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Rules of the Month

Rule 1:9 – Non-Club members are **not** to operate any Club equipment, including lawn mowers, tractors, or Club locomotives with the following exceptions: A non-Club member may operate Club locomotives only on special occasions such as special runs, when they are an invited guest. Such a person must be closely supervised by an experienced Club engineer.

Rule 1-10: For insurance purposes Engineers and conductors on trains hauling the public **MUST** be qualified members of SOLS or a recognized live steam train club.

1-11: All operating personnel, while on duty, shall have a copy of these operating rules in their possession.

Note: Bruce Kelly has been examining our rules and will propose changes to be adopted.

NEXT SOLS MEETING

Our next meeting will be on Monday, November 25th at 7:15 P.M. inside the model railroad clubhouse. Hope you can join your friends there.

Minutes from the October 28 SOLS Membership Meeting

Meeting called at 7:15 p.m. – 30 members present.

Dale thanked the membership for all their hard work. He also reported that the last run day went smoothly. There were no derailments or breakdowns.

Minutes were read and approved, with a motion by David Turner and a second by Ron Butler.

TREASURER REPORT: Report, attached to these minutes, was read by Dale Butler, in the absence of Paul Sheedy.

Tony reported the total passenger count for the year was 35,573, which is an average of 635 passengers an hour! Dick Stark reported a total parking of 6,000 cars. It was a busy season.

TRACK SUPERINDENDENT: Tony spent half of October gathering leaves, black walnut pods, and fallen branches. He and Elvin took advantage of the unseasonably good weather (for this time of the year) with landscape maintenance. They sure could use some help.

The tracks are in very good shape, considering the beating 1,000 train movements make a month. Tony is still working on replacing ties on both sides of the Cedar Flats crossing. Fixed 120 feet of the curve going upgrade on the Mountain Division where Butler's train derailed several times during the Oct 13 run day. There were no derailments there on the last run day.

All the miniature houses will be put away this week, the porta-potty will be picked up, the water shut off, and the tables from the outside gazebo will be brought in from outside the fence.

ELECTRICAL REPORT: Rocky reported that the Mountain Division signal is temporarily repaired. Those signals not working will be repaired over the winter. After working for three hours on the signal coming into the yard, the problem was still not solved. Rocky has plenty of time to get these problems solved.

ROUNDHOUSE REPORT: Glen Pfister's Locomotive has been painted by Art Turner to Western Pacific colors. Dale said that Mr. Pfister has to pay for repairs to his locomotive, as each owner has to pay for repairs made to his own train. This is already being done by the Pfister family.

LANDSCAPE REPORT: Elvin asked if anyone wants walnuts. The husks can be removed in a cement mixer! Actually he and Tony are ahead of schedule on the leaf and walnut patrol. Elvin needs new sides on the trailer; a couple of pieces of plywood would do. If another porta-potty is ordered next season he does not want to be responsible for hanging around all day to let the cleaning crew in. Therefore, the porta-potty company will be given the combination to the lock on the gate.

BEANERY REPORT Terri said it was a great year, with popcorn being extremely popular. Last Run Day we sold out completely by 1:30. Dale said that anyone can have the unsold diet pop, as it does not keep, but not the regular pop as it will keep until next season.

NEW BUSINESS: The Rotary Club contacted Tony because they would like to have a charity Christmas event during December. This event would be a fund raiser for children to be sent to Portland for special dental care. All we would do is provide the trains, and would get 10% of the gate. However there are many, many problems the organizers will need to overcome first. A few of the problems to overcome are:

1. There is no lighting at night around our layout in the park. The event would be at night with Christmas lighted displays around our layout, but there are no electrical power sources outside the station to power the displays.
2. The City will have shut off the water. No water, therefore no public rest rooms.
3. Parking attendants would have to be provided by the organizers, and there is only one parking lot light!

The event committee is coming to the park on Nov.1st to look it over. Tony feels that their “balloon” will burst as there are just too many logistical problems to overcome.

As a big thank you, the fine people at District Fire Station No. 4 will be given a gift certificate for a free two-train party for scheduling next year at the winner’s discretion.

Once again Holly and Nadine Snyder are opening their home to the club for our annual Christmas party. The date has been changed since our last meeting. The party will be on Saturday, Dec. 21 and will begin earlier this year at 5:30 p.m. [More details will follow later in this newsletter.]

