage has ever even been documented for the creek, but the watershed it drains is huge, and the rain caused it to flow with a violence beyond anyone's recent memory. Homeowners who access their property using bridges over the usually dry creek found their bridges and driveways washed away. I saw photos of people's cars getting washed into the creek. This is a creek that is only about 3 feet wide in most places. Sinbad Creek flows into the Arroyo De la Laguna behind the Sunol Glen school.

The Arroyo De La Laguna also went six feet over flood stage on New Years Day, and again on January 16th by about 3 feet. While this used to be a dry creek (hence its name), it runs year-round nowadays. I think this is due to the abnormal amount of irrigation runoff it collects, as it runs even during drought times. It gets fed by San Ramon Creek and the Arroyo Mocho, which are similarly fed by irrigation runoff (lots of golf courses through these watersheds). This time, when it went over flood stage, it needed to find new ways to get the high water amount down and into Alameda Creek.

Whenever you have these high water volumes and creeks climbing their banks, the water collects a lot of debris that is laying along the creek from past storms and vegetation life cycles. This

debris gets carried downstream until it reaches the ocean or is captured by other structures the water encounters. Usually the water wins, and the debris drags up whatever it is caught against. Usually, that is other trees. In some cases it is more permanent structures, like the bridge piers. This happened to us this year when debris got caught on the northernmost pier of the Arroyo De La Laguna Bridge (railroad east). The debris caused the water to climb up and scour out the creek bank sediment, exposing the pier. That is not a good thing.

A veritable mountain of this debris got hung up where the Arroyo De La Laguna flows under Hwy 84, right at Sunol Corners (by the entrance to the Water Temple). The Sinbad Creek and Arroyo De La Laguna water now had no place to go. It went over the bridge, flooding the nearby school as well.

All of this water eventually made it to Alameda Creek, where it turned the babbling brook into a deadly river. The Creek overran its banks down at Dresser Bridge, which it does whenever it goes over flood stage. That water would close Niles Canyon Highway to traffic if the Highway wasn't already closed due to the inevitable rock slides East of the bridge, which usually close the road soon after it starts raining. This time the creek also overran its banks East of Brightside, which, again, I have never seen it do. Came close before, but not put the road under 3 feet of creek. Alameda Creek went 6 feet over flood stage. Alameda Creek is also fed by the San Antonio Creek from the east, and is managed through outflow from San Antonio Reservoir. Usually they try to keep the creek flowing at around 25-40 cubic feet per second. After the New Years storm it was running at a peak of 23,000 cubic feet per second. That is a lot of water (Niagara Falls runs at about 83,000 cubic feet per second, 24/7). It is running today at 3000 cubic feet per second, but the rains have finally moved on. In February of 2017 it ran

at 12,900 on the 7th and 17,400 on the 20th, which was the previous record.

That amount of water is no match for a lot of the trees that lined the creek bed between Sunol and Dresser Bridge. I would estimate 50% of those trees are now gone. That debris also did a number on the highway itself. A 1000 foot stretch of brand new guard rail was ripped away by the debris and huge debris piles have also been deposited on the highway side of the creek. The steep embankment on the other (Union Pacific) side of the canyon does not collect debris as quickly.

It will take CalTrans a long time to clean this up, and to repair the damage. Even the new bridge they are building east of Farwell took a hit. Also one of those 100-foot eucalyptus trees along the road at 'the spot' toppled and barricaded the road (which was luckily closed by the aforementioned rock slides).

