

Greetings!

This is your Maintenance of Way Team update for November 24, 2013. Yes, it's that time of year again. This time next week, the annual pajama migration south to the North Pole will be in full swing and your MOW Team's been hard at work to make sure that the Polar Express won't be delayed by any track issues. So, here's the scoop on your MOW Team's activities.

Tuesday, the Mighty MOW Weed Team was at full force with the triumphant return of Joe "Two-Drops" Galipeau to the crew. He joined Captain Mike Taylor and Weedies Heather Kearns and Dave Megeath out on the line with a mission to guarantee that Santa's Village arrives at the North Pole without encountering any overhead obstructions. First, Mike and Joe attacked a wayward oleander that was blocking a railroad crossing sign at Broadway while Dave in his flying bucket and Heather controlling the Man-lift groomed oak and walnut trees that impeded the line of sight for engineers in the locomotives heading north along Oleander Alley into the Broadway Curve. Then, the Vegetation Vigilantes headed south to the Miller Park Siding to clear any vegetation impediments that could interfere with a brakeman spotting a car on the line. What a great job these guys do. Santa, his elves, and purveyors of hot chocolate everywhere are in their debt!

Meanwhile, back at the Shops, Pat Scholzen, Gene Peck, Cliff Hayes, Chris Carlson, Mike Harris, Mike T., Heather, Frank Werry, and Alan Hardy dared the clouds to part and challenge our right to MOW fun. Fortunately for us, the clouds squeezed forth barely two drops. Pat, Cliff, and Gene worked on the lighting stanchion that will make it possible for us to venture out on the line on fall and winter evenings. Heather headed over to Old Sac to change the fuel filters on the tamper. Frank and Chris stenciled "CSRM" on our army of orange-cones which will be used to demark the ever changing road to the Shops in the Rail Yards. Mike H. began working on the overhaul and refit of the front-end loader while Mike T. rebuilt the pull-start on the Weed Team's generator – which tried to pick a fight with Heather earlier in the day (she won).

Frank, Heather, Cliff, and Mike H. made Thursday a productive evening. Cliff mounted the new spare-tire under our trusty Chevy Truck. Then, he modified the receiver on the MOW trailer so that our big wench can be secured to it. Heather and Frank headed over to Old Sac to refuel the tamper so that it could be out on the line without delay on Saturday. Mike H. finished his refit of the loader by changing the oil. He then investigated, diagnosed, and repaired an electrical issue that interfered with the operation of the lights and horn. Of course, he was successful and the loader is now working at 100 percent efficiency. Our railroad is so very fortunate to have such experts volunteering on its behalf.

Two boxes of doughnuts almost weren't enough on Saturday. We had a big crew show up on Saturday consisting of 14 dedicated volunteers for a day of tricky tie-changing under a switch. Pam Tatro, Fred Carr, Mike T., Michael Florentine, John Rexroth, Chris, Mike Miller, Steve Nemeth, Frank, Harry Voss, Alan, Heather, and Clem Meier (in reverse sign-in order) made for a great track-gang. Our goal for the day was to replace four ties under Switch 16 (south Miller Park/Setzer Spur). In particular, several 11-footers desperately needed replacing. Well, not only did we meet our goal, we exceeded it by changing 12 additional standard ties to the north of the switch. Heather piloted the tamper. Alan commanded the scarifer. Harry was at the helm of the motorcar consist. Chris kept the section-gang machine on the rails. Steve was EIC of the spike-maul (Steve, by the way, has been featured on national television, TLC's "Extreme Trains," for his prowess with the spike-maul). The biggest challenge of the day was the fact that the ties we were addressing literally imploded as we took them out. The 11-footers under the switch lost all cohesion as they were removed. Fortunately, the mighty MOW Team was on hand to dig out the remains. Once the remnants were removed, we were able to insert very heavy solid oak hard-wood switch ties that we salvaged from the old UP Main last year. Feeling good with our effort, we then we attacked the array of rottenness to the north of the switch. It was a tremendous effort by a fantastic crew!

Thanksgiving week is upon us. Yet, the MOW Team will still be hard at work. On Tuesday, the Weed Team is heading to Hood for some vegetation evisceration. Meet at the Shops at 8:30 a.m. Tuesday starting at 2 p.m., Shops crew will meet. Several tasks are at hand including bringing the Fire Truck back from the Museum and sending the A-6 Motorcar over to Old Sac. We're taking Thursday off for turkey. But, Saturday, the crew will be gathering at 8 o'clock a.m. for doughnuts and more MOW fun. Polar Express will be full operation in the afternoon. Many thanks to all our fantastic and dedicated MOW Team volunteers, without whom there would be no track, no trains, and ergo, no hot chocolate!

