

THE MANIFEST

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Minutes from the Monday, August 25, 2014 SOLS Membership Meeting

Meeting called to order at 7:15 with 18 Members and two guests present.

Dale said Run Day, yesterday (August 24) was a good day and thanked everyone for coming out and working hard to make it a good day.

Minutes were read. Lee Parrish moved to approve and Charlie Nix second. The motion carried and the minutes approved.

Dale mentioned that the reason the Insurance Policy premium was raised was because it was written wrong.

TREASURERS REPORT: Tony gave the Treasurer's Report, which are attached to these minutes.

SUPERINTENDANTS REPORT: Tony replaced fifteen ties on the rails on the trestle approach to the transfer table. Thirty more ties were replaced in various areas. Built several more 10-ft. track panels. Fixed 6 foot curved section on the Mountain division. Leveled several spots on the mainline where the rails joined. Repaired the summit siding switch. Rebuilt second switch donated by Glen and Julie... and mowed the lawns.

ELECTRICAL REPORT: In the absence of Rocky there was no Electrical Report.

ROUNDHOUSE REPORT: Art replaced the pump seal in SP8182, and he has greased almost all the rolling stock.

CONSTRUCTION REPORT: Lee said there wasn't too much to do but he did replace the yard light. (We are impressed! - Tony)

LANDSCAPE REPORT: Elvin suggested a shade cover for the area where the children and their parents wait for Thomas. The cover will be 18x36 at a cost of \$1600.00. The fence by the loading area for Thomas will need to be moved because it gets too congested in that area. Lee so moved and Art second. The motion carried. Irrigation System in the "Bear Country" area needs to be completed. This will be a Spring time project. Willament Graystone has donated eight pallets plus of cement blocks to the park. We are most grateful for this Gift. Thank You.

BEANERY REPORT: In the absence of Jean, there is no report, however it is noted that Jean is leaving on a cross country trip. Carol Butler, Skip, John and Marsha's Granddaughter and Dale, if needed, will work in the Beanery.

Dale said there is a good report on Jerry Cooper. He is under Doctors care and is doing better after his surgery. [We miss seeing you at the park, Jerry.]

Dale thanked Loren for painting the cartoon figures. Dale also thanked Tony for the great shape the tracks are in.

Also a big Thank You for the Thomas Train Crew: John, Marsha, Boyd, Jodi and Skip. There are to be no more bubble whistles on any trains. They make too much of a mess. Besides every time someone blows the bubble whistle on the Thomas train the engineer stops because radios are not used on the Thomas train. Only whistles.

Julie feels the mural on the water tank is her fault. She has been reassured that it is not her fault, and to just let it go. (More about the mural later.)

Rules of the Month

Rule 2.19.2: When trains(s) approach location where a SOLS member is working on or close to track a train is on, Engineer will slow down his train to half speed and be prepared to stop short of worker no closer than 50 feet.

Rule 2.19.3: If track worker has not acknowledged approaching train, Engineer shall sound horn or whistle within 100 feet of track worker. Once track worker has acknowledged approaching train visually or by radio, train will continue at reduced speed unless instructed otherwise by track worker.

Rule 2.19.4: If track worker determines a track defect is serious enough to stop traffic for more than 10 minutes, he is to notify Station Master and train crews an alternate route, or stop all traffic.

NEXT SOLS MEETING

Our next meeting will be inside the model railroad clubhouse on Monday, September 29th at 7:15 P.M.

{Minutes, continued} Loren asked that the Conductors help load the trains.

Guest Don Green was asked to speak. Mr. Green is from Southern Oregon Community Service Corporation. He handed the club a \$2000.00 donation! As volunteers we all work very hard and it is wonderful to be so appreciated.

Dale said we are going to need new passenger car trucks, which Mike Butler can make during the winter when his business is slow. He just suggested to think about it for now.

Robert Michaels has handed in an application, Lee moved we accept his application and Art second. Motion carried. Welcome Bob (Robert).

Don't forget our Pot Luck Saturday, August 30, 2014. Come one, come all, and enjoy!!!

Charlie moved we adjourn Art second we adjourned at 8 P.M.