As the water drains away, the debris fields remain. Along the Niles Canyon Railway, the debris seems to be limited to a few huge trees that have toppled (which will require professional removal), some large rocks that have come down, and acres of mud. The mud is the hardest thing to clean up. If it is wet it is really heavy. If it dries up, it becomes concrete. It needs to be removed as quickly as possible. Between Brightside and Farmer's crossing the culverts were overrun with mud and small rocks, and caused the runoff to spill onto the tracks and even over the tracks onto the highway. There are a few other areas where mud will need to be removed from the drainage ditches and culverts, mostly around the Big Curve. I have already made the call to ask Alameda County to include us in any requests they make to FEMA or CalOES for aid. We would need funding to repair the storm damage to the Arroyo bridge, prevent further scouring of the embankments around the big curve (both by depositing rip-rap to shore up the creek bank. We

# NILES CANYON RAILWAY

## President's Report

**Henry Baum - President**

may also need to replace the culverts around west of Farmer's which have plagued us for years and are just too small to handle these new runoff

amounts. While we have dealt with these mud problems before, the creek bank erosion we are seeing is new. With these astronomical flow rates, the

creek banks will need to be stabilized, as the sediment deposited along the outside of the curves was all scoured away this time.

We have postponed commencing our 2023 train operations until March to give us time to dry out and deal with these issues. As mudslides can easily continue up to 2 weeks after the rain stops, we may still have to deal with problems that haven't happened yet. Just ask the folks at the ACE train and the UP. ACE has had two trains clobbered by two mudslides earlier this week, directly across from Brightside and near where the derailment happened in 2016, which was also caused by a small mudslide. No derailments, which is even luckier because the trees that slowed the derailment last time from ending up in the creek are all gone.

The PLA's good luck continues as we are doing pretty well compared to others through this difficult time period of storms. Our post-TOL break means we aren't running trains, we have money available thanks to our successful TOL and we can take the time to do things properly. We still need your help though. Helping dig out culverts, planning train events, we need volunteers to make it happen. Make 2023 the year you come out and volunteer.

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](mailto: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**

## Signalero Dave Lion Passed Away



Sadly, Signalero Dave Lion passed away this past November. Dave's contributions to the Signal Department were invaluable. He was always willing to help out with any task regardless of how mundane it was.

Around 2007 we started upgrading our grade crossing control systems and Dave had his hand in every one of them. He became our relay expert and would spend many hours cleaning and testing these critical parts, which control our signals.

Dave was always fun to be around and we are grateful for all he did and for his friendship. He will be missed by all of us that knew him.

**Curt Hoppins**

### 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

**Stephen Barkkarie - General Manager**

In general, as February rolls around we get rolling down the track again, but this year January fell on us like a big wet blanket putting a damper on all our plans. We were looking forward to putting the TOL away and getting back to all the projects paused for the Holidays like the new windows for the #315 coach, the kitchen upgrades for the All-Day Lunch and fresh paint for the "Bones" open car. Well, that idea has gone out the window, or more accurately "down the creek". Instead, it's time to pull on the rubber boots, grab the muck shovel and begin the pleasant task of reclaiming the railway from the slurry delivered by weeks of rain. There are plenty of challenges to bring our line back into shape for running passenger trains and even to carry out required inspections. We have a lot of work to do but I know we are up to it and by the time you read this we will be well under way.

The monumental rains brought us mudslides, downed trees, plugged culverts, power outages and closed roads. At one point, the highway was covered by the river the entire length of Brightside as well as the tangent area around MP34.5 East of the yard. The pesky culvert at MP34.8 (Farmer's) once again was inundated by mudflow which, as it has historically, continued down onto Hwy 84 blocking traffic. Caltrans was quick to clear the road and we responded by mustering a crew, a Hi-rail backhoe, a locomotive and side dump to remove a couple hundred cubic yards from the ditches and culvert. We brought out a pump and jetting pipe to clear the culvert and restored flow only to have another storm wash the hillside down on us again. Very frustrating, and an indicator that we must allow the storms to subside before we can adequately clean up the damage.

