

Greetings!

This is your Maintenance of Way Team Update for January 31, 2016. It was a bit different week for the MOW Team with mostly Shops projects giving the Team a chance to catch-up. But, there's no need to catch-up with this update. So let's get it started.

The Mighty MOW Weed Team was busy as bees in spring this week working on both Tuesday and Thursday. On Tuesday, Mike Taylor headed to Hood to do what Weedies do when faced with the ever encroaching green stuff that infests the line. The Weed Team's motorcar needed a bit of maintenance and sprucing-up, as well. Meanwhile, back at the Shops, Heather Kearns met up with Mike T. where they continued work on rebuilding the 65-gallon spray-rig and field-and-brush mowers. They were joined by Pat Scholzen, Cliff Hayes, Gene Peck, Frederick Carr, and Mike Harris. Cliff welded-up brand new support brackets for the derrick crane. Mike H. headed over to the Boiler Shop to get the Big Green Machine, front-end loader, and back-hoe all serviced and ready to roll. Then he and Fred assisted Mike T. with the new plumbing on the 65-gallon rig. Getting fittings to fit in hoses took some effort. All in all, a good evening of steady progress.

Thursday was a big day for the Weed Team. Mike T. was joined by Dave "Mongo" Megeath and they set off on a preemptive strike against monumental threat to the SSRR Mainline near Mile Post 2.0. You may recall that during Polar Express, a massive limb the size of a tree fell on the tracks impeding the progress of the train on its journey south to the North Pole. Well, another such limb was suspended over the track like the Sword of Damocles from a horsetail hair. This branch had equal potential to cause havoc as it was 20 to 25 feet in length, 18 inches in diameter, and nearly horizontal, spanning the track from a tree on the east side. "Mongo" climbed into the bucket of the man-lift and extended the lift-arm it to its full reach. The, using the gas-powered chainsaw-on-a-stick, he began slicing and dicing through it at various points. When he had cut through the largest part of the branch, it crashed to the earth with a trembling "thud". Back on the ground, "Mongo" stood atop his wooden quarry and declared victory. The threat was no more! Mongo and Mike T. then shredded much of it into tiny bits by shoving it through the chipper. A momentous day, indeed, for the Mighty MOW Weed Team, "Mongo," and Mike T.!

In the evening on Thursday, Mike H., Heather, Fred, Cliff, and Alan Hardy joined the fun. As the Team will need the tie-shear operational in the near future, Mike H. investigated a problem with the "kickers" that "kick" the sheared pieces of tie out from beneath the rails. The securing pins that keep the kickers from descending inadvertently while in travel-mode, would not engage. The shear was revved-up and the kickers exercised multiple times as Mike H. made various adjustments. Unfortunately, it didn't quite work. But, Mike H. came up with a plan to modify the latch mechanism to secure the kickers. With the machine's Detroit Diesel running wide-open, Fred discovered a significant air-leak. The air-dryer had popped its lid. Damaged beyond repair, he bypassed and removed the air-dryer so that the systems on the machine that require compressed air can still function. Cliff continued work on the derrick crane. He and Fred set up the magnetic-drill-press to create drainage holes in the support bracket pockets on the deck. With that, it was "quittin' time USA" and Team headed home.

Saturday was a bit of a "catch-as-catch-can" day for the MOW Team. We suspended the track replacement/rail-upsizing project at Front Street because of the need to keep the track in service for special train in the afternoon. Because of the whole "*no track, no trains*" postulate, we felt it best not to risk pulling up rails out of the ground on a day when a train is scheduled. Furthermore, the new docent Open House would take place in the afternoon at which the MOW Team would present. Plus all of the MOW Team's conductors needed to attend the annual Conductor/Train Master training seminar. It's vital that the MOW Team conductors maintain their certifications in order to interact with the Union Pacific dispatchers in Omaha so that our equipment can be moved between the Shops and Old Sacramento over the UP Mainline. So, for most of the day, the Team stuck around the Shops where Steve Wilson, Michael Florentine, Clem Meier, Chris Carlson, Pamela Tatro, and Alan got the doughnuts all to themselves (and there were plenty). Before we lost all our conductors to the training seminar, the Team needed to move equipment over the UP Main to the Shops from Old Sacramento for some repairs. The Jackson 125 tie-exchanger needed electrical work before it heads out on the line again next week. It would be towed over using the Kalamazoo tug. So, Chris, Steve, and Mike F. got the machines ready to roll. Back at the Shops, Chris got right to work fixing the 125. Clem and Alan managed to reorganize an entire aisle of the Erecting Shop making it easier to locate track materials. Clem swept the floor so clean that you could eat off it – well, almost. Pam located our long-lost rail-rollers which will come in handy next week as we replace rails at Front Street.

