



Goleta **DEPOT** **DISPATCH**

Newsletter of the South Coast Railroad Museum

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Depot Day is Sept. 28

The 15th annual *Depot Day*, the South Coast Railroad Museum's big annual celebration, will be held Sunday, Sept. 28. For all of the exciting details, see the special full-page *Depot Day '97* coverage on page 4.

In Memoriam: Neil Fetter, Robert B. McNeel

The museum lost two of its dearest friends with the recent passing of **Robert B. McNeel** and **Neil Fetter**.

Bob McNeel had served as a volunteer "agent" at the museum since the early 1980s, until failing health forced his retirement in 1996. A former Southern Pacific railroad employee, including years as a steam-locomotive fireman, Bob was a unique resource to our museum, assisting with a number of exhibition- and publication-research projects. He also presented over the years several *Continuing Lecture Series* programs on a variety of railroad topics. He died July 19.

Donations in memory of Robert McNeel have been received from Hilda Volkman, Gary Coombs, Nancy B. McNeill, and the Scottish Society of Santa Barbara.

Neil Fetter was one of Goleta Depot's first tour guides and volunteered more recently as a museum agent. He was named Goleta's "Man of the Year" for 1985, honoring service to both the railroad museum and other community causes. He served briefly on the museum Board of Trustees in 1997 and was responsible for garnering Elks Lodge support for the museum's participation in the summer youth-reading program of the Santa Barbara Public Libraries. Neil Fetter died Aug. 1.

Visit Kids Around The World By Train

Join international train traveler, author, and photographer **Rich Thom** on a multimedia railroad journey to visit children around the world. The program, which will be of particular interest to the museum's Junior Engineers and their families, takes place Wednesday, Sept. 17 at the Goleta Library, 500 N. Fairview Ave., beginning at 7 p.m.

"If you want to learn about a country and get close to its people, there's no better way to travel than by train," according to Thom. "This is particularly true in foreign lands, especially in less-developed countries, where automobiles are few and the train remains, to this day, the easiest and often the only affordable means of travel for most people."

Rich Thom will share his experiences and slides collected over a quarter-century of foreign train travel, where children grow up in conditions vastly different from those of Southern California. "Traveling exclusively by train — from slow-moving mixed trains to passenger expresses, mostly pulled by steam locomotives — we'll meet kids in China, India, Thailand, South Africa, El Salvador, Ecuador, Bolivia, and Argentina."

Rich Thom has ridden and photographed the railways of 30 countries and has chronicled his journeys in a number of railway publications, including frequent contributions to the *International Railway Traveler* magazine. He will be available to answer questions and meet with attendees following the program, when refreshments also will be served.

The program is part of the railroad museum's *Continuing Lecture Series*. It is free and open to the public as well as to members.

Park Commission Approves Plans

At its July 31 meeting, the County Park Commission gave in-concept approval to the museum's plans for grounds improvements. The proposal, developed by the museum's Planning Committee and staff, with input from the general membership, includes four elements: (1) construction of a new museum entry structure, patterned after the historic Miramar depot, which visitors will pass through as they enter the museum grounds; (2) resurfacing of pathways between the depot and miniature-train boarding area for improved accessibility, especially for visitors in wheelchairs; (3) construction of a group-picnic area, to accommodate better the museum's usage for birthday parties and other public group gatherings; and (4) installation of additional wooden post-and-rail fencing near the museum's eastern border, to provide greater visitor safety with regard to the miniature train.

Grant applications are now being prepared to seek foundation support for the project.

Free Rides Draw Big Crowd; Nov. 8 is Next Free Day

Saturday, July 26 marked the museum's third day of free miniature-train rides for the general public in 1997. The response was excellent, with a total of 262 free passes issued to museum visitors. The day was made possible by the hundreds of museum members and supporters who contributed to the *Great Goleta Rail Race* fundraiser, held May 17.

The final free-ride day for 1997 will be Saturday, Nov. 8 — also made possible by our generous *Great Race* donors.

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Institute for American Research*

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Dan O'Brien (right) ran his mogul during Steaming Summer '97.

"Steaming Summer" Was Another Audience Pleaser

The 11th annual *Another Steaming Summer* was held Aug. 9-10. Despite some dreary weather over that weekend, the event drew a good-sized crowd, especially on Saturday. Combined ridership over the two days reached 1,142, surpassing the 1996 mark of 1,090. This included 930 train passengers (equaling last year's total) and 212 on the handcar.

Most importantly, our visitors seemed to have a great time. Finding lots to see and do, many stayed for several hours. In fact, one family was on hand to ride the first train on Saturday, as well as the last!

Throughout most of the weekend, two

*Trustee Noel Langle helped give more than
200 handcar rides over the weekend.*

steam trains operated simultaneously. As was the case last year, most of the passenger hauling was performed by Gene Allen's 4-4-0 American and Ed Winnewisser's 0-6-0 switcher. On Sunday, Dan O'Brien came to the rescue from Westminster, with his 2-6-0 mogul. Each steamer usually pulled two or occasionally three passenger cars. In support, No. 2655, the younger of the museum's two diesel-prototype switchers, was available whenever one of the steam locomotives, or its crew, needed a break.