REMINDER! POTLUCK DINNER I'm hoping this newsletter reminder reaches everyone before August 30th. As mentioned last month, our annual Railroad Park potluck dinner will be held at our Live Steamers station area at 6:00pm on Aug. 30th. We will be running trains before and after dinner for everyone in the park. It's always special when we get to operate trains after dark.

Our club will provide 125 pieces of fried chicken. We ask all of you to bring one or two of the following: a main dish, a salad dish, a dessert, or snack items. Our club will provide bottled water and sodas. For hot food dishes there are plenty of electrical outlets available at the beanery counter.

We ask you to bring your food items no later than 5:50pm so that everything is on the table and ready to serve at 6:00pm. Bring your own eating utensils and plates. Don't forget serving spoons, cake cutters, ladles, etc. to serve your food items. We have some of these on hand, but not enough if everyone forgets.

So be sure you have your potluck food item on the serving tables no later than 5:50pm, otherwise your item will not be ready when we opening the chow line at 6:00pm.

HOT AUGUST RUN DAYS Our two runs days last month turned out to be more like the normal summer runs days we're used to seeing. In fact, both the August 10 and Aug. 24 run days ended up with nearly the same passenger count (2,551 vs. 2,552). The last run day in July had 2,589 passengers, and all three of these run days experienced temperatures in the high nineties/low one hundreds.

The Aug 10th run day was very hot, but cloudy skies prevented us from feeling like hot dogs on the beanery grill. Temperatures for the Aug. 25th run day were around 90 degrees, so the public showed up in large numbers the first three hours, and disappeared the last hour. Best of all there were no major operational problems with the train equipment or the tracks.

What amazes many of us is how popular our Thomas & Friends kiddie's trains are. As Dale Butler stated at the August 25 membership meeting, "When Bob [Dale's son] and I installed the loading area fence along the track, we had no idea how busy these trains would be. This train ride is far more popular than we planned."

It became apparent last year that the club should have allowed more space for loading the trains, and for the parents to wait and watch. To meet this challenge, at the August meeting Elvin Sinfield proposed erecting a 36' long x 18' wide carport structure to (1) keep the hot sun (or the occasional rain) off the trains and public at the station, and (2) widen and lengthen the loading area for more ease of passage for the public.

As Loren Synder has said, he has received many, many public complements about our new carport structure we installed in July at the end of our mainline loading area. The ample shade prevents the sun from turning our passenger car seats into pancake griddles as the trains wait to be loaded. The engine crews and stationmaster also enjoy the shade. Elvin said that having a similar structure over the Thomas trains station area will having the same benefits of keeping waiting passengers and the train equipment cool. It will likely increase the ridership and donations when the public feels more comfortable with their children.

To meet this need the membership voted to purchase the proper size carport and have it installed. The exact measurements will be set in a few days after we determine how much wider and longer we want this area to be. The entranceway needs to be at least a couple feet wider for easier passage as parents, often pushing strollers, move from the loading to unloading area, plus we will create a "photo area" south of the loading area for parents to photograph their children as the train departs the station. Hopefully all of this will be ready in time for our Sept. 14th run day.

PARK PROJECTS One thing you have to admit about our club, we don't sit around and keep our area of the park the same. Our club is torn between wanting to have a traditional Live Steamers layout where we can operate trains in a more or less prototypical fashion, and having to move thousands of passengers every run day; not counting the extra thousands we also carry on our 100+ private train parties each year.

If we had more space for additional track it would be possible to do both by separating the two themes, but that is not an option we have. For better or for worse the Medford Railroad Park has evolved into a very popular destination for the public. Just the number of visitors for the fourteen public runs days places our park No. 2 in terms of the most used city park in Medford.

Therefore, we have evolved to feel more like an amusement park than that of an operating Live Steamers club layout, such as found at Train Mountain, Sacramento, Los Angeles, and elsewhere around the country. This "double edge sword" is great in that it is so popular with the public, but it's also a challenge with having enough volunteers to handle and maintain it. I believe we're doing a tremendous job worthy of praise.