The annual Rogue Valley Railroad Show is Thanksgiving weekend, Nov30-Dec01. Those members bringing their trains to display are Art, Skip, Dave H. and Dale. We’re looking forward to very successful show once again.

Charlie moved we adjourn; Art second. We adjourned at 8:00 p.m.

2013 SEASON RECAP Upon closing our gates after this season’s last public run day on October 27th, I’ll use a little space here to reflect how we did. With so many attractions across the nation not lasting more than ten years, the fact we just completed our 32nd year of operation is very rewarding and deserves a bit of breast beating.

This year ended up being our second busiest year in history in giving free train rides. (Last year was our busiest with 37,335 passengers.) For our fourteen public run days our mainline trains carried 29,685 passengers, and our Thomas & Friends trains carried 5,888 passengers, for a total ridership of 35,573. This translated to an average of 635 passengers per hour – which is amazing! On our April 28th “Run Day” this year we averaged 903 passengers per hour! Another way to look at it is we run about 1,000 total train movements over our tracks per month during the operating season. This counts the public run days, the 120 private parties this year, and normal “play time” and maintenance trains.

Three of our 2013 run days occurred when the weather was bad enough to keep the crowds away, and another coincided with the annual Pear Blossom Festival in town. For most of the year we were ahead of last year's record, but we're not going to cry over having our second best year ever. Just three years ago we set a new record by giving rides to 21,700.

Private parties were another great success story this year. Even though we restricted ourselves to no more than two parties per day, we hosted 118 parties, down slightly from the record 128 parties last year. I don't have the final figures yet, but I believe we actually did more in sales and donations from these parties than last year.

The wonderful gals in the beanery performed sales magic while working in such a confined area. Many times they sold over 200 hot dogs, plus who knows how many sausage dogs, beverages, souvenirs, breakfast sandwiches, ice cream and more. Don Miller must have sold a million bags of popcorn this year. During our final run day he sold 189 bags of popcorn during the first two or so hours. He would have sold more, but we ran out of popcorn. (I wonder if Don eats popcorn at home. Probably not!)

This year was similar to previous years in that there were new attractions around our layout for the public to enjoy. Dave Herzog spent a lot of time expanding his historic "Butte Creek Mill" structure located between the two mainlines. The water pump he installed pumped lots of water from the holding pond, down the flume and into the mill complex, where it exits the other side into a creek for return to the holding pond.

You couldn't miss the most notable changes; that being three new retaining walls around the back side of our layout. Until this year the area was a rocky, weed-covered eyesore with nothing going for it until Elvin added the three block walls. Not only are the three walls up, but they are being back-filled to create level terraces. This is also the site of our new "Cat County" feature. Through a contact from Dave Herzog we received fifty cubic yards of good, clean dirt from a contractor building a swimming pool in the area. This dirt will also be used to beautify other areas of our layout. It just keeps getting better.

Not to be overlooked is the one new attraction that proved more popular than we'd thought possible. It is the wooden playground locomotive donated to us in February by Medford's Parks & Recreation Department. Previously located at another City park for a dozen years, it looked brand new after a complete restoration by the Parks Department. We'd be rich if we had a nickel for every child that played on that locomotive.

RAILROAD PARK NEWS Our two October run days fall into the "What the Heck" category. We fully expected to see a very large crowd come to the park on October 13th, but it wasn't all that busy. The sun was out, the temperatures were in the 70s, fall colors were beginning to show, but it was very slow for the first 90 minutes, but after that it was very busy. Passenger count was almost the same as for the same date last year.

For those Railroad Park volunteers on the final run day on October 27th, it will be one to talk about for years. The forecast was for sunny skies and temperatures around 65 degrees, with a 30% chance of showers in the evening. The public arrived slowly at first, but within thirty minutes the waiting line was three rows deep. We had enough trains running to allow me to go around the park and photograph all the club operations.

By 1:00 p.m. it was warm enough to shed our jackets and sweaters. We all thought, "Is this a great run day or what?" It soon turned out to be "or what?" Within one round-trip on the layout the sun disappeared and it cooled down considerably. And then the wind suddenly appeared from the west. The wind blew so hard that it removed nearly all the leaves from the five giant black walnut trees next to our tracks. Combined with a light sprinkling of rain, the leaves actually stung our faces. The weather turned bad enough to force much of the public to go home.

