



The Passing Track

May-June 2007

Newsletter of the Rogue Valley Model Railroad Club

PO Box 1362—Medford, OR 97501

Home page is <http://rvmrc.railfan.net/>

Permanent Layout on Fast Track, But...

The Rogue Valley Model Railroad Club has put the construction of the permanent layout on the fast track. Extraordinary progress has been made in the last 6 months. With progress, however, comes growing pains. The Club has experienced several frustrating events in which completed work has been undone and redone, in some cases several times. As a famous movie line once quipped...*"what we have here is a failure to communicate."*

Dave Carr, our newly elected Club President, gave it to us straight up: communicate, communicate, communicate. Addressing both recent and past events where the lack of communication on modeling ideas and strategies have left a few members upset or caused them to leave the Club, Dave stressed the need for respect of personal ideas and creativity, yet to follow agreed upon plans. Members in attendance believed the issue was not over the general plan for the permanent layout, but how to tolerate the testing of ideas and creativity. Dave noted that there are some strong personalities in the Club with extraordinary talents that should be given

respect for their experience and wisdom. By the same token, there are many others in the Club who make equally important contributions, and they should likewise be respected. Dave believes if we improve our efforts to give one another ownership in the discussions, fact-finding and solutions that we will accomplish our common goal of building a first class model railroad. Dave's ultimate goal: "finish" the layout and still be friends.



Thoughts on P&E Signals

By Larry Tuttle

The consensus of the club members is that we want to consider some sort of signal system on the permanent layout. While it is highly unlikely that the real P&E would have had signals, the case has been made that signals would enhance our operations, especially on Sundays. They would also serve to educate us and the public about railroad signals.

As most of you know, I've spent many, many days with Rick Perry, signal maintainer on the Central Oregon & Pacific. I feel privileged to have learned from him and been allowed to observe and photograph much of CORP's signal system. If we are to have signals, I propose to have a prototypically realistic signal system. I am suggesting a "poor man's ABS" (Automatic Block Signal) system. This is akin to what CORP has done with the Siskiyou line. Their system indicates occupancy of the next two blocks and protects against broken rail, misaligned switches and clearances fouled by rolling stock.

Operating Authority. One thing which an ABS signal does not do is authorizing a train to use the track it's protecting. CTC (Centralized Traffic Control) does grant authority, but it's very expensive and appropriate only for heavily traveled rail lines. Authority to occupy a track on the P&E would come from two sources. One: the Dispatcher issues a Track Warrant to proceed from point A to point B. The signal only confirms that this track isn't occupied and has no detectable defects. Two: Yard Limits allow a train to move at a specified speed prepared to stop short of another train operating in Yard Limits. Yard Limits are designated by a big yellow "Y" (Yard Board) along the right side of the track. A Track Warrant will give authority up to the Yard Board. Within Yard Limits, however, no Track Warrant is necessary and it's up to each train crew to work together and stay out of each other's way. For our purposes, Operating Authority rules would be in effect during Op Sessions, but not on Sunday run days. In other words, during Op Sessions we run a railroad and on Sundays we just run trains.

The Signals If you have studied the SP's ABS system, you'll have noted that at each end of each siding there's a pair of signals just past the points of the switch. If an engineer approaching one of these signals observed a "green" indication, he knew he was clear to proceed to the next siding. If it was yellow, he could proceed at reduced speed prepared to stop short of the next signal. If the signal was red, he was to stop short of the fouling point of the switch between him and the signal, allowing oncoming traffic clear passage over the switch and into the siding or main (whichever was unoccupied). Notice that this signal gives no information on the position of the switch. That was up to the engineer to determine and align as necessary. Now, if you notice (or remember in the case of the Semaphores), each signal has a number board on it. This number conveys two pieces of information: first, what milepost the signal is at (the four digit number is a mile post in tenths of a mile); and second, that this is a Permissive signal. Permissive means that a train coming up to a red indication must come to a full stop, but may proceed at Restricted Speed prepared to stop short of broken rail, another train or equipment fouling the track within one half his range of vision. Coming up on a siding, if the main was clear and the block beyond the siding was also clear, the signal would show green or clear. If only the main to the end of the siding was clear (like another train was going into the siding), the signal would show yellow or Approach. Of course if the main was occupied the signal would show red or Stop and Proceed.

On the P&E we would have a pair of signals just past the points of switches for sidings. Also, there'd be a pair of Intermediate signals mid way between sidings as needed. In the Medford/White City area, we could forgo signals altogether since that trackage would be in Yard Limits and easily visible to the operating crew. However, we probably would want signals going onto the Siskiyou Line (aka lower level staging) by Medco.