Surveys taken several years ago found that first time train riders visiting our park encompassed approximately 25 to 33% of the total passengers. Obviously this means that most of our guests are repeat visitors. To keep the public coming back we need a safe, family-friendly location with ample parking, and easy access to the park attractions. Offering good food, snacks, beverages, souvenirs, and shaded picnic areas is also important. But you still need to keep the public interested enough to want to come back again and again.

As far as our track layout, there is no longer any more room for expansion. The best we can do is "tweak" the track arrangement we have to whatever operational changes we face. Even before we reached this limit we knew we had to "beautify" the space we already had. The great majority of parks with Live Steamers clubs have plenty of tracks to operate trains over, but they lack the scenery that is just as important as the ride. I can think of one club that has about five miles of mainline track, but the ride is between a forest of trees on both sides. In a short space of time you lose interest, unless you love trains.

Fortunately for our club the fact there are three other railroad clubs within view of our trains has the added benefit of keeping our passenger's attention. About eight or so years ago we began to make a serious effort to keep our grass cut and the weeds down when Steve Bruff asked for additional hoses and sprinklers to aid in this effort. At the same time we purchased a new riding lawn mower to replace two old pieces of equipment that were lawn mowers in name only! Within a few months the usual brown hills and weed-covered area were replaced with green grass and trimmed trees.

Today's area is blessed with operating waterfalls, mills, block retaining walls, new miniature buildings, fences, underground sprinkling systems, flowers, new trees and bushes, signs, and much more. Some of these little changes seem a bit childish at first, but the public loves it, and it helps us spend less time to maintain the park.

As an example, prior to Elvin joining our club about four years ago, it would take me an average of 10 to 12 hours just to cut the grass inside our park. [This also counts cutting the grass for the Southern Oregon Railway Historical Society, as I'm also a member of that group.] If I had to cut the weeds too, that added another 2 to 4 hours. With all of Elvin's landscaping, the elimination of areas where only weeds once grew, and the sculpturing of the grass areas and trees, I can do the entire park in about three and a half hours. There is the added benefit whereby many of the areas changed by Elvin are now low maintenance – a necessity when Elvin and I are no longer able to maintain it ourselves.

Continuing with the subject of minor visual changes, I have to compliment Loren Snyder. Last year he erected the "Bear Hollow" sign to better designate the area where our silhouettes of bears around trees have been a public favorite for decades. A few more bear silhouettes were added, and he created our new

In the last three weeks he added two more cartoon features in Bear Hollow, and created a new feature over where four years ago we had no tracks and the area was hidden behind part of a old block wall, lots of tall weeds, and some small trees. As you pass over the diamond that separates Siburg Siding and our present mainline, you see a round area of decorative rocks and cactus plants Elvin designed to hide where the old block wall once stood. Loren got the idea of installing painted cutouts of the famous Warner Bros. "Road Runner" and "Wild E. Coyote" cartoon characters. It is a perfect match of scenery and characters. A sign in front of the two characters has the famous words "Beep Beep!" Great idea Loren.



Photo #1



Photo #2



These four images show Loren Snyder's latest addition to our layout. Photo #1 proves there is no hunting in Bear Hollow as a bear chases away a hunter. Photo No. 2 shows a hunter in hot water. The other two photos show the new addition near the mainline crossing over Siburg Siding. Wild E. Coyote chases the Road Runner among cacti growing in a rock garden designed by Elvin Sinfield.

BEAUTIFUL ART (no, not Art Turner!) I can't recall how long or how many times someone has suggested we paint a mural on the former sewage treatment plant settling tank - the large concrete tank across from our station. Several proposals have come and gone over the years, usually with the high price tag stopping the plan. In early August a friend of Julie Lyons was offered the plan to paint a mural on the tank. Julie asked for a design based on our newer Live Steamers club Tee-shirts, and the artist's fee was reasonable. After looking at photos of the artist previous work, the members gave the go-ahead at the July meeting.

The artist (Beau James) began with a high pressure cleaning of the tank wall. Using a sketch of the Tee-shirt design he took two days to outline and paint the design. The outcome was not quite what we thought it was supposed to be. It looks similar to what you'd find spray painted on the side of a railroad boxcar.