The layout was a thick sea of yellow leaves and black walnut pods between the propane spur switch, and the Cedar Flats road crossing. It was only the movements of many trains that allowed engineers to actually see the rails above the leaves. This mess came after Elvin and I had cleared all the previous day's leaves and walnut pods before the park opened. One blessing is that we no longer have to wait three more weeks for these trees to shed their leaves. Until this day I never experience seeing one "storm" remove so many leaves in such a short space of time. What a way to end the season.

OFF SEASON WORK PROJECTS As this newsletter goes to press I will briefly describe some of the work we will concentrate on during the next five months. Requiring immediate attention is the gathering and removal of leaves, walnut pods, and branches around the layout. Not having any large track projects to do this winter, Elvin and I agreed to try to stay on top by removing the debris on a daily basis. This was possible because of we are being blessed with an unusually long (and warm) "Indian Summer" this October.

After seeing tons of leaves being blown off on October 27th, it was really a good thing as after many hours of blowing leaves with leaf blowers, the leaves were concentrated in very large piles. Two days later, with help from Ron Butler, Mary Wooding, David Turner, and Marjorie Johnson, we worked with Elvin to rid the park of as much of the debris as possible. By late afternoon Elvin made three separate trips to dump the leaves at the local transfer station. It's too bad I didn't take "before and after" photos. The gang removed as much debris in five hours as Elvin and I would normally do in five or so days of work. Also thank you to Lee Parish for removing a ton of leaves from the top of the beanery and loading platform.

Although the worst of the fall leaf work is about done, the tons of leaves from the maple and other "leafy" trees are now falling. A few hours of your help would go a long, long way towards easing our workload and making the park look great. Contact Elvin (541-301-5924) or myself (541-944-9176) if you can spare a few hours. We need your help.

Another off season project underway is the storage of selected outdoor miniature buildings, picnic tables and benches. Being blessed with a large covered passenger loading structure it's a great choice to store these items for the winter. David Turner and I moved all the miniature buildings from the "Bear Country" curve, but for now have left a few more outside until after hosting scheduled parties in November. Yes! We have three parties in November. Something we've never done before.

Our Signal Department (Rocky, Phil, Dean & Billie) hope to rid the system of all the gremlins that have popped up this year. For several months the signals on the Mountain Division have not function properly, but the crew has traced the problem to an area near the signal outside Tunnel No. 3. For reasons unknown the voltage drops on the Mountain Division up to this signal. They checked and replaced signal components with no success. During the final run day they plugged in a battery charger to the Mountain Division and everything worked as it should. Good luck Rocky on finding the problem.

In addition to the removal of leaves, branches and other debris, Elvin has other projects to do. Rick Aubin soon will cut many of the unneeded branches from the three giant Black Walnut trees in the Cedar Flats area. These trees are long overdue for pruning; especially the branches sticking far over the tracks. John Polacek will haul away the trimmings using his big trailer.

Elvin has ordered more cement blocks to beautify the last ugly area behind the station. I'm referring to the entrance outside Tunnel No. 1 and the slope leading to Summit Siding. Elvin will remove the larger rocks and take them to the NRHS chapter's motorcar-handcar track extension for use there. Elvin will fill behind a new retaining wall with some of the free dirt we received last month, and improve the big slope with a short terrace, dirt fill, and low maintenance shrubbery.

This is the first time in years I do not have a large track building project, so track repairs this winter will mostly consist of rail and tie replacement. I will also sort through the 250 feet or so of rail and ties we received from the estate of former SOLS member Julius Blenke. The rails show very little wear and will be useful to us, however, the curved sections are too sharp and will need to be "straightened" a bit for us to use. Most of the ties appear to be good, and the two switches will be rebuilt.

Elvin and I are discussing a few ideas on how to improve the appearance and safety of the area in front of the station. They are simple and could be ready for next season, weather and time permitting.

36th ANNUAL ROGUE VALLEY RAILROAD SHOW This year's Thanksgiving weekend Railroad Show will occur on Saturday, November 30th, and Sunday, December 1st, 2013. There are a few changes this year, such as the show time on Sunday, Dec.1 has been extended one hour (10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.) and now children 12 and under are free with a paid adult.

This is the one big fundraising event for the Railroad Park; therefore we want it to be successful. Each of the five Railroad Park clubs are assigned the same number of hours to staff the various "show jobs" required to receive their club's share of the show proceeds. Our club has already filled the show job slots assigned to us; however, because of their small size the Morse Telegraph Club cannot fill all their show jobs. Therefore, each year the Railroad Show Committee asks the other four clubs for help filling in those unfulfilled jobs.

