

## RCGRS Elections

RCGRS biennial elections will be held at the RCGRS Annual Business Meeting, January 9th, 2010 at the Columbia Gorge Model Railroad Club, 2505 N. Vancouver Ave, Portland, OR 97227, 503-288-7246. The following people are running for the open RCGRS Officer Positions:

President: Greg Martin  
                  Jeff Lange  
Vice Pres.: Nick Kelsey  
Secretary Kathryn Warrior  
Treasure: Steve Cogswell  
Yardmaster: Dennis Peoples

All of the above positions are still open to anyone else that wants to run for an office. If you are interested, email me, [dwdunham@msn.com](mailto:dwdunham@msn.com) and I will add you to the Official Ballot. This needs to be done prior to the end of the year. Nominations for the office will also be open from the floor the day of the Annual Meeting. A person making a nomination from the floor, must have approval of nomination prior to elections being voted on.

Paper ballots will be handed out at the meeting with a space for write-ins. Ballots will be collected, counted and the results will be announced. After the new Offices are announced, the new Officers will take over directing the Society for the next two years.

Darrel Dunham  
Past President  
Elections Chairman  
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## Shannon & Millie Pratt Open House

On December 5th, the outdoors was cold but the indoors was warm and cheerful. Shannon's indoor Marklin railroad was decorated beautifully for the season. The trackage is very dense, but traffic is carefully controlled by electronic block signals which enables three or four trains to be operated simultaneously in limited space.



A few of the Guests: Allan and Kathryn Warrior, Greg and Janet Martin, Shannon Pratt, and Jeff and Dianne Lange



The Christmas parade is in full swing in the highly decorated Party Town.



Trackage and passing sidings between Party Town and Farmdale. If you look carefully, Shannon and Millie's family members are represented in the murals behind the railroad operations.



Although the village of Farmdale is smaller than Party Town, the village is beautifully decorated and the season's activities abound to include all of the people.

### Open House at the Swiss Flat Ry

There were dire predictions of an ice storm, but for those who braved the predictions, a great evening was had at Jan and Rae Zweerts houseboat. Fortunately, the ice storm stayed south of the Portland area. Rae made great chili and the house certainly reflected that Christmas time had arrived here. The decorated Christmas Ships paraded past on the river as scheduled, and the Swiss Flat Ry was in full operation. Another hit of the evening was the old silent movie, "The General"

The Swiss Flat Ry resides on a small barge on the river side of Jan and Rae's houseboat. The motif and theme of the railway is Swiss/European. The railway can be controlled remotely from an operating center located in the bedroom and a window overlooks the the operation. Jan has much of the

right of way illuminated with lighted ropes. There are three independent loops for railway operations.



A seasonal "EggLiner" pulls a decorated car through the loop. This mainline loop has an operating catenary system.



Another part of the catenary system



Jan was able to add several buildings this year



The switch yard is currently empty at this season, but is much more active during an operating session.

## **Abandoned Railroads Of Oregon, The Union Pacific/Wyoming Colorado Railroad**

When the Union Pacific suspended service over its Burns Branch due to the flooding of Malheur and Harney Lakes in March 1984, the company announced intentions to re-build the damaged trackage and resume service as soon as the flood waters receded. However, when the lake levels dropped in the late 1980's the company made no efforts to repair the line. One of the biggest stumbling blocks to repairing the line was the large amount of work needed and the high cost of performing the work. The rail line was seen by many as an essential part of the region's economy, and cries to get the railroad re-opened again became louder and more frequent.

Three shippers were located in Burns at the time; Snow Mountain Pine, successor to the Edward Hines Lumber Company, Tecton Laminates, and Frenchglen Millworks. Following the 1984 closure of the line these shippers trucked their products to other reloads in the vicinity, including one that was briefly established on the Great Western Railroad in Lakeview, OR. Trucking the lumber out of the basin added to the operating costs of all three companies, making them less competitive in the lumber markets.