Julie was upset, but we told her not to worry. As E. Don Pettit told her, "But what if the public loves it?" As it turns out the public does love it. Really! Plus it's far better than looking at the dirty, old concrete tank wall. It kinda grows on you.



BLOCKBUSTER DEAL For the last several years in these newsletters we've documented the many retaining and decorative block walls built by Elvin. A few weeks ago Elvin needed to have one block cut by Willamette Graystone in Medford; the supplier Elvin uses. During his visit one of the management invited Elvin out back and showed his walls made with a variety of decorative blocks used for display purposes. He told Elvin they no longer needed those displays, and he could help himself to all of it. All he has to is load them on pallets and they will be delivered to the park. Loren has been helping Elvin loading the pallets.

Well! With an offer like that how could we refuse? Elvin says that some of the blocks are not your run of the mill blocks like he's been using. They are very decorative, and he'll use them on special projects. Elvin estimates we are getting about \$4,000 worth of free blocks. Thank you, Willamette Graystone and Elvin.

As this newsletter is written I am finishing another project I've put off for a couple of years. The summit switch has been out of service on account of the switch points not clearing enough to allow a train to pull into the siding. It's not really a siding anymore since I removed the west switch about four years ago. No one was using the siding, so I took one switch out for use elsewhere. The spur is long enough to put a disabled train in the clear, but we've never had a need to do that. In reality the only train that uses the spur is my work train, so that's why I never felt the need to fix the switch and realign the spur tracks until now. I have projects at home I've put off doing longer than this.

Art Turner is about done serving our club passenger cars and locomotives. He has a few more passenger cars left to do, plus one of the maintenance golf carts. Lee Parrish removed all the valves from the water system misters and soaked them in vinegar overnight to remove the mineral deposits. After installation the mister now works as it should, instead of dripping water on visitors.

WELCOME ABOARD At our August 25th meeting the attending members voted for approval of the application for membership of Robert "Bob" Michaels of Medford. Bob already has shown an interest in train operations and will begin training as a conductor at our train party of August 27th. Welcome aboard, Bob!

A VERY GENEROUS DONATION Also at our August 25th meeting, Mr. Don Green, which some of us know personally, came to present a special donation. Representing the Southern Oregon Community Service Corporation, Don presented Dale with a check to the Southern Oregon Live Steamers in the amount of \$2,000.00.

Upon receiving the check Dale and all members present applauded the organization and Don for their gracious donation. Don told us there are no restrictions on how we use the funds. It comes in very handy as 15 minutes earlier we approved the purchase and installation of the carport to cover our Thomas trains loading area. We will use part of this donation to pay for this improvement for the comfort of our visitors. Thank you, Don and your Southern Oregon Community Service Corporation.

Quote of the Month In early August over at Bear Hollow, Loren Snyder showed me where he planned to locate the new cartoon cutouts he made. As we walked back towards the station area, we noticed Elvin digging the dirt for his cucumber patch with the garden tractor. I say "noticed" because the garden tractor was making more noise than usual.

Loren yelled to Elvin, "Hey, your garden tractor is making a lot of noise!" And Elvin replied, "That's my tractor's sound system."



In another effort to improve service and safety, it was decided to add another car with regular seats behind our wheelchair car. Prior to the addition of this car, only a conductor could ride behind the passenger sitting in the wheelchair in front of him. This left out a spouse, caretaker, or other friends of the handicapped person from riding the same train. Now two more riders can go with the wheelchair rider, with the conductor occupying the rear



Another improvement project already underway is the leveling of the small area immediately south of our beanery. There has always been a downward slope towards the bypass track fence, making the area unusable. Elvin has been leveling the area with the garden tractor and adding dirt fill. He will build a low retaining wall with decorative blocks and level the spot with a gravel/recycled asphalt mix to create a hard service for picnic tables.

On August 22-23, a large party of H.O. scale modelers from the Willamette Model Railroad Club of Clackamas, OR were invited to run their trains on the Rogue Valley Model Railroad Club's beautiful layout. The two clubs held joint operating sessions; that is, running trains similar to that of



During the one hour break between two SOLS train parties we invited these members to experience a ride around our layout. To a person they were very impressed with our layout at Railroad Park. "We have nothing like this at all where we live," said several members after touring our