GN Influence and Era. Given the GN/SP&S influence on the P&E, it would be logical that the signals would reflect GN practice. On the Oregon Trunk around Bend and on the GN line to Vancouver, BC, H-2 Searchlight signals were used. These signals would suggest that the installation

took place well before our operating era. More modern signals, tri-lights and stack lights would suggest a more modern installation.

Costs. A reasonably detailed and proportioned three-aspect single head signal retails for about \$30 each. Add in detection circuitry, even if built by one of our members, and we're around \$100 per block. We are looking at a total cost of \$3,000 or more for a decent, bare bones signal system on our layout.

Another Option. Given the cost and complexity of a plausible ABS signal system, a reasonable alternative, at least for now, is to incorporate block detection where we feel we need it and place the actual signals some place other than next to the track. Even three color lights placed up on the windowsills, or another high, out of the way location, would provide operators with block occupancy information. If this option works well during op sessions, the detection could be expanded into a full ABS system.

As a member of the Signal Gang, I am proposing that all further acquisition of equipment and installation of hardware and wiring for the signal systems be stopped until we get our plan together. At the very least, all of the Signal Gang should be on the same page and in agreement with the plan before we go further. And the Signal Gang needs to report back to the Club about what is going on and what it will entail. We've come a long way in the last six or eight months. The scenery pictures show an incredible amount of progress since the first of this year. It might be time to take a break and slow down a little. Finish off a few more scenes and let the signals rest for a while. If someone really wants to keep going on signals, then perhaps work on grade crossing signals, which require no track wiring or re-wiring.

So, now we're confronted with the desire for a signal system. We've discovered that a significant amount of the layout will need to be re-wired in order to make the signals work as they should. The Signal Gang has decided to go ahead with detection and some sort of signals on the two hidden sections of the layout. The current operating plan is to see how these signals work and then reconsider if we want to continue with a signal system on the rest of the main line...but only with an agreed upon plan in hand. Lesson learned!

(Editor's Note: The Signal Gang is continuing to develop a signal plan for presentation to the Board and discussion/voting by the membership.)

May Board Meeting

There was no May Board Meeting due to a quorum not being present.

June Board Meeting

The meeting was called to order at 7:35 p.m. with three board members and five club members present. There was no treasurer (Bruce McGarvey is on vacation), but E. Don reported on the club's finances. The Club maintains a healthy financial balance. The largest expenditures of the year thus far were for insurance, the permanent layout and utilities.

The Railroad Park Development group reported back to each of the Railroad Park user groups. RVMRC members representing the Club on this park-wide committee are Brad Fawcett and Dick Stark. Parking attendants was one of the topics discussed. The Railroad Park Development group agreed that each Club (excluding the Morse Telegraph group) will provide a person or persons for staffing the Railroad Park parking lot and the adjacent parking areas in the Medford Fire Department Facility during the Sunday Public run sessions. This results in the RVMRC needing five persons (which includes 1 person for parking attendant) for each time slot on Sunday. Not all of the discussion on this topic is reflected in the notes.

(Ed. Note...having spent last Sunday being an attendant, I can attest to the effectiveness of having three persons in the parking areas. Radios are provided for communication and the orange vests provide both recognition for drivers and safety for the attendants. As the temperatures warm, be sure to wear sunscreen and take water to drink. Each shift lasts 1 hour).

Jim Dougall reported that the *Rail Model Journal* magazines donated to the Club by Kadee Quality Products are now in the library and the filing cases for these magazines have been labeled.

Jay Mudge and Larry Tuttle discussed having Saturday afternoon programs on the topic of Digital Command Control (DCC). The June 24th General Membership meeting will have another hands on training session on operation of DCC throttles.

Dave Spakousky reported that the operation of the permanent layout is going well. Dave said he has some ideas on detection in regard to operating the permanent layout using signal display. We will need to clean up and renew the wiring schematic for the permanent layout. Jay Mudge showed the group some electrical feed wires that are already made up and can be used. Dave discussed changes and work progress at Eagle Point. The industries or businesses at that location will be a wood products mill with rail capacity for 2 box cars and 2 log cars; a feed mill with 1 hopper or 1 box car; and a propane dealer with 1 propane tank car.

The wood products mill in Eagle Point will result in elimination of one lumber mill in White City and also eliminate the need for a covered hopper (grain/feed) going to White City. The elimination of the lumber mill in White City will then allow an expansion of the rural landscape between Eagle Point and White City.

Some cars on the layout need repair or upgrading (e.g. existing knuckle couplers need to be changed to Kadee couplers; also some cars need additional weight; car wheelsets need to be checked to improve rolling capability, etc.).

