

Greetings!

This is your MOW Team update for March 19, 2017. It was a busy week for your MOW Team which included lots of extra-curricular activities by a very dedicated crew. So, let's get this update started before we're made to stay after school!

Things got going early on Tuesday with two morning teams meeting at the Shops. First, Mike Taylor, Ed Kottal, and Steve Wilson of the mighty Weed Team packed up their gear and headed to Hood for a day of mowing the right-of-way. All the green that had been sprayed in previous weeks was now a lovely shade of golden-brown. So, the Weedies deployed their field-and-brush mowers and mowed to their hearts content. The Weedies did incredible work and cleared a good portion of the Hood Mainline north of Mile Post 11.6 of weedy debris.

Meanwhile, back at the Shops, Alan Hardy, Joe Margucci, Michael Florentine, Frank Werry, and Harry Voss gathered early to move the San Diego and Arizona Easter 1003 1931 Ford Model AA rail-mounted fire-truck to the California Automobile Museum where it on displayed for a few months. Frank, Mike F., and Joe got the fire-truck loaded and strapped-down on the trailer. At the Auto Museum, Harry positioned the truck and trailer at the loading-dock. The Team then unloaded it and, with the help of Auto Museum personnel, used a rolling-jack and special wheel-assemblies designed for moving vehicles about and got the fire-truck to its display area. With that, the Team left the fire-truck in the capable hands of our good friends Delta Pick-Mello and Jennifer Rabbon who run the Automobile Museum.

Tuesday evening, Pat Scholzen, Joe, Matt McCracken, Frank, Gene Peck, Chris Carlson, and Heather Kearns kept things rolling. The main task at hand was to retrieve the A-4 motorcar, which is experiencing some issues with its brakes, from Old Sacramento and into the Shops. As it was buried in the back of the MOW container, Matt on the A-6 motorcar, pulled the entire work-train out and spotted it near the transfer table. Joe, Frank, and Heather fired-up the Kalamazoo tug which would be used to pull the A-4 over the UP Main. Conductor Frank called Dispatcher 62 in Omaha and arranged for a swift crossing. Once put away at the Shops, Joe piloted the Kalamazoo back to Old Sac.

Thursday started with a cupcake birthday party for Heather. Alan, Weston Snyder, Ed, Joe, Matt, Chris, and Frank all raised their cupcakes and toasted Heather on her special day. With birthday cupcakes consumed, the Team headed to Old Sac. to open-up the Kalamazoo and head to Setzer with four ballast hoppers in tow. The plan was fill the hoppers with ballast rock so the Team could hit the ground running on Saturday. The Birthday Girl was EIC of the operation. Frank and Ed took the front-end loader back-hoe to Setzer to fill the hoppers. Matt piloted the Kalamazoo. At Setzer, the operation was going quite smoothly as Ed and Frank loaded rock. Weston, Joe, and Heather cleared the rails of stray rock which could act as chocks under the wheels. With the hoppers filled, Matt threw the throttle wide-open on the Kalamazoo and pulled the rock-cars up the Setzer grade and back to Old Sac. Meanwhile, the loader started acting up and died while climbing the hill towards Front Street. Chris attempted to trouble-shoot the problem to no avail. So, decision was made to leave it at Setzer overnight. By the time the Team got back to the Shops, it was late. But, a plan was derived for retrieving the loader in the morning.

Which brings us to Friday morning where Heather, Frank, and Joe met at Setzer to retrieve the loader. They had a pretty good idea of what was wrong so, undertook remedial repairs. With Heather and Frank following closely behind in the truck, Joe managed to nurse the loader back to Old Sac. The decision was made to leave it there because of the traffic and road-closures madness of "March Madness" at the Golden Palace. Joe and Heather would arrive extra early on Saturday morning to move it back to the Shops before the "March Madness" madness blocked the streets of Sacramento. Many thanks to Joe, Frank, and Heather for going "above and beyond" on Friday morning.