Until that time, we have been taking



*Adam Weidenbach Photograph*

**Steve Barkkarie and Doug Vanderlee inspect signal pole knocked down on Farwell Bridge.**

care of all the downed trees that just couldn't take the strain of massive amounts of water and high winds after years of drought. Down in Niles a large pine near the entrance crashed down on the fence at Crist oil and a large eucalyptus at the East end toppled down narrowly missing the wall over Mission Boulevard. Across the Mission bridge, on the South Leg of the wye, a large live oak split under the stress and threatened our signal base in that location. All these monster trees are beyond our volunteer forces, so we brought in the professionals at Terry's tree service to handle the job. They were the ones who handled our problem with the giant Eucalyptus behind the Sunol post office. (Now aren't we glad we spent the money to thin those trees as they are still standing despite all the damage around Sunol.) We also had trees across the track at MP 31.5, MP 31.75, MP 32.6, MP 32.7...Well you get the idea, we had a lot of trees come



*S. Barkkarie Photograph*

**Barkkarie Falls comes to life after January storms.**



# NILES CANYON RAILWAY

## Along the Right of Way

**Stephen Barkkarie - General Manager**

down. Fortunately, we had bearings replaced and new knives installed on our awesome Bandit chipper so it was up to the task and has been busy "making mulch" up and down the line.

I guess misery does love company, because those of us who braved the elements to get to Brightside had front row seats to the troubles ACE train had, not once, but twice right across the creek from the yard. The high water took out most of the trees that normally block our view of the UP tracks, so we had an excellent view. Kind of comforting to know we are not the only ones dealing with slides.

Just as every cloud has a silver lining, so does all this doom and gloomy weather. For only the second time since it was built the waterfall at the East end of Brightside flowed a



*Adam Weidenbach Photograph*

### Dealing with fallen tree.



*S. Barkkarie Photograph*

**Adam Weidenbach and Doug Vanderlee** inspect mud flow at MP32.2.

cheerful babble. That watercourse handles the overflow from the retention pond on the Ferma property next door. It appears the series of storms has finally filled it. Also, the storms caused a delay in undoing the TOL and that prompted us to delay the opening of operation until March. That decision has given us hard working volunteers a little breathing room. We have four more weeks to carefully stow away the lights, make needed repairs, deal with stubborn connectors and prepare the train for Spring. It is also a chance for folks to take a trip or visit friends and family, which many have done. (All part of living a balanced life and refreshing oneself in order to be able to freely give to others.) So, once you are feeling well balanced again, I look forward to seeing you in the canyon for another year of railroading on the NCRY.

**Stephen Barkkarie**  
General Manager



*S. Barkkarie Photograph*

**Brightside view of ACE train caught by slide.**



# NILES CANYON RAILWAY

## Building East

Mike Strider - Chief Engineer



Mike Pechner Photograph

Build East crew lifting track just west of Happy Valley Road Bridge 01/07/23.

### Continued from Page 1

opened our track to that point. Once on site out east we raised the track to set top-of-rail stakes but later in the day ran out of existing dropped ballast to reach the proper grade elevation. On Friday, January 13th, 2023, a crew of three including Brad Jones, Rick Cory and Mike Strider dropped several loads of ballast rock on those areas that were short on rock. This will help prepare for the lifting of track for the February 4 crew.

Just a heads up, and for the benefit of all the volunteers that have helped in the effort to build track eastward, we are having a special train, the SP GP-9 5623 and the SP 134-ft articulated coach on Saturday, March 4th, 2023, pick the crew up on the east end and take the crew to a lunch in Brightside yard prepared by Doug Debs. After lunch, the train will return the crew to the east end site. The train will somewhat replicate the old Del Monte or Sacramento Daylight style train

that ran in the 60's. This special train and lunch are reserved for the benefit of those who have worked on track eastward and those who show up for trackwork that day.

Hope to see as many volunteers as possible in the next few months as we finish up our track raising task ending at the Happy Valley Road Bridge soon. Crew meets first Saturday of each month 8 am at Brightside yard and leaves by 8:30 am. See you then.

**Mike Strider**



# NILES CANYON RAILWAY

## Building East

**Mike Strider - Chief Engineer**



*Mike Pechner Photograph*

Build east crew taking a lunch break on Happy Valley Road Bridge. L-R: Brad Jones, Bob Gilbert, Steve Hill, Mike Strider, and Steve Knoeck.



*Mike Pechner Photograph*

Looking north on the last curve before the Happy Valley Bridge and building track underneath 680.