Jim Dougall made a motion proposing a committee of four club members (Dave Spakousky, Dave Carr, Jay Mudge, and Larry Tuttle) to analyze the permanent layout signal system needs and investigate equipment currently available on the market. This committee will report back to the RVMRC Board with their findings and recommendations at the June 27th General Membership meeting, or as soon as possible thereafter. The motion passed.



New Board Installed

The Membership elected a new board for the 2007-2008 term. Dave Carr was elected President; Dave Spakousky was elected vice-president; Bruce McGarvey was elected treasurer; and Jim Dougall, secretary. Dick Stark was nominated to be the at-large Board member.

Passages and Prayers

The Club wishes to extend its condolences and prayers for the families of Marvin Cluff, former RVMRC member in the late 1990's, Wil Cleveland, whose wife passed away on May 6, 2007, and Bob Griffith, whose wife passed away June 26, 2007.



Marvin George Cluff

Marvin George Cluff, 54, a resident of Fairbanks, AK, passed away on Tuesday, May 8th, 2007 in his home of cancer. Marvin was born November 19, 1952 in Mesa, AZ to Raymond and Eileen Cluff, and was the 6th of 7 children. He grew up and attended school in Ashland, OR, graduating in 1971.

He married Susan Linnette Jones of Malad, ID in the Ogden UT LDS temple on May 6, 1977. In 2004 they decided to move up to Fairbanks, AK to be near their children. He enjoyed model railroading and has built many of his own tracks and bridges throughout the years. This last year he designed and built a G scale bridge. He enjoyed hiking, backpacking, skiing, and most recently had been taking ultralight flying lessons before he became too ill to continue.

Muriel V. Cleveland

Muriel V. Cleveland, wife, mother, grandmother and great grandmother, passed away May 6, 2007 at RVMC after a long illness. She is survived by her husband (Wil Cleveland), 8 children, 20 grandchildren and 16 great-grandchildren. She was preceded in death by one son, and one daughter.

Winona L. Griffith

Winona L. Griffith, wife of Club Member Bob Griffith, passed away June 26, 2007. She was raised in Iowa, was a well known square dance caller, drove a school bus, and worked in a bank. She was a Master Gardener, enjoyed miniatures, and was active in the Medford Senior Club. Bob and Winona were married for 60 years and had two sons.

July Calendar of Events

All events in the Clubhouse at the Railroad Park unless otherwise noted.

Sunday Public Run Sessions

Sunday, July 8 and 22
10:30 AM to 3:00 PM

**General Construction/New Layout
Saturdays**
Generally From 10:00 AM to 3 PM

Board Meeting:
2nd Wednesday of each month
7:30 PM to 9:00 PM

**Construction/Cleanup Sessions:
Thursdays**
7:30 PM to 9:00 PM

General Membership Meeting
4th Wednesday of each month
7:30 PM to 9:00 PM

RAILROAD TIME CARDS 2007

July 6-8 – Dunsmuir Railroad Days, Locomotives and rolling stock, Speeder rides, Model railroad displays, Food court, meet local authors, and more. Dunsmuir, Calif. Info: www.dunsmuirrailroaddays.com

July 22-28 – NMRA 2007 Convention - National Train Show. Detroit Marriott Renaissance Center, Detroit, Michigan. <http://www.nmra.org/2007/>

July 28-29 & Aug 4-5 – 37th Edition The Great Oregon Steam-Up, Antique Powerland Museum, Brooks, Ore. 7am-6pm. Info: 503-393-2424 www.antiquepowerland.com

Aug 8-12 - Treasure Valley Express, PNR Convention, Boise, Idaho. Info: Bruce McCosh 208-386-9629 or <http://pnr.nmra.org/3div/tve2007a.htm>

Sep 22 – West Side Train Show & Swap Meet, National Guard Armory, Forest Grove, Ore. 10am – 3pm. Info: Ken Jackson 503-357-8753, westsidetrainshow@comcast.net

Oct – Fall 1st Div PNR Mini-Meet to be held in the Newport/Toledo area. Stay tuned for details when available.

Oct 13-14 – Central Oregon Live Steamers & Eastern Cascades Model Railroad Club Open House, 21520 Modoc Lane, Bend, Ore. Info: 541-317-1545.

Nov 24-25 – 30th Annual Rogue Valley Railroad Show, Medford Armory, 1701 S. Pacific Hwy, Medford, Ore. Info: Bill at 541-821-5547 or Brad 541-535-7952.

If you know of shows not listed here please let me know so we can share that information with our readers.

Contact Bruce at iwcr@charter.net or 541-890-8145. 06/09/2007bhm.

Enjoy some oldies on aging as my thoughts for the month:

- Eventually you will reach a point when you stop lying about your age and start bragging about it.*
- Some people try to turn back their odometers. Not me, I want people to know "why" I look this way. I've traveled a long way and some of the roads weren't paved.*

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