

Greetings!

This is your Maintenance of Way team update for November 6, 2016. The countdown-clock is clicking towards that happy hot-chocolate time of year. Just 20 days to until the “believe bells” start ringing – or don’t. So, if you believe, this update will start right now.

The MOW Team’s Designated Supervisor of Barbecue Engineers (DSBE), Pat Scholzen, made an alarming announcement on Tuesday: “There will be barbecue!” Mike Taylor, Cliff Hayes, Anthony Filamor, Gene Peck, Joe Margucci, Matt McCracken, Weston Snyder, Harry Voss, Mike Harris, Frank Werry, and Chris Carlson shouted for joy! But first, the man-lift and chipper were ready to return to Old Sacramento. Joe and Anthony headed to Old Sac. to retrieve the Kalamazoo tug to lead the man-lift back. The Kalamazoo triggers the signal system at the UP Interlocking. The man-lift does not. They got an immediate green-light to bring it over to the Rail Yards. At the Erecting Shop, Mike H., Frank, Weston, and Matt brought the machines out onto the transfer table where they’d meet up with the tug. Now, here’s where it gets interesting. Earlier in the day, an accident on the Union Pacific tracks between Oakland and Vallejo shut down the mainline. Capital Corridor trains were delayed by upwards of four hours. By the time the Team had the man-lift and chipper ready to roll over to Old Sacramento trains had resumed running. Thus, the UP dispatcher informed us that there would be a lengthy delay before we’d get a green light. So, the Team moved back to towards the Shops and secured the equipment but planned to try again before the end of the evening. Meanwhile, barbecue dinner was waiting. And it was mighty tasty – pork-loin, bratwurst, chicken-wings, beans, plus a plethora of desserts. DSBE Pat outdid himself, sharing his expert barbecuing skills with the Team. It was a thoroughly enjoyable evening of strong camaraderie. With dinner done, the Team fired up the man-lift and Kalamazoo to make another run at crossing over to Old Sacramento. Alas, the news was not good. So, the Team went to “plan-B.” The man-lift, chipper, and Kalamazoo were brought inside the Erecting Shop in hopes of better times on Thursday. Nonetheless, it had been a great evening of good times with your MOW Team.

Thursday, the Mighty Weed Team welcomed a new member. Ed Duruy from the recent docent class joined Mike T., Ed Kottal, and Steve Wilson on an adventure to Hood. Welcome aboard, Ed D.! Soon we’ll have as many “Eds” as “Mikes”! Because of the difficulties getting the man-lift over to Old Sac. on Tuesday, planned work on the SSRR Mainline were postponed. The Weedies continued their efforts at keeping the Hood dream alive by slashing away at the encroaching green foe. Despite the change in plans, the Weed Team had what could only be defined as a successful day.

Meanwhile, back at the Shops, Heather Kearns gave Ed D. the formal tour of the buildings. Chris, Joe, Weston, Cliff, Mike H., Matt, Harry, Ed K., and Mike T. scurried about getting the Kalamazoo, man-lift, and chipper ready to roll. Joe and Ed K. headed to Old Sac. to retrieve the A-6 motorcar, which is suffering from a bad Bendix in its starter motor. Things went smoothly as they crossed the UP Main. In the building, Mike T. honed the blades on the chipper while Chris and Harry added an additional hasp and lock to its battery box. Cliff made a few more modifications to the man-lift’s battery box. Soon enough, the Team was ready to roll. This time, the UP dispatcher gave our conductor a quick, “On signal indication.” Moments later, the derails aligned and the green light shone from the signal mast. After a little night-time switching activity in the Old Sac. Yard, the Team got everything secured and put away. With that, it was “quittin’ time USA,” so the Team said “good-night, see you Saturday.”