## Tales of the Past

Dexter D. Day - Operations Manager

### This Month's tale: MUD! LOTS OF MUD

This tale begins not looking at the present storms that have hit the canyon in the last week of 2022 and early 2023, but of the heavy storms that were upon us in the past around the earlier part of this Century. For some of you that are new to Niles Canyon Railway, these storms in late 2022 and early 2023 might seem like they are the worst storms that they have seen happen in Niles Canyon. There have been others that have been equal or worse to the canyon. Yes! The storms we got in the last days of 2022 were good storms, but the canyon has seen worse. Of course, we haven't had too many storms in the past years, so any storm would seem to be a good one or over stated.

This is one major reason that the Southern Pacific wanted to close down this original line into the Bay Area. Every winter storm was causing them money and time in keeping this line over the Altamont Pass and through Niles Canyon open for trains to safely use.

This tale begins at the end of last Century and the early part of this Century when the Niles Canyon Railway was still being rebuilt into a railroad right of way as we know it today on the old Southern Pacific Line. During that time, several large storms hit this area which affected the rebuild of this railroad. Since those big storms, a lot of work has been done to dress up the right of way to withstand the storm's water runoff, but that does not include mud flow since you never know when and where those will take place. The tales being told have taken place over several years by the stories that were associated with the various storms that have caused major problems to this railroad over the years. It is 1998, the winter is now upon us. We always



*John Vlasak Photograph*

**Slide at MP 30.5 in 1998 that took place when Mother Nature's earth dam broke. Took track and highway out.**

expect wet weather, but some years are heavier than others. The railroad always has got going in getting the railroad ready for winter, but there is only so much you can do. Then you just sit back and, like a crap shoot, you wait to see which way the dice will end up. You hope in your favor. That year, earlier storms had dumped a large amount of rain onto the canyon and the hills around the railroad were getting into the unstable state. Up to that night, this railroad had only had minor slides that were able to be cleaned up with a work crew in a day, now the rain has been coming down off and on for days and sometimes steady. There have been several small slides throughout the canyon, the ground was soaked and not firm anymore. Then, during one night without warning, there was a major slide on the upper elevation of the hills to the West of our tracks. The top of the hill went into the gully and



*John Pelmulder Photograph*

**Cleaning up the big slide at MP 30.5, lots of work involved.**

made a natural dam. As water settled in behind the earth fill-made dam, the pressure was mounting behind the dam. It finally broke and the water rushed down the hill with nothing to stop it. Two homeless were camping at the bottom of the hill by our tracks at MP 30.5 when they were awakened by