Jim Marchiando brought his trailer-mounted steam plant to the event again this year, helping to keep the grounds alive with the sounds of steam whistles. The plant also powered a water pump and a variety of smaller mechanical devices demonstrated by Jim Higman.

Operating model steam engines and equipment on display during *Steaming Summer* included the museum's own Little Engines American, plus a three-truck "Climax" logging locomotive shared by Gene Allen.

Thanks are extended to the many others who helped to make this year's event possible. Selling hot sandwiches both days were representatives from the Goleta Lions Club, including Bob and Jane Mangus, Jerry and Gail Newton, Ron Plourde, Harry Reed, John Riffero, Jack Rutten, Pete Shamlian, and Tom and Traci Tucker.

Thanks also to all of the regular docent-volunteers who helped over the weekend: Edee Brown, Stella Kramer, Ed Leska, Bruce Morden, Bill Parker, Margaret Pryde, and Hilda Volkman. A former docent, Steve Kramer, was back for *Steaming Summer* again this year, to assist in running those sometimes-cantankerous locomotives.

Members of the Board of Trustees performed the bulk of the admissions-table du-

ties. They included President John Locke, Mike Couch, Mike Gartzke, Peter Shamlian, Dick Shelton, and Rich Thom, with assistance from Wendy Shelton. Board member Noel Langle worked both days on the handcar, while fellow trustee John Sanchez helped to share the model railroad exhibit with event-goers.

To protect the equipment left on the grounds, Bruce and Michael Morden camped over at the museum on Saturday night.

Local musician Steve McPeters kindly gave a grateful audience several hours of fine music on Sunday afternoon, entertaining the crowd with his vocal, guitar, and banjo renditions of railroad tunes and other songs.

Last but not least, a very special thank you to Toyota of Santa Barbara and owner Denny Franks. There would never be *Another Steaming Summer* without their continuing support!



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Photos courtesy of Phyllis J. Olsen.

Women Working On RRs Will Be Nov. Lecture Topic

Nancy Smiler Levinson, author of a new book, *She's Been Working On The Railroad*, will be the featured speaker at the Wed., Nov. 19 edition of the museum's *Continuing Lecture Series*.

As with her book, Levinson's presentation will focus on the history of women who have worked on America's railroads, from the 1830s to the present. She will also share in slide form many of the historical and contemporary photographic images which were compiled for the book by Shirley Burman, who rail fans and history buffs may recognize from her traveling exhibition, *Women and the American Railroad*. Burman's husband is the railroad photographer, Richard Steinheimer.

Copies of *She's Been Working On The Railroad* will be available at the event for purchase and signing by the author. Refreshments will follow the presentation.

The 7:30 p.m. program will be held at Goleta Library, 500 North Fairview Ave., Goleta.

Coast Starlight Program Moves Forward

The museum's plans for the development of an interpretive program for the *Coast Starlight* received a big boost when 40 area residents showed up for an Aug. 20 meeting to find out more about how to become program guides. The large turnout was due in part to a well-placed announcement in the *Santa Barbara News-Press*, which attracted several dozen non-members to the gathering. The museum also received calls from many others unable to attend the meeting, who asked that their names be added to the list of guide candidates. This raises the total number interested in the guide program to more than 60.

Program testing and guide training is scheduled to begin in November.

Full implementation will start not later than June 1 of next year.

Sponsors of the guide program include California State Parks, Goleta Valley Chamber of Commerce, Santa Barbara Conference & Visitors Bureau, and Santa Barbara County Parks.

Besides the free train rides, guides have a unique opportunity to share "California's

Wonderful Corner" (between Santa Barbara and San Luis Obispo) with travelers. Anyone interested in learning more about becoming a *Coast Starlight* guide are encouraged to contact Director Gary Coombs at 805-964-3540.

Toy Trains, Teddy Bears Needed For Holiday Display

The museum's annual *Toy Trains and Teddy Bears!* holiday display opens Nov. 28 and will continue into early January. Dozens of museum members, trustees, employees, volunteers, and friends make this festive exhibition possible each year by loaning stuffed animals and toy locomotives and rail cars to share with our visitors in the display.

Each year we try to increase the number of keepsakes that are displayed and always hope to include both new items and new members of the museum family. If you would like to add your own personal touch to this year's display, please contact the museum office (964-3540), any weekday afternoon, or leave a message with your name and phone number.

Jr. Engineers Celebrate With July Party

The 5th annual *Junior Engineers Club Party* on Thursday, July 17 was another big success. Club members and their invited guests were treated to 109 free rides on the Goleta Short Line, along with special showings of *Thomas The Tank Engine* videos, and some delicious refreshments, including a festive Junior Engineers cake and cupcakes.