In the afternoon, Pam and Alan represented the MOW Team at the prospective Docent Open House put on by the Museum to showcase the various volunteer opportunities available. Pam was fantastic as the Team's ambassador to the new docents explaining the meaning of "MOW fun" (and our propensity for doughnuts). As MOW is the most recognized program at the California State Railroad Museum, Alan had all of our awards and plaques on display as well as a multitude of historic MOW Team photos. Once the Conductor/Train Master recertification seminar was complete, the MOW Team's conductors were available to conduct the scarifier-inserter, Jackson 125, and Kalamazoo tug back over the UP Mail from the Shops to Old Sacramento. And with that, a good day came to a close.

This coming week, the Weed Team will meet up on Tuesday to finish work on the 65-gallon spray-rig then test it out on the Mainline. In the afternoon and evening, the Tuesday and Thursday crews will gather for more MOW fun. Meet at or before 5 o'clock. Next Saturday, February 6th, the Team will resume the rail replacement/upsizing project at Front Street in earnest. The goal for the day will be the replacement of the east rail. We'll be using the rail-saw and rail-drill next week, as well. Lots of sparks will fly. You won't want to miss it!

See you out on the line,

Alan, Chris, and Richard.



Cliff creates a new support bracket for the derrick crane



Mike H. airs-up the tires of the front-end loader



Heather continues her efforts refitting the Weed Team's arsenal of field-and-brush mowers



Mike T. and Fred struggle to attach a fitting to a hose for the re-plumbing of the 65-gallon spray-rig



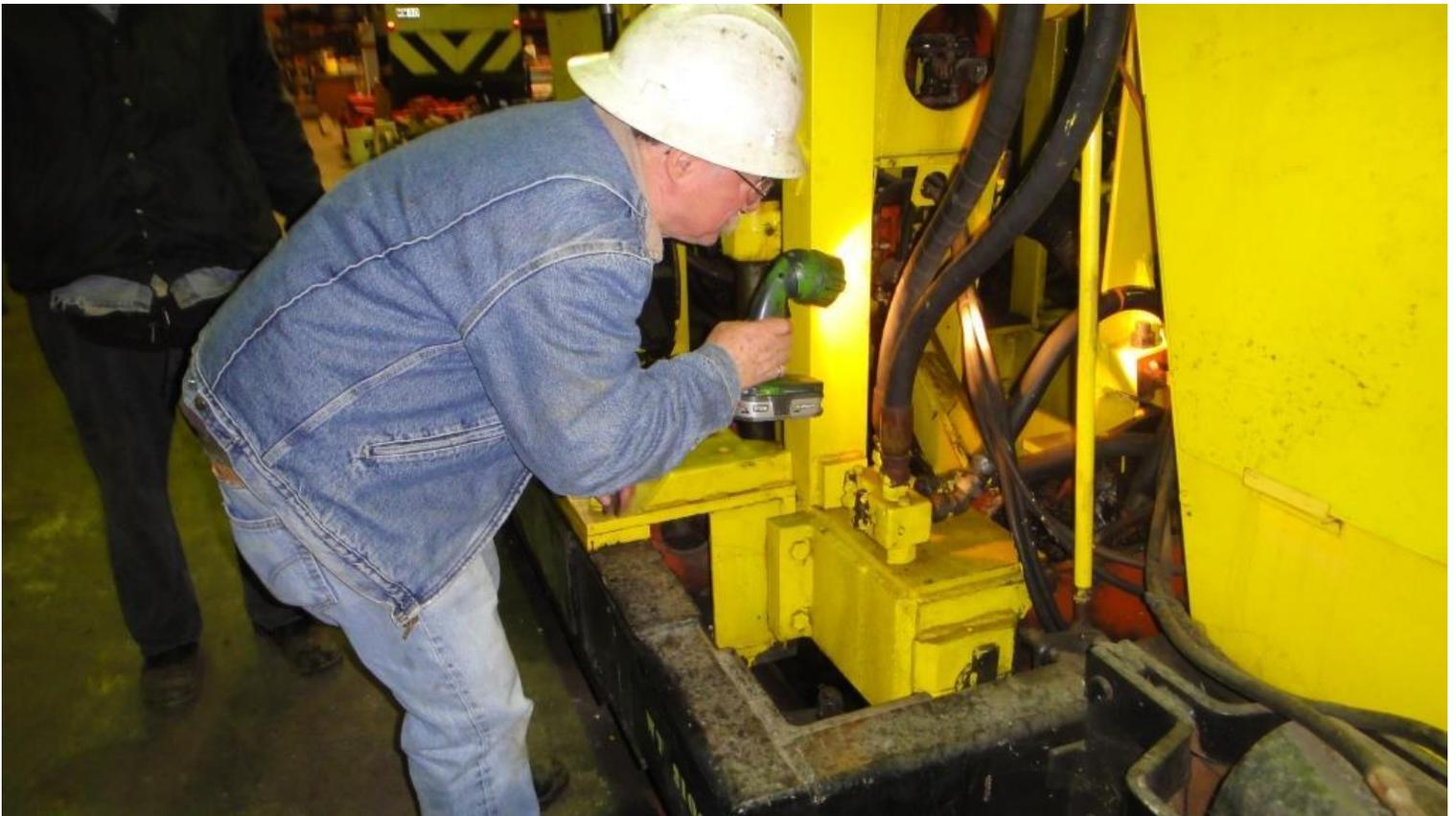
The "Sword of Damocles" limb over the SSRR Mainline is removed by the Mighty MOW Weed Team



Mongo with leg on top of his wooden quarry declares victory!