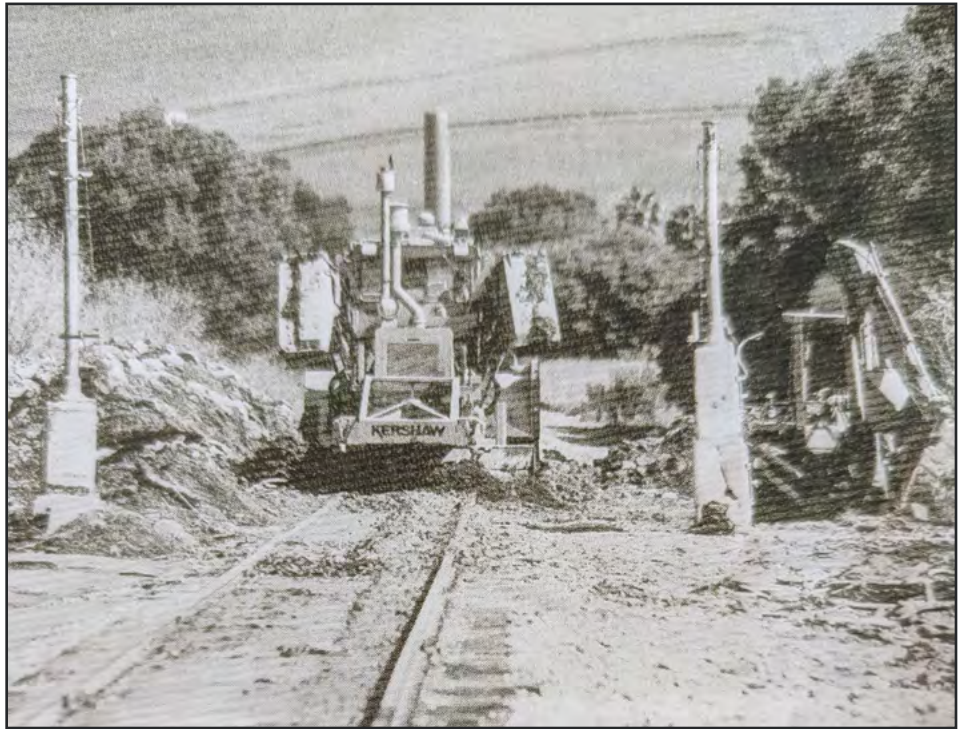
**Dexter D. Day - Operations Manager**

a sound like a roaring freight train. The water, trees, and mud rushed across the tracks by them and drove a car on the highway into Alameda Creek. The driver of the car was lucky, he was able to get out alive. However, the slide has cut our railroad in two and it will be a major clean up to get it open. Once we got the water under control, the clean up to get the railroad reopened will start once the weather clears. Another slide took place the same winter as the previous tale.

I got a call stating that it was reported that we had a slide in the canyon. Great! Well, it didn't take long to find it. At MP 32.9, the whole mountain side fell into the creek which it had to go across our tracks to get to the creek. This does not look good. We won't be clearing this slide anytime soon with equipment that we have to use. It was sixty plus feet high and about 50 plus feet wide with a 20 foot width on the slope. We needed outside help. Well, we were lucky, we got outside help. A contractor was assigned to our railroad and the earth removal was under way. It took a little doing, but the slide slowly started to disappear and finally the right of way came back into view. Now it was up to our crews to clean up the right of way and get the ditching back so more mud wouldn't pay us another visit onto our tracks. The railroad was open once again for operation. There was still a lot of clean up to do.

Another time and another water problem. When we were building this railroad around MP 32.5, we always enjoyed when we could listen to the music over across the creek at the Spot which was a camp ground along with bar and a little store. On weekends you could see trailers and RVs parked over there camping. The camp sites were not that far from the creek which is ok when the level of the creek stays the same. During heavy rains, the