In 1986 Union Pacific decided to sell 87 branchlines across its system to shortline operators. The Burns branch was one of the lines offered up. A group of companies based out of Boise, ID formed an organization called Intermountain Western Industries, and a deal to buy the Burns branch as part of a bigger package deal including 319 miles of branchlines in southern Idaho was soon signed. Intermountain Western Industries created the Intermountain Western Railroad to operate the lines, and several locomotives were acquired and painted for the new operation.

Efforts to secure public funding to rebuild the damaged trackage across the lake were started while the Intermountain Western deal was being worked out. Local and state politicians appealed to the Army

Corps of Engineers for funding to repair the railroad, but the Corps issued a report in June 1987 denying the application. The Corps concluded that the railroad was a single property, and the regulations prohibited the agency from funding projects benefiting only one property. The agency then released a Final Environmental Impact Statement that disapproved of any publicly financed repairs. This negative report spurred Oregon's Congressional delegation into action, and the agency was pressured to change its decision. Robert Page, Assistant Secretary of the Army, soon issued a decision determining that the project was in the public interest and that it should be funded under Section 205 of the Flood Control Act of 1948. Congress authorized \$3 million for the project on 15 December 1987. The Corps went back to work on another Environmental Impact Statement. The first draft of this document was issued to the public on 6 September 1987 calling for the railroad to be raised from 3 to 6 feet. The Corps estimated that the public investment in the line would be earned back through higher Forest Service timber sale receipts from the area, as there was a feeling that the lack of rail service caused timber sales to sell for less than they could have with readily available rail service. The Forest Service pegged their annual losses attributed to the lack of rail service at \$1.9 million.

In late 1987 negotiations between Union Pacific and Intermountain Western Industries broke down, and the agreement to sell the Burns branch fell apart. Once again the future of the line became cloudy. One of the companies behind Intermountain Western Industries was Western Railroad Builders (WRB) of Ogden, Utah. WRB was a railroad contracting firm that got into the shortline railroading business with the purchase of two Union Pacific branchlines in southern Wyoming and northern Colorado. The company established the Wyoming/Colorado Railroad (WYCO) to operate the branches. WRB became interested in the Burns branch after the Intermountain Western deal fell apart, and after receiving traffic assurances from potential shippers in Burns the company entered into negotiations with UP for the line. A deal was reached in late 1988, and the Interstate Commerce

Commission approved the sale on 13 April 1989. WYCO expected to earn a profit by operating the line so long as the reconstruction of the damaged track did not cost the company anything. Snow Mountain Pine projected shipping 150–200 carloads of lumber per month over the re-opened railroad. WYCO believed that it could successfully operate the line with that level of business, but some lingering doubts about the viability of the line remained. WYCO signed an agreement with the State of Oregon committing the company to provide service to Burns for at least three years, as all sides realized that bringing traffic back onto the rails would not happen overnight. WYCO planned to operate the line indefinitely, but secured a right to terminate operations and salvage the line if insufficient traffic to keep the line going was not realized at the end of three years.

Negotiations between the various parties involved in the various deals involving the railroad dragged on through the summer and fall of 1989. WYCO's deal to purchase the line from Union Pacific finally closed in early November, and the Oregon Eastern Division of the Wyoming/Colorado Railroad commenced operations on 6 November 1989 over the 24 miles of track between Ontario and Celatom. A burned trestle and collapsed tunnel had to be repaired on the line between Celatom and Crane in addition to the work required on the line west of Crane.

Local and state politicians put together a funding package to finance the work on the line west of Crane. Most of the funding came from the \$3 million appropriated by Congress earlier; the three lumber mills in Burns contributed \$200,000 towards the project; and additional funds were provided by the State of Oregon and local governments. WYCO was to do the actual work, but ran into snags over financing methods. The Army Corps of Engineers required WYCO to post \$3.5 million dollars worth of performance bonds before the work began, but the company was unable to secure such bonds. WYCO did obtain over \$7 million worth of surety bonds, but the Corps refused to accept them. WYCO sent a letter to Oregon Congressman Robert Smith stating that they would sal-

vage the rails if a resolution to the stand-off could not be found quickly. Mr. Smith called a meeting with the Corps, and after the intervention of the Congressman the agency agreed to accept WYCO's surety bonds. The last obstacle to re-opening the railroad was cleared.

Work on the reconstruction project commenced during the third week of November 1989. WYCO brought in a crew of 22 men to do the work, which involved dumping rock down the middle and along the sides of the track. A track machine would then run over the track, lifting the track structure up and compacting the rock underneath. Approximately a mile and a quarter of new track was laid in areas where the lake had washed the old track structure away. Re-building the damaged track consumed 70,000 cubic yards of rock, and 1,500 feet of culvert pipe was installed in the grade to allow for safe passage of water under the tracks. The tracks were raised an average of around 6 feet, with some areas requiring fills up to 10 feet deep. The first train into Burns arrived during the last week of January 1990, and the first revenue train eastbound out of Burns left town with three loads of Snow Mountain Pine lumber in the pre-dawn hours of Friday, 2 February 1990. The dream of resuming service to Burns was finally a reality. WYCO stationed a train crew in Burns, and twice a week the crew ran westward. WYCO continued to operate the eastern portion of the line with locomotives leased from the Union Pacific.

Work on improving the railroad continued through the spring and summer, and by early June the job was nearly done. It was time to party. Thursday, 31 May 1990, was the chosen day for the Great 1990 Rerailment Celebration. Approximately 100 celebrants paid \$25 each to ride a four car passenger special on that day that ran from Crane over the rebuilt trackage to Hines. A steak barbecue was held after the train arrived in Burns. Many politicians and dignitaries gave speeches, and everyone had a good time.

Despite the prevailing optimism there were some troubling signs. Snow Mountain Pine projected that they would ship 150–200 loads a month before

operations began, but actually only shipped a grand total of 86 cars during the first four full months of operation. Tecton Laminates shipped one carload during that same period, and Frenchglen Millworks contributed a carload or two a week. It was not nearly enough. WYCO responded by dropping service down to one train a week, and by the end of 1990 Burns-based operations were abolished, with trains operating from Vale out to Burns only when enough enough loaded cars were available to make a run worth it. The sawmills felt that they could get their customers to accept freight shipped by rail again, but despite the best efforts of everyone involved carloadings remained flat. Service to Burns dropped to an average of one train every three weeks.

Traffic over the eastern end of the railroad remained good. The primary shipper on this part of the railroad was a giant Eagle-Pitcher Diatomaceous Earth plant located at Celatom, 24 miles west of Ontario. The railroad also did good business hauling agricultural commodities over this end of the railroad. West of Celatom was another story, as traffic failed to improve. WYCO was free to end operations west of Celatom in the early months of 1992, and as that date grew near the public agencies that financed the re-opening of the line grew concerned. The parties assumed that three years would provide enough time for WYCO to build a traffic base to allow for profitable operations, but the traffic base did not appear. The State of Oregon announced in late 1991 plans to build a woodchip loader in either Burns or Hines that would provide an estimated 20 to 30 loads a week for the railroad, but nothing came of those plans.

Average carloads handled to or from Burns held steady at around 25 per month as 1991 turned into 1992. WYCO's commitment to the State of Oregon was met in mid-March, but the railroad continued running to Burns in the hope that a substantial new source of traffic would show up that would save the public and private investments in the line. The line was in a precarious situation, and only one small mishap was required to force the issue. That one mishap came in June 1992, when heavy truck traffic severely damaged the Highway 78 grade cross-

ing in Crane, making it almost impassible to rail traffic. WYCO decided that the end was at hand. On 23 June 1992 a light locomotive made the long trip from Vale to Burns to gather up all remaining cars at the west end of the railroad. The final eastbound train departed in the early morning hours of 24 June 1992. This last train consisted of two loads from Tecton Laminates, three empty boxcars, and two empty bulkhead flats. A hi-rail pickup carried all remaining track and equipment tools formerly used on the west end of the railroad and followed the last freight out of town. A track bulletin was issued on 1 July 1992 taking the entire railroad west of Celatom out of service.

The railroad put the word out that it would run to Burns again if the shippers ordered cars, but no orders were received. In late August 1992 workers at Snow Mountain Pine discovered a track crew commencing salvage operations next to the Hines mill. The state and local governments protested, but to no avail as WYCO had the right to take up the tracks. Salvage operations began in earnest the following spring, and by the middle of 1993 the 30 miles from Crane to Burns had been salvaged. At this point Union Pacific took WYCO to court, claiming that the short line had violated the three year operating contract for the line. UP claimed that it had the right to reacquire the line for the original \$1.3 million purchase price and that WYCO had to turn 60% of the salvage value of the tracks already removed over to the UP. The case dragged on through the last half of 1993 and into the early months of 1994, when WYCO and UP reached an agreement settling the case. Under the agreement WYCO got to scrap the line from Milepost 78 (about four miles west of Juntura) westward to Burns, while UP got to scrap the 44 miles of track from Celatom to Milepost 78. WYCO began the job of scrapping the railroad from Crane to Milepost 78 on 7 January 1994 and was completed on 1 February 1994. A UP track crew commenced scrapping operations on their portion of the line on 6 February 1994, and their job was done by the end of March. The UP rails were loaded into eight rail trains that were shipped east to UP plants for conversion into continuously welded rail.



**Editor's Note:** Many great pictures of the operation and rolling stock can be seen at <http://www.trainweb.org/highdesertrails/wyco.html>

Thus ended the long and sometime strange tale of railroading in the Harney basin. There was a lot of talk of placing the railroad into public ownership to preserve it for possible future use, but feelings ran against dumping any additional public money into the line. There was a lot of talk of turning the grade into a recreation trail, and WYCO donated the grade from Hines to Burns to an organization proposing to start a trail, but nothing came of that idea either. Despite the huge expenditures of public funds and political capital the line could not be saved. Snow Mountain Pine closed the mill in Hines a few years after the railroad pulled out, which would have doomed the railroad anyway. Most of the sawmill facility has been scrapped, with little more than the smokestack, the drying sheds, and a few outbuildings remaining today. The old Tecton Laminates facility is currently operated by Louisiana Pacific, and it remains as the last trace of the once mighty timber industry in Burns.

The Wyoming Colorado Railroad, Inc. (WYCO) now consists of two short line operations terminating on the Union Pacific Railroad at Ontario, Oregon (Oregon Eastern Railroad) and Walcott Junction, Wyoming). There is a variety of freight products hauled on these lines.

David L. Durbano purchased the Oregon Eastern line in 1987. The line includes approximately 27 miles of track, accompanying real estate and improvements beginning at Ontario, Oregon and ending at Celetom, Oregon. The line hauls diatomaceous earth and agricultural products.

The initial acquisition of WYCO, at the end of 1987, was a key element in management's strategic plan. WYCO consists of two branch rail lines and approximately 2,245 acres of real property (track corridor), located in southeastern Wyoming, acquired from the Union Pacific Railroad.

The Encampment Branch runs approximately 25 miles, from Walcott Junction, off the Union Pacific's North Platte-Salt Lake City mainline, to Saratoga, Wyoming. The current traffic base is made up of lumber products. This line is laid with 133 and 131 pound rail and is considered to be in excellent condition.

The base of operation of WYCO is Saratoga, Wyoming. Two locomotives, located at Walcott Junction, services the Encampment Branch. The loaded cars on the Encampment Branch are delivered to Walcott Junction at least twice weekly and are picked up by Union Pacific. Empty cars are returned to the customers on each branch at the same time the loads are picked up. On non-operating days, the train crew provides the necessary maintenance on the tracks.



## Schedules & Timetables

Make sure you check the calendar on our Website at <http://www.rcgrs.com/> for the most up-to-date schedules and timetables.

It is our Society's policy to attempt to have an event or open house on every second Saturday of the month. Other and additional dates during a month are also available and encouraged. Anyone interested in having an Open House or sponsoring an event, please contact **Nick Kelsey 503-266-1110 kelsey.nick@gmail.com**.

### **January 2, 2010, Saturday, 10:00 a.m.:**

Multnomah Athletic Club: Disassembly of the display layout at the MAC. Parking in the garage across the street, tell them why you are there to get in and park.

We also need help tearing down Al's Garden RR display which will probably be immediately after we finish dismantling the one at the Multnomah Club. I think Gary Lee plans to go from the Multnomah Club directly to Al's Garden Center to finish the job there. Volunteers are needed to help.

**January 9, 2010, Saturday, 1:00 p.m.: Annual meeting.** The Columbia Gorge Model Railroad Club has graciously offered to let us hold our annual meeting at their club house, 2505 N. Vancouver Ave, Portland, OR 97227, 503-288-7246.

RCGRS will provide the Main Dish (ham or turkey) and members need to bring: A-H Salads, I-P Side Dish, Q-Z Dessert.

**January 16, 2010, Saturday, 8:30 a.m. until 2:30 p.m.:** MODULAR SIG Work Session at Constructavision. Bring: lunch, snacks, tools and safety glasses.

**January 22, 2010, Friday, 6pm until 9pm:** OPERATIONS SIG at the Worthington and Randolph RR (Nick's place). RSVP Please. Car Card creation for our Operating layouts, Kelsey, Lee, Derville, Warrior, Zweerts

**2nd weekend February:** Event and Host?

**February 27, 2010, Saturday, 12:00 until 6:00 p.m.:** OPSIG operations on Bill Dippert's HO (indoor) railroad.

**March 13, 2010, Saturday:** Construction session at Constructavision. Gary Lee will guide members through construction of a model for their railroad. Subject to be announced.

**March 19, 20, 21, 2010:** The Great Train Expo at the Metro Convention Center. RCGRS will set up a large modular display and run trains.

**2nd weekend April:** Event and Host? (quarterly meeting)

**2nd weekend May:** Dennis & Carolyn Rose open house.

**2nd weekend June:** Ron and Merlene Bacon open house.

**June 19, 2010, Saturday:** Railroads In The Garden Summer Tour 2010. Bill Derville, Chairman

2nd weekend July: Gary and Jonette Lee (also, quarterly meeting)

### **July 29 - August 11, 2010:**

2010 NGRConvention.in Tacoma Washington.

Website and registration information is available at [http://www.psgrs.org/2010\\_NGRC\\_Schedule.html](http://www.psgrs.org/2010_NGRC_Schedule.html)

**Pre-convention Tour:** July 20-31 Oregon & SW Washington. Volunteers will be needed to assist the layouts that will be open for the tour.

**Convention & tours:** August 1-8 Greater Puget Sound area.

**Post-convention tours:** August 9-11, British Columbia.

**2nd weekend August:** Jeff and Diane Lange (Annual Auction)

**2nd weekend September:** Event and Host? (quarterly meeting)

**Halloween Trains October:** Location and Host?

**November 13, 2010:** Annual RCGRS Luncheon

**December 2010:** Jan and Rae Zweerts open house and viewing of the Christmas ships.

## Membership Dues Are Due!

The dues are \$30 per year for an individual and an additional \$6 per year for a significant other. There is only one class of member and all dues paying members have a vote in the business of the society. All dues are payable in December for the following fiscal year beginning in January.

Name \_\_\_\_\_  
Spouse \_\_\_\_\_  
Address \_\_\_\_\_  
Town \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP \_\_\_\_\_  
Telephone Number \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_  
My Interests: \_\_\_\_\_  
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Return the bottom section of this page with your dues payment to: RCGRS, 17520 S. Holly Lane; Oregon City, OR 97045 Make checks payable to RCGRS.