Fred locates the air leak in the tie-shear and begins removing and bypassing the air-dryer



After making various adjustments, Mike H. watches the tie-shear's kickers as they are retracted



Cliff and Fred engage the magnetic drill-press to open drainage holes on deck of the derrick crane



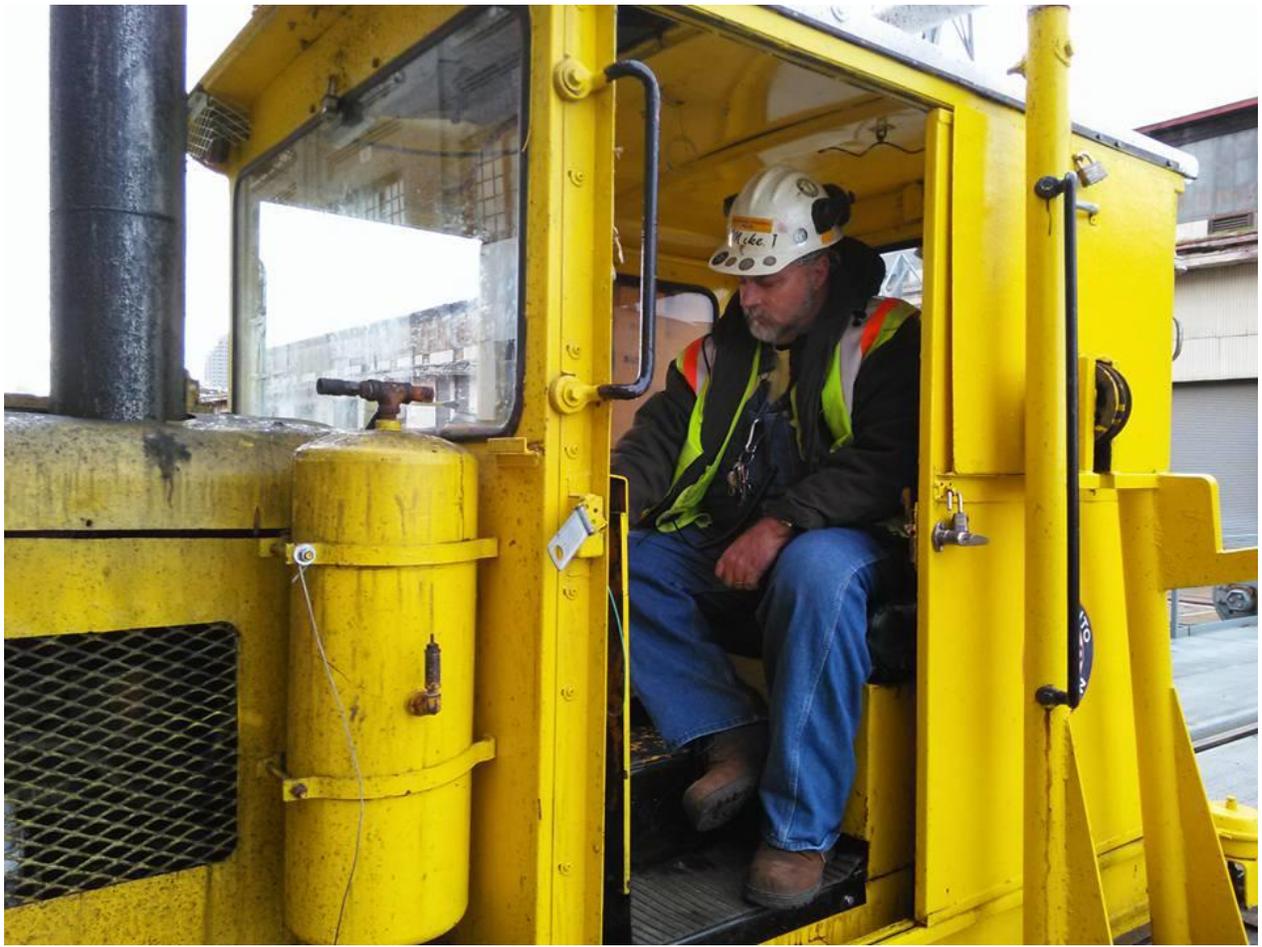
The 65-gallon spray-rig looks nearly brand new!



With a green-light from Omaha, Mike F. and Steve move the Kalamazoo and Jackson 125 from Old Sacramento...



...Over the UP Main and to the Shops



Mike F. pilots the Kalamazoo



Mike F. and Steve take on a project requiring the drill-press



Alan at the new docent Open House showing off the MOW Team's impressive wares



A joint convention of your MOW Team conductors – all recertified and ready to start conductin'. From left: your intrepid reporter; Frank Werry; Heather Kearns; and Ed Moriarty