



The Passing Track

November 2010

Newsletter of the Rogue Valley Model Railroad Club

PO Box 1362—Medford, OR 97501

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

Annual Rogue Valley Railroad Show

Thanksgiving is approaching and that simply means "it's showtime"! The 2010 version of the Rogue Valley Railroad Show begins Saturday, November 27 at 10 a.m. and concludes on Sunday at 4 p.m. In between, thousands of people will enjoy model railroad displays, exhibits, swap tables, door prizes and the raffle. Proceeds benefit the Medford Railroad Park.

In order to be ready to go on Saturday, participants in the show set up the previous day, Friday, the day after Thanksgiving. While shoppers rush to the early morning specials and door busters, we gather at the Clubhouse to load up the modules, drive over to the Medford Armory and begin the task of setting up the layout. Here is how you can help. Be at the Clubhouse on Friday, November 26, at 8 a.m. to help load the truck (sure it is a bit of lifting, but easier than fighting off hungry shoppers). It takes 3-4 hours to fully set up the layout, so those who can spend the day at the Armory are appreciated.

For those who are not familiar with the drill, the clubs receive a share of the proceeds based on the number of hours (proportion of the total) each club works. While each club is given a specific number of slots from the start, not all of the jobs get filled. Thus, there are other opportunities to work a two-hour shift and contribute to the club's overall work hours, and consequently, the club coffers. More important, the Rogue Valley Club needs to make sure it fulfills the work slots we are given, so as not to lose the money making opportunity.

When all of the fun is over Sunday, there is a mad rush to take everything down and clear the Armory. That is another time when all hands need to be on deck, as the Armory expects everyone to be out by before 7 p.m.

The Club also provides the manpower for the HO kid's layout, which is moved to and from the Armory from East Medford with the rental truck the Club uses for its move. This situation further complicates the logistics and the removal on Sunday; hence, the reason to have as many people available as we can muster.

Don't forget that in addition to working our jobs, we run trains on the layout. We generally run both DC and DCC, so it is an opportunity to run the trains you have not converted to run at the Clubhouse. One last important point. Please take the time to converse with our guests. There are many visitors to the show that like to learn a thing or two about model railroading, or perhaps, as some of us have, join the Club because someone made them feel a part of the Club family when they first approached us at the Show. See you at the Show!

One Good Show Deserves Another

The end of October meant a trip to Klamath Falls to the second annual Klamath Railroad Show to raise funds for the Klamath Rails Club. Bruce McGarvey, Brad Fawcett, and Art Mckee led a small contingent of Club members to the eastside, and were joined by a number of Rogue Valley Club members that reside in Klamath Falls. While attendance was a bit lower than in the past, people who came to the show were able to enjoy some fun model railroading.



Ken Dencer makes some last minute adjustments on his steamer.



Joe Brick, Brad Fawcett, and Jim Fisher smile for the camera

I Know What You Did Last Summer

by Brad Fawcett

The title of a teen classic movie is appropriate for Brad and Kris Fawcett. This past summer they spent some unusual time railfanning...on their bikes, and on the Milwaukee Road's famous "Hiawatha Line" which ran from Chicago to Seattle. And now the rest of the story...

The portion of the route that passed through the Bitterroot Mountains in western Montana and the Idaho panhandle was long regarded as one of the most breathtaking scenic stretches of railroad in the country. Built between 1906 and 1910, this portion of the Hiawatha Line handled freight and passenger traffic into the 1970's. For a while, large portions of the line were electrified, creating the longest electrified railroad line in the world. Due to competition from interstate highways and the airlines, as well as plain old mismanagement, the Milwaukee Road went bankrupt in 1977. The last train passed through the Bitterroots on the Hiawatha Line in 1980.

As part of the U.S. Forest Service's "Rails to Trails" program, 15 miles of the Hiawatha Line, starting at the Montana/Idaho border and going west, were converted into a bicycle trail in the late 1990's. While in Spokane, my wife and I took a one-day excursion and bicycled down the "Route of the Hiawatha".



The scenery was every bit as spectacular as advertised. The winding route goes through nine tunnels and over seven tall trestles. Most of this portion of the line runs southeast along one side of Loop Creek (a small tributary of the St. Joe River), makes a 180 degree turn at the end of the small canyon, and then doubles back down the other side of the canyon to the northwest. The trail drops slowly but steadily, losing about 1000 feet in altitude over the 15-mile stretch. Thus, at many points during the first half of the ride, you can look down and across the canyon and see the trail and trestles below. During the second half, you can look up and across and view the trail above.



Note the wooden centenary structures still mounted on this trestle

Of course, the tunnels and trestles are a large part of what makes this bicycle ride unique and interesting. The trail starts with the famous Taft Tunnel at St. Paul Pass on the Idaho/Montana border. This tunnel is 8771 feet long - about 1.7 miles. It's hard to describe the eerie feeling of peddling in the darkness through a tunnel of that length. (Bicycle lights and helmets are required, of course). It takes about 10 to 15 minutes to pass through the tunnel at moderate bicycling speeds. As you enter the eastern portal, the western portal is just a small pinpoint of light that very, very gradually gets larger as you pedal along. The other eight tunnels are more modest in length, ranging from 1516 feet to 178 feet long. The largest of the seven steel trestles crosses Kelly Creek and is 850 feet long and 230 feet high; the smallest trestle at Russell Creek is 281 feet long and 96 feet high. Over 40 interpretive signs along the route share the colorful history of this stretch of the Milwaukee Road and the mining encampments it serviced. Railroad signposts have mileage markers indicating how far you are from the eastern end of the line in Chicago.