La Día de los Doughnuts had dawned and Joe, Alan, Clem Meier, Matt, Steve Nemeth, Heather, Al Utzig, Ed K., Mike Willis, Weston, Michael Florentine, Jose Gomez Anthony, and Mike H. were ready to dig in and sugar-up for the day’s activities. The Team would head to Miller Park to replace some nasty looking ties. First, Joe and Alan gathered up a bundle of new ties which were loaded onto the Big Green Machine for Mike F. to take to the work-site. Al suggested taking the back-hoe with us, which was not part of the original plan. Good thing he did because it sure came in handy. Heather piloted the tamper, Ed and Steve corralled the Kalamazoo tug to pull the Team’s work-train, and Joe fired-up the Jackson 125 tie-exchanger. At the work-site, the ties slated for removal were identified. Anthony, Weston, Matt, Jose, Mike H. began pulling spike, plates, and rail-anchors. Clem, Mike W., and Steve used shovels and mattocks to dig out the tie-ends. Joe on the 125 began pulling the bad ties out. The very first one shattered under the power of the 125 so, Al brought in the back-hoe and got (what was left of it) the rest of the out. Mike H. disposed of the debris. Steve, Jose, Mike F., and Weston rolled new ties off the bundle onto the bucket of the back-hoe for transport to the empty cribs where they would be inserted. Heather was the human scarifier digging-out tie-cribs by herself. She did an amazing job digging out ballast-rock which is probably the least fun job out on the line. Once the EIC realized she was working all alone, he cracked his tyrannical whip and redeployed Mike F., Weston, and Ed K. to help her out. Al, Matt, Mike W., Clem, Steve, and Weston nipped the ties, set, and drove the spikes. Then Steve and Mike F. put on a show by interpreting old-fashion track-gang railroading by engaging in a tandem spike-driving demonstration, driving spikes just like their predecessors did when building the Pacific Railroad of 1869. With the first dozen or so ties now done, the lunch bell beckoned. But, that didn’t stop the progress.

After a brief re-fueling period, Joe, Weston, Steve, and Heather were right back at it puling spikes, plates, and rail-anchors for the next set of ties to come out. This time, Weston got a shot at operating the 125 to pull a few ties. The activity out on the line continued well into the afternoon as the Team continued its important work. Heather and Matt brought the tamper in. With Heather as trainer, Matt got some quality time with that monster machine. Alan guided the operation from the ground as the new ties were tamped-up. It was time to dispose of the old ties so, Jose, Mike H., and Steve rolled them down the levy where Anthony got them all piled up for Mike F. on Big Green to take them to our ever-growing dead tie pile at Setzer. With that, the Team packed up and took all the equipment back to Old Sacramento for put away. Then, they headed to the Shops to enjoy leftover cake from the barbecue on Tuesday. It had been a great day out on the line with tremendous progress accomplished. The Team worked tirelessly in their quest to build a better railroad. Today, the track is safer and stronger because of the Team’s commendable efforts.

The season of darkness is upon us with the coming of standard time but the light will shine bright in the Shops starting at 5 o’clock on Tuesday and Thursday. Saturday, a new MOW Team adventure will commence at 8 o’clock a.m. Many thanks to all for your commitment and efforts!

See you out on the line,

Alan, Chris, and Richard



The man-lift and chipper are ready to roll. Unfortunately, the Union Pacific wasn't...



Matt and Anthony take the transfer table south



DSBE Pat gets dinner ready



MOW Team enjoying yummy barbecue



Alan offers a toast to the Team



Chris works on the chipper



Ed K. and Joe bring the A-4 and A-6 over to the Shops



Mike T. makes final adjustments to the chipper's batter box



Matt and Mike H. hook the chipper up to the Kalamazoo tug



This time, the UP is ready to roll...



Alan guides Joe on the yellow Hyster forklift loading ties onto the Green Machine



Al binds the bundle to the Green Machine



Joe and Mike H. watch Weston remove rail-anchors



Al on the back-hoe removes a shattered tie



Mike H. gathers the tie debris



Joe on the Jackson 125 tie-exchanger removes ties



Joe on the 125 continues to remove ties as Clem works ahead to dig-out tie-ends



Heather digs-out a tie-crib so that the new tie can be inserted straight and level



Mike F., Weston, and Ed join Heather in digging out cribs



Al uses the bucket of the back-hoe to transport new ties to their new homes



Clem fills in rock around a newly inserted tie



Mike W. and Mike F. roll new ties off of the tie bundle



Weston and Mike F. scoot a tie along the rails to the crib where it will be inserted



Mike F. and Steve pull a new tie under the base of the rail



With the spikes set, Mike W. nips-up the tie as Mike F. and Steve put on a tandem spike-driving demonstration



Joe puts his back into nipping-up the rail so that Steve can insert a tie-plate



Joe nips the tie as Steve drives the spike using his world-famous as-seen-on-TV windmill spike-driving technique



Weston gets a lesson in operating the Jackson 125 from Alan and Joe



As Joe digs-out under the crib, Jose slides a tie under the base of the rail for the 125 to pull-in



Jose places the wedge-end of the nipper-bar against the edge of a tie-plate which Steve hammers into place



Steve nips-up the tie as Al drives a spike



Alan guides from the ground as Matt takes a turn at operating the tamper



Jose and Mike H. toss old dead ties down the levy...



...Which Mike F. hauls away with Big Green as Anthony watches for traffic