Moms, Dads Get Free Rides

Thanks to support from **Goleta National Bank**, moms and dads visiting the museum on Mother's Day and Father's Day, respectively, were treated to complimentary rides on the Goleta Short Line. **Goleta National Bank** has sponsored these special days honoring the parents in our community since 1994.

Goleta Amtrak Station Work To Commence

As this issue of the *Depot Dispatch* goes to press, construction on the Goleta Amtrak station is about to begin. The work will start as soon as the Union Pacific Railroad completes relocation of its signal wires underground, according to Robert Crego, District Manager for Amtrak West.

A 50-60 day construction schedule is

expected, Crego said. This would point to late-October as the most likely date for a station opening.

When completed, the Goleta station will handle passengers using Amtrak's *San Diegan* trains as well as serving as the layover point for most *San Diegan* trains traveling north of Los Angeles.

Burtness Shares Personal Rail Journeys

A special thank-you is owed to local educator, author, and SCRM docent **Bob Burtness** for sharing his recent steam-railroad experiences with an appreciative audience at our June 18 *Continuing Lecture Series* program at Goleta Library. The hour-long program, "Excursion Steam Railroads of the West," was a colorful blend of slide images and anecdotes — all drawn from travels by Burtness aboard "tourist railroads" in Arizona, California, Colorado, and New Mexico.

Birthday Parties Held Recently At Museum

Celebrating birthday parties at the museum since the last newsletter report were **Scott Buffon, Nathaniel Denning, Joshua Goldwasser, Ethan Harter, Sam Katz, Jay Larinan, Thomas Schiferl, and Tijs Short.**

Projects Help Acknowledged

The museum is indebted to **Gene Allen** for making some much-needed improvements to the Goleta Short Line track in preparation for *Steaming Summer* weekend. Currently, Gene is also assisting the director in the creation of new interpretive signage for the miniature-train boarding area.

Special thanks also are due to **Karl Harris** for supervising the repair of one of Goleta Depot's doors.

Welcome New Members

New museum members are **William F. Russell and Joy Thornton.**

Recent additions to the Junior Engineers Club include **Nicolas A. Amboy, Fiona Avery, David Barash, Israel Carpenter, Christian Carpenter, Joshua Goldwasser, Ethan Brooks Harter, Bjorn Lensander, Nicholas Lensander, Oliver Barrett Rudd, Connor James Rudd, Bradley Schlesinger and Dana Walker.**

A special welcome to all new members!



DEPOT DAY is Big Annual Whoop-Dee-Doo!

The 15th Annual *Depot Day* will be held Sunday, Sept. 28, from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Depot Day is held each year to commemorate and celebrate the preservation of the historic Goleta Depot. The event, which is made possible by our members and friends, is also the museum's main annual community fundraiser.

Donation Requested

A \$1 donation per person will be requested upon admission to *Depot Day*. Members are encouraged to join with other event attendees in making this donation.

Silent Auction

Please plan to shop at the *Depot Day* Silent Auction tables. Lucky bidders will come away with some terrific items, including dinners at fine restaurants, luxury hotel stays, admission to Disneyland and Magic Mountain, tickets to regional performing arts productions, winery tours, and a list of more than 100 other goods, services, and gift ideas for all ages.

The auction also includes a round-trip custom-class trip for two to San Diego aboard Amtrak, including admission for two to Sea World. The winning bidder will have their choice of points-of-origin: Santa Barbara, Carpinteria, or the new **Goleta** rail station!

The auction is an important revenue source for the museum. If you have new or collector's items or valuable services to donate to the auction, please call Phyllis Olsen in the museum office (964-3540).

Musical Entertainment

Music has become an important part of the *Depot Day* tradition and this year's event promises to be no exception.

Showstoppers, the young performers directed by Radu Azdril, will be on hand to entertain with numbers from their summer vaudeville show. Also featured will be the Monte Vista Elementary School chorus.

Tri-Tip Barbecue

Depot Day attendees will be able to dine on a delicious barbecue meal, including sliced tri-tip, green salad, toasted french bread, and ranch beans. Ticket prices on the day are \$7 for adults and \$5 for children under 12.

BBQ tickets can also be purchased in advance, which includes \$1 off the regular price. Advance tickets are available at the museum's Trackside Shop, (purchases of three or more tickets can be made by major credit card), or from most museum trustees, volunteers, and staff members.

You are encouraged to buy your BBQ tickets before *Depot Day*. In addition to saving \$1 on every ticket, you'll be helping event planners to estimate the number of meals to prepare.

Other Refreshments

If a full meal isn't to your liking, our volunteers will also be serving hot dogs, soft drinks, and other refreshments throughout the day.

Rides, Rides, Rides

Two miniature trains will operate on the Goleta Short Line during *Depot Day*. There will also be rides on the museum handcar. Rides are \$1 for the train and 50¢ for the handcar.



Train Films

Films on a variety of railroad topics will be shown throughout *Depot Day* in the museum's Gandy Dancer Theater.

Steam Display

This year's steam display will feature a tabletop assortment of operating steam-driven machines, demonstrated by Jim Higman.