Tom Freeburger, Josh Bailey, Steve Nemeth, Chris, and Alan constituted the crew on Saturday. Thanks to Tom and Chris, there were more doughnuts than you could shake a stick at! The bulk of the crew, Frank, Heather, Joe, Ed, Weston, Jose Gomez, and the cameraman (which explains the lack of morning operation photos) all had to attend the annual Brakeman Training symposium. As such, there were too few folks available to continue the track-raise, so an audible was called and the switch-stand at Swtich 2 (South Turntable Lead – House Track) was replaced. The existing switch stand has been hit so many times that the head-block had shattered and no longer could support a stand with a standard base. So, a switch-stand with an extra-long base was installed. Tom and Josh pulled spikes while Steve and Chris disconnected the control rod. Next, they put the new stand in place, attached the rod, and adjusted the connecting rods at the transit-clips. Steve then demonstrated old fashioned railroading by driving spikes using a spike-maul and his world-famous as seen on TV wind-mill spike-driving technique. Josh greased the switch and now it works better than ever. Following the brakeman class, Joe, Ed, Weston, and Heather joined the crew. Conductor Heather conducted the ballast regulator over UP Main from the Shops. Steve fired-up the Kalamazoo and pulled the rock-cars to the raise area south of the Pioneer Bridge where Chris, Weston, and Joe disgorged the rock. Ed in the regulator then plowed the rock to the proper level. Joe took the Kalamazoo and hoppers to Setzer where Frank, on the back-hoe, refilled them. More rock was disgorged and plowed. Then the Team headed back to Old Sac. to put things away. Although we couldn't continue the raise, a great deal of good work got done. A special thanks to Jim Coviello of Team Signals who removed the Broadway signal system from service as the MOW Team worked within the circuit. And, of course, to the fantastic volunteers who do so much to help build a better railroad!

This coming week, the Shops crews will meet at or before 5 o'clock on Tuesday and Thursday. The mighty Weed Team will meet for weed remediation along the Sutterville Line on Thursday. Meet at the Shops at 8:30 a.m. Saturday, we're hopeful that a BIG crew will show up for our final day out on the line without trains. The fun starts at 8 o'clock a.m. Again, thanks to everyone!

See you out on the line,

Alan, Chris, and Richard.



Looking north on the Hood Line at MP 11.6 after the Weedies finished mowing



The fire-truck arrives at the California Automobile Museum



Joe carefully monitors the wench-cable as the fire-truck is unloaded from the trailer



Using a rolling-jack and special wheelie-dealies, the fire-truck is maneuvered into position



Mike F., and Harry admire the fire-truck while Frank and Joe check on the temporary rail



The San Diego and Arizona Easter 1003, a 1931 Ford Model AA rail-mounted fire-truck on display at the California Automobile Museum



Matt on the A-6 motorcar, who has just pulled the entire work-train consist out of the container, stands at attention awaiting orders



Joe and Frank on the return trip across the UP Main after delivering the A-4 motorcar with the wonky brakes to the shops



Now that it's been repaired Joe takes the MOW Team's blue tractor back to the Boiler Shop



Gentlemen, will you raise your cupcakes in a toast to Heather on her birthday!



Frank in the front-end loader and Ed on the back-hoe scoop-up rock for loading into the hopper-cars



It was like watching a great ballet as these two great machines danced around each other



Oh no! Poor Weston! The shovel handle broke. I guess he didn't realize his own super-human strength!



Despite being her birthday, Heather keeps on working and clears rock from the head of the rail with the broken-handled shovel





The lone picture from Saturday's switch repair: Josh dons the "huff-'n'-puff" machine to blow organic debris from around the switch



In the afternoon, Steve pilots the Kalamazoo pulling the hopper and keeps a close eye on Chris and Heather as they disgorge rock



The ballasting operation in progress



Chris and Heather drop rock along the east side of the track



Steve pilots the Kalamazoo as Chris and Heather drop rock along the west side of the track



Ed has a firm hand on the controls of the ballast regulator while plowing newly laid rock



The plow of the ballast regulator as it plows rock over the rails



Meanwhile, Frank on the back-hoe at Setzer, loads another round of rock into the hoppers



The ballast regulator awaits the arrival of the ballast-hoppers for round-two of rock-dropping



Heather and Weston discharge another hopper of rock