*Continued on next page*



*John Pelmulder Photograph*

**Getting the upper hand on clean up at MP 30.5. Brick plant stack in distance.**



*John Pelmulder Photograph*

**Big slide at MP 32.9 in 1998. Clean up of slide was contracted out.**



*John Pelmulder Photograph*

**Track crew clearing a culvert after major slide at MP 30.5 in.**



*John Vlasak Photograph*

**The heavy machine work is done at MP 32.9. Now it is back to shovels for final touch.**

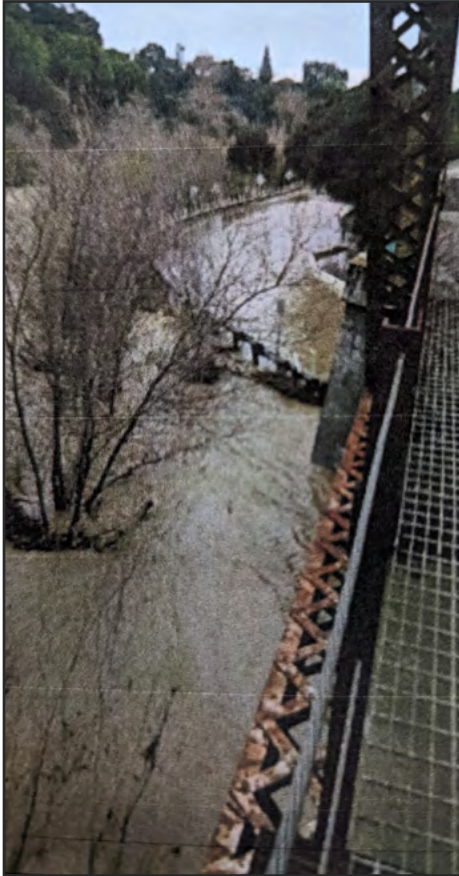


# NILES CANYON RAILWAY

## Tales of the Past

Dexter D. Day - Operations Manager

*Continued from previous page*



*Steve Barkkarie Photograph*

**When water has no place to go, it finds a way out of the creek banks.**

Calaveras Reservoir was already full and the through spillways were under repair. Water was required to be let out of the dam to release the volume against the dam. This puts an extreme amount of water into the creek. In the past, this wasn't a big deal when the camp grounds were notified of the water release. But when the camp ground didn't get the advance notice that was or was not sent out, this caused a major problem. The released excess water from the dam worked its way down the creek, the water was rising fast. There was an RV and a trailer camping at the camp ground. The water raised up to the point that



*Joe Peterson Photograph*

**When Mother Nature wants to put on a show. Mud, tree and rocks.**

the trailer and RV were now like a boat floating down the creek. It was lucky that no one was hurt. Fingers were pointed but the camp ground was closed down in the months that followed. The property is water district property. Then we have old faithful. You don't have to place a date, if you are going to have a major rain storm, this culvert just West of Farmers crossing is going to be the first to foul up on the right of way. With most storms it works as built. But heavy rain mixed with mud flow along with branches, and you've got a mud mess at MP 34.8. Our crews



*Joe Peterson Photograph*

**Here is another photo of slide at MP 32.75. Joy of railroading in a canyon.**



*Joe Peterson Photograph*

**Old Faithful at MP 34.7. If we are going to have a slide, there is a good chance it will be at Farmers Crossing area.**

can get the track open, but the track remains a mess for a long time until it completely gets dried out. The railroad is a canyon railroad, and we live with that fact year by year, except when we have a drought in hand. The Niles Canyon Railroad has been through a lot in the years in the past, and we can expect the future not to be much better. The pictures reflect various slide problems that have come our way over the years. With that said, another Tale comes to an end.

**Dexter Day**



## Station Agent

Donna Alexander

'Twas the night after TOL and all through the train, not a creature was stirring, it was only the rain. And boy did it rain after we finished the Train of Lights. I'm so glad it held off until the TOL was over for the season.

A big thank you to our Train of Lights volunteers who worked on the train and on the ground: Mary, Dalip, Bob, Laura, Steve, Bev, Henry, Karrey, Roy, Amanda, David, Linda, Hal, Madeline, Bruce, Pat, Crystal, May, Bruce, Ron, Steve, Wendy, Toni, Paul, Tom, Dexter, Doug, Connie, Mason, Gerry, Nancy, Karen, Jeanne, Al, Brenda, Betty, Jim, Laura, Lindsay, Jim, Gail, Garrett, Lee, Joan, Clark, Lauren, Bob, Crisand, Rob, Megan, Jack, Bonnie, Steve, Cathy, Susan, Kathy, Greg, Dave, Derek, Rudy, Lynn, Nel, John, Roger, Benita, Patrice, Gail, Peter, Steve, Tom, Dan, Sally, Matthew, Jeff, Phil, Kylie, Charlene, Cynder, Liam, Dylan, Susan, Steve, Kristina, Mike, Cathy, Theresa, Kevin, Bob, Linda, Joe, Frankie, Kathy, Stephanie, Logan, Janeen, Tim, Daniel, Dan, Briana, Rebecca, Janet, Rich-

ard, Linda, Jack, Wayne, Mika, Raymond, Ron, Sue, Dan, Ethan, Andrew, Rene, Barbara, Doug, Jacques, Joan, Mark, Vicki, Bess, Susan, Allison, Nick. A big thank you to our Train of Lights train and engine crew: Kent, Mark, Gerry, Ed, Jorg, John, Brad, Ron, Mason, Eric, Jackie, Mike, Doug, Nick, Liam, Scott, Sanjay, Chris, Jordan, Curt, John, Bent, Matt, Dave, John, David, Peter, Jim, Jon, Bob, Pat, Ted, Wesley, Dennis, Warren, Steve, Don, Gerald, George, Dylan, Tim, Kurt, Jamie, Ron, Donald, Chris, Charles, Alan.