The trail runs gently downhill the entire route, and is an easy ride even for non-experienced bicyclists and children. Upon reaching the bottom, a shuttle bus takes you and your bicycle back to the top – for a small fee, of course. (We did encounter a few hardy folks riding up the trail.) There is a catch, however – the shuttle bus drops you at the western portal of the Taft Tunnel, and you must bicycle eastbound back through the 1.7-mile tunnel to return to your car.

I know that some of our Historical Society members are probably aghast at the very thought of the “Rails to Trails” program. Nonetheless, I would highly encourage railfans visiting that part of the country to give the Route of the Hiawatha a try. It was a truly unique and enjoyable experience. More information is available at the website: www.skilookout.com/hiawatha

November 2010 Calendar of Events

General Construction/New Layout

Saturdays

Generally From 10:00 AM to 4 PM

Board Meeting

2nd Wednesday of each month

November 10

7:00 PM to 8:30 PM

Operations Session**

2nd Saturday of each month

November 13

10 am to 3 pm

Cancelled--General Membership Meeting

4th Wednesday of each month

7:00 PM to 8:30 PM

Instead, see you at the RR Show!

**Please sign up for engineer and conductor assignments upon arrival. By coming before the session starts, you have time to setup/acquire throttles, radios, and motive equipment, if needed, as well as become familiar with the assignment. Operations session begins promptly at 10:30.

Rogue Valley Model RR Club
P.O. Box 1362
Medford, OR 97501

RAILROAD TIME CARDS 2010

Nov 12 – World War I History, Dr. Robert Harrison. Second Friday at the Ashland Historic Railroad Museum, 258 A Street, Suite 7 (upstairs), Ashland, Ore. Program starts at 6:30 pm. Info: 541-261-6605, <http://www.ashlandrrmuseum.org/>

Nov 13-14 – 34th Annual International Railfair, Placer County Fairgrounds, 800 All American City Blvd, Roseville, Calif., Sat 10-5, Sun 10-4. For more information: www.internationalrailfair.com

Nov 27-28 - 33rd Annual Rogue Valley Railroad Show, Medford Armory, 1701 S. Pacific Hwy, Medford, Ore. Setup Fri, Show open Sat 10-5, Sun 11-4. Model exhibits, swap meet, raffle/door prizes and more. Info: Brad at 541-535-7952 or Bruce 541-890-8145 or iwcr@charter.net

Dec 4 – Railroad Show & Swap Meet, Willamette Valley Model Railroad Club, Polk County Fairgrounds, Hwy 22 & 99W, Rickreal, Ore. 10 am – 3 pm, Info: Judy 503-581-6071 or macinnej@msn.com

Dec 10 – Ashland's Golden Spike – Dr. Sue DeMarinis. Second Friday at the Ashland Historic Railroad Museum, 258 A Street, Suite 7 (upstairs), Ashland, Ore. Program starts at 6:30 pm. Info: 541-261-6605, <http://www.ashlandrrmuseum.org/>

Looking ahead to events for **2011**:

Jan 15-16 – The Great Train Expo, Cal Expo, Sacramento, Calif. <http://www.greattrainexpo.com/>

Feb 19-20 - The Great Train Expo, Portland Expo Center, Portland, Ore. <http://www.greattrainexpo.com/>

March – Annual Klamath Falls Museum Railroad Show. Klamath Rails and Rogue Valley Model Railroad Clubs.

Mar 12 – Winterail 2011, Stockton, Calif. <http://www.winterail.com/>

Mar/Apr - ESPEE-N-OREGON 2010 will be held in Salem, Ore – springtime. Date not set yet. Check web site for date and location, <http://espee-n-oregon.com/convention.html>

Spring NMRA/PNR 1st Division Mini-Meet in Bend

April 9-10 - Willamette Cascade 23rd Annual Railroad Show & Swap Meet, Eugene, Ore.

July 3-9 – X2011 West, NMRA 2011 National Convention, Sacramento, Calif. www.x2011west.org

Sep 8-11 – SPH&TS Convention, Portland, Ore. <http://www.sphts.org/convention/>

Fall NMRA/PNR 1st Division Mini-Meet In Eugene

Nov 26-27 – 34th Annual Rogue Valley Railroad Show, Medford, Ore.

Train Trivia: "A November 5, 1842 issue of the Baltimore American contained an article which described the first account of a meal being served on a train. Cold food was served to the President and Directors of the Baltimore & Ohio Railroads and their guests. The article states, 'The attention of the company was equally divided between the excellence of the fare and the novelty of thirty or forty gentlemen comfortably enjoying a collation while traveling at the rapid rate of twenty-five or thirty miles per hour.' " 11/08/3/2010 bhm