If you can help the Morse Telegraph Club by filling one of their unfulfilled slots, you have the choice whether you want credit to go to the Live Steamers or the Morse Telegraph Club. The other clubs also have equal opportunity to fill these slots, so selection will be on a rotating basis.

Those SOLS members not scheduled to a show job slot are invited to help staff our own exhibition floor table displays. We will sell club souvenirs, hand out information sheets, answer questions, and in general, just have a fun time talking with the public about our club and the Railroad Park. You will need a Railroad Show name badge to be there, so please contact me (Tony Johnson) at 541-944-9176 or by e-mail at SPFlimsie@aol.com so I can have badges made.

Finally, all those who have signed up for "show Jobs" will receive in the mail a complete three-day schedule highlighting the days, hours, job description they signed up for.

TWO IMPORTANT EVENTS IN DECEMBER The Live Steamers have two important events to be held in December. One is our annual Live Steamers Potluck Christmas Dinner at Holly and Nadine Snyder's home in Medford. **The date is Saturday, December 21st, beginning at 5:30 P.M.** Their address is 340 Orchard View Terrace in Medford. We ask everyone to bring a main dish, side dish, salad, dessert or snack to the party.

Each year the quantity, quality and variety of food is outstanding. You will not lose weight at the party. Watch out for Art's spicy chili. I bet Laura Turner will bring lots of her great homemade cookies. [I'm starting to salivate!] Just bring a big appetite. Drinks will be provided.

The other event will be a new one for the Live Steamers, and it could be just the event the public has been asking about for many years. It is special train runs after dark with lighted Christmas displays around our layout.

Two years ago I was approach by Darren Ravassipour of the Medford Rogue Rotary Club. Back then he informally inquired if it would be possible for the Rotary to set up lighted Christmas displays around our layout, and for us to give rides on special trains after dark.

In their own words, "The mission of the event is to (1) provide a safe, holiday experience for all people in the Valley, (2) make it affordable for all socioeconomic levels, and (3) raise money for Medford Rogue Rotary and its Foundation." [They do a lot of charitable work through their Foundation.] For our effort the Live Steamers will get 10% of the gate receipts.

I told him some of the logistic hurdles they would have to overcome first before we could even consider participating in such an event.

Last month Darren contacted me again and asked for a meeting at Railroad Park for himself and other members of the Rotary. When we met on Nov. 28th I handed to all of them a prepared list I made listing our concerns that they would have to address. The most obvious ones are: (1) There is no electricity available around most of our layout. (2) There is only one parking lot light, plus they would need to provide lighting from the front gate to our station. (3) The water would have already been turned off by the Park Dept. No water = no public restrooms. (4) We would need enough ambient light around our tracks and trains to maintain our safety standards. (5) We need to keep the public from wandering off to other areas of the park.

They carefully read my list and it appears I underestimated how organized they are. They will bring in portable generators to run the lighted displays where electricity is not available; mostly in our Mountain Division. They will set up a floodlight tree to light the pathway from the gate to our station, plus additional lighting in the parking lot. The Parks & Recreation Dept. (some are in this Rotary) promised the water will be on and the public restrooms opened. They will have portable lighting around our tracks where needed. They will post volunteers at our "Keep Out" barriers to make sure the public doesn't go where we don't want them to.

Although more details will emerge at our next meeting with the Rotary on Dec. 3, this is what we Live Steamers are expected to do. **Run trains only!** The Rotary will have parking lot attendants. They will sell and collect the tickets. They will provide security, including a Medford Public safety officer. They will sell hot chocolate, coffee and popcorn from our beanery. They will have either live musicians (carolers), or piped-in Christmas season music from a D.J. type vehicle. I believe they will have Santa Claus there for kids to have their picture taken. There is more that will happen than I have space to list here. It is designed so that the public will pay for one ride, ride the train, buy hot drinks and popcorn, see Santa, listen to music, and then leave. If they want to ride the train again, they would need to buy additional tickets.

They ask for us to provide at least three trains and crews. Coinciding with the safe operation of our trains, we will slow down our trains as they pass the lighted displays so the public can enjoy the ride. I figure the ride length at about 12 minutes. This will be a two-day event to be held on **Friday, Dec. 13 and Sat. Dec. 14; both days from 4:00-9:00 p.m.** (Trains will start running around 5:00 p.m.) This is why we asked Holly to reschedule our Christmas Potluck Dinner.

More details will be in next month's MANIFEST. Please consider helping everyone out by volunteering to run the special trains. It is extremely important that we do our small share.