Thank you to all who volunteered this season, those who signed up early, and those who signed up, or just showed up, whenever someone got sick and had to cancel. We have the best bunch of volunteers around!! I hope Santa was very good to all of you, you definitely deserve it.

I hope everyone takes some time to rest, recover, and recuperate. We have decided that we will not operate our daytime trains until March because of all of the rains and the need to clean up our tracks, undecorate our cars when it's not raining, move the gift shop items back to the depot gift shop, and do our needed rest and recovery.

The Wednesday Warriors, our exterior decorators, need help with undecorating the train cars, so if you have some spare time on a Wednesday or two, please come out to Brightside around 9:30a.m. and help them undecorate the exterior of the cars.

Regrettably, we're all getting a little bit older each year and need more help with what we did quicker in past years. The more help we have the faster it gets done. And the sooner we get the

cars undecorated, the faster we can work on other projects around the yard, and there are a lot of them.

So thank you all once again for the time you put in to make this the best TOL. Thank you for your smiles, your caring, your helpfulness, your genuine eagerness to volunteer and pass this enjoyment on to our passengers for a wonderful, memorable time on our trains. That's why they keep coming back each year. We received so many nice things said about our volunteers, our trains, and what we do. And to think it all happened over 60 years ago by the interest and love a college student had with steam engines. Thanks Henry Luna!! We feel fortunate to be a part of something that is so unique and completely run by volunteers.

Thank you all for your volunteer hearts, and I hope you enjoyed the seasons so much that you will continue volunteering with us.

donna

**If you are above age 72 1/2, you can contribute directly to the PLA from your IRA using a Qualified Charitable Distribution. QCD's may be excluded from your taxable income, and at the same time qualify toward your required minimum distribution (RMD). Contact your Plan Administrator to initiate a contribution. If details of the PLA as recipient are needed, contact Treasurer Pat Stratton.**

**You may not know this, but if you contribute appreciated stocks, bonds or mutual funds to the PLA, the total value of the security on the transfer date may be tax-deductible to you, and you aren't required to pay capital gains taxes on any appreciation. This can be done easily and securely to the PLA's account with Wells Fargo Advisors. Contact Treasurer Pat Stratton for additional information.**



## Treasurer's Report

Pat Stratton - Treasurer

Great job by all on successful completion of our TOL season operations. I missed most of it after contracting Covid while on Train Crew 11/30 - which I then gave directly to my wife Mary. Neither of us could participate again on the train until 12/28. I was busy at home with the Treasurer's back-office work that gets exponentially greater with the TOL, as was Mary who has evolved into my informal assistant. The view from the back office was of a very successful operating season. We boarded nearly 30,000 passengers, sold \$1 million in tickets, and encountered no mud or rock slides until after the last run was completed.

Of course, funding of the PLA mission - the protection and restoration of our historic railroad equipment collection - is the reason we work so hard and so long to make our TOL the success that it is. Now, during the quiet time of January, we turn our thoughts to setting priorities, planning, and implementing that mission. My two-bits worth - Priority #1: Maintain the roofs; otherwise, the entire car/loco is coming apart day-to-day under the relentless sun. Priority #2: Keep very good exterior paint on all cars/locos; the paint protects the wood and steel, it gives each piece its identity, and as a museum our equipment should all look its best. I believe a good-looking museum will be rewarded with donations and increased volunteer participation.

This season's TOL has been good to us - our balance sheet shows a good cash cushion, due in large part to TOL ticket sales. Our Endowment Fund and Stock accounts are doing better than the general market, which is the best we can hope for in this economy. Even in last year's poor investment climate the Endowment earnings added over \$61k to its untouchable core principal, and the Stock account earned regular dividends.

Our TOL commissary operations turned things around by increasing prices to \$2 for each item and controlling costs, thereby beating our sales estimates by 10%, and on-board gift shop sales met our optimistic sales estimate for a very good year. The lovely quilt that was up for raffle resulted in over \$1,700 in donations which we will share 50/50 with its makers, the Piece-makers Quilt Guild.

I am happy to announce the result of the steam locomotive SP1744 fundraising blitz begun last Thanksgiving and through December 31. During those 5 weeks PLA received \$27,862 directed toward restoration of the 1744. A gift of \$10,000 was made by Nick & Gail

Farwell. The following also made major gifts (defined as \$500 or more during this fundraiser): Steve Patterson; Lisa Dutra; Fred Kroger; Rich & Clarice Anderson; Whitney Haist; Michael Brilliot; Ray & Sharon Crist; Bruce Sorel; Frank Lonyay; Jeff Brazelton; and Constance Luna (for Henry Luna, one of the original PLA founders).

The financial audit should be ready for review by the Board later this month, and acceptance at the February Board meeting.

If you have any questions or comments, let me know.

**Pat Stratton**

Treasurer

[treasurer@ncry.org](mailto:treasurer@ncry.org)



Chris Hauf Photograph

The January storms have really cleared out large portions of Alameda Creek to the point you can now see the Union Pacific (nee Western Pacific) bridge of the creek as you work your way east along Highway 84 just before you round the corner before Farmer's Crossing.



# NILES CANYON RAILWAY

## Membership Report

**Rich Alexander - Membership**

New Members: Susan Hayes; Alex Kyle; Jenifer Kyle; Karen Meyer; and Jeanette Smith.

Sue Thomas was voted in to be a voting member at the January Membership Meeting.

Donna and I took some well-deserved time off after TOL and went south to see our son and granddaughter. We spent a week down there and returned for the board meeting and caught up on things and then returned south for some more time with our granddaughter while our son worked in Northern California.

TOL is over and I can say what a relief it is, after 20 something nights of trains

and wearing many different hats, wow. There were times when I was ready to throw the hat in, but now that it is over all I say is what a great time for all who participated in the TOL from our volunteers to our passengers.

Every TOL starts out great and by the first week we all think what did we get ourselves into, but we persist and make it through. This only happens because of our dedicated volunteers, new and returning ones.

We tried new things this year with ticket sales, some of them worked well, others not so well. Time to readjust again for next year.

Overall, the TOL was a huge success both financially and passenger wise.

I know that I did a lot of grumbling around the house towards the end of TOL, but now that the TOL is over Donna and I are already thinking about next year's TOL and what can be done to improve some of the things that cropped up and caused problems.

The one thing that I can definitely say is that with everyone who stepped up, it made it possible to pull off one of our most successful TOL to date. Once again, a big thank you to all who made this possible.

**Rich Alexander**



*Chris Hauf Photograph*

In what may be my favorite set of photos from the 2022 Train of Lights, Bob Pratt punches the ticket of a young passenger. He approached with his ticket. Bob asked him his age which he deftly displayed. He received his punches equal to his age and had his ticket returned ready to ride. It is this level of care that our volunteers display that really sets us apart and makes riding our trains even that much more special. Great job to Bob.



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*Chris Hauf Photograph*

With its Train of Lights decorations removed and moved in front of the car shop thanks to our Operations team, the K.C. Bones is the next open car to receive attention after the Park and Brightside received full reworks and repaints in 2022. Volunteer, Chris Hauf, has offered to repaint the car this winter; finishing the work that he started in 2015, but was never able to finish due to paint issues and operational needs that resulted in the car being put back into service before paint was complete. Chris already had all of the lower panels of BOTH sides of the car finish sanded for priming in this photo taken on January 21. Hopefully with just two more work sessions and once some other improvement work on the ends is complete, the entire car can be primed, finish painted and lettered back to Niles Canyon & K.C. Bones finally closing this chapter out. It will also put 4 of the 5 cars we use for our weekend trains in new paint!