



TRAIN ORDERS

Volume 2003, Number 5

September 2003

The Santa Maria Valley Railway Historical Museum

P.O. Box 264, Santa Maria, CA 93456-0264; (805) 714-4927

The Museum: Santa Maria Town Center Mall, Sat./Sun. 1-4:30pm

<http://www.smvrhm.org/> School/Club groups by appointment.

Cab Ride on the SMVRR

By Hal Madson

I was approached some time ago to make an appearance in a video on the coast line being filmed by Bob McMillan of Valhalla Video Productions. He had a copy of my book and wanted to feature a segment on the Santa Maria Valley Railroad. We filmed the SMVRR on Thursday, July 31st.

The filming started at the engine house located at Miller Street and the tracks, and using the idling GP-9, 1801 for a backdrop, I narrated a short history of the railroad industry here in Santa Maria. We then "chased" the daily switching job as performed by the crew consisting of Tom Braunger, engineer and Vince Martinez, brake- ("SMVRR" continued next page)



SMVRR No. 1801 at the diamond pushing the lumber car and hopper west to the west leg of the wye before continuing south to the Airbase. Bob McMillan photo.



Meetings

General: first Thursday of the month, 6:00pm, at the Santa Maria Inn.

Museum Development: Thursdays (except first Thursday of the month) at the Museum, 6