We'll see you out on the line,

Alan, Chris, and Richard.



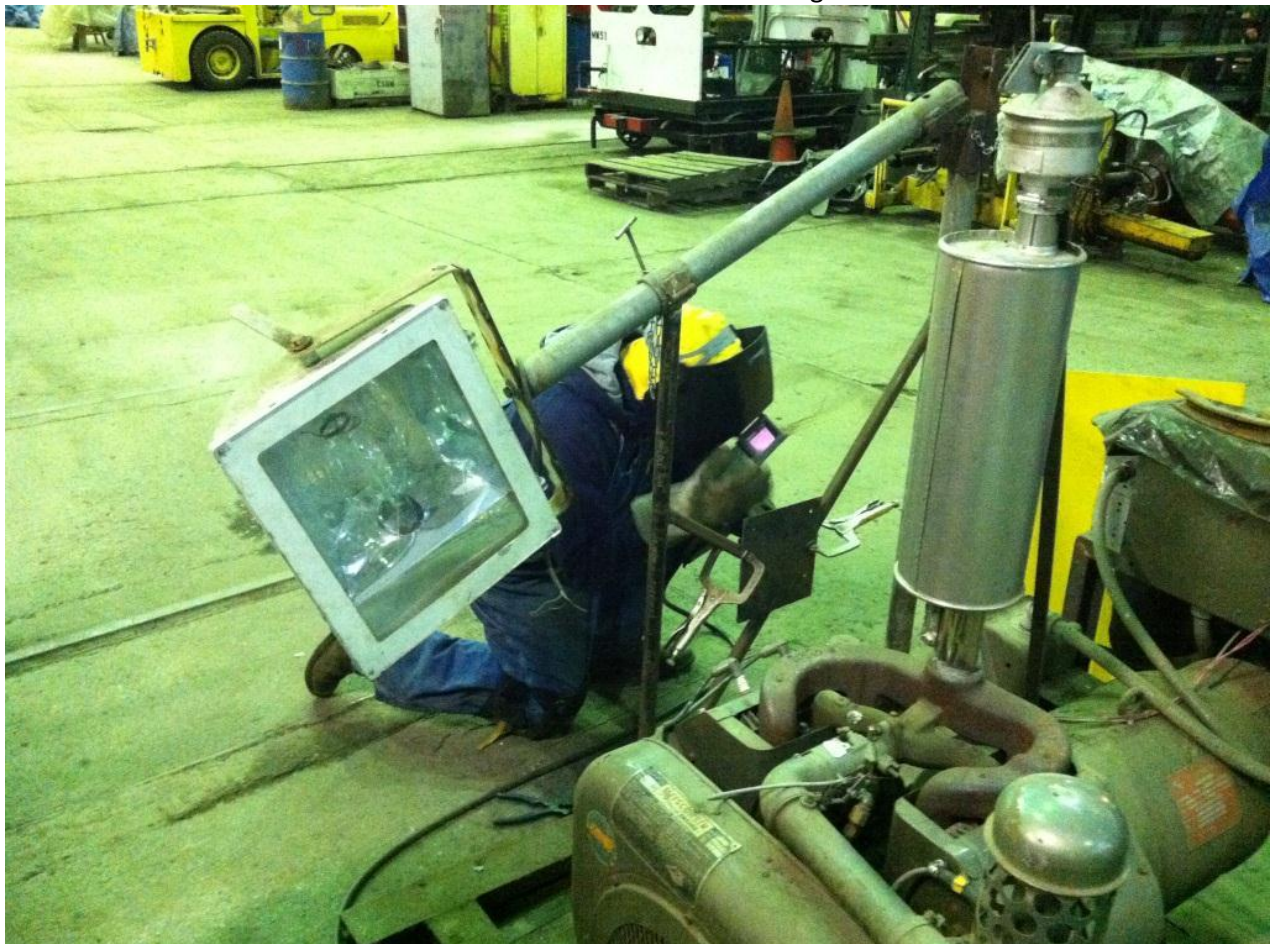
Mike and Dave gather up the vestiges of a one-time living organism



Your mighty Weed Team in action



The result of Heather's battle with the generator



Cliff welds together the light stanchion for our mobile worksite lighting system



Alan supervises Pam and Mike T. pounding out the tie plate on the switch tie being replaced



Frank attempts to pound the tie out after the section-gang machine crushed the other end



Slowly but surely, the old tie emerges



John and Chris clear away the remains. As you can see, we don't have much to work with



Mike F. drags the remains of one rotten old switch tie away



Spike champion Steve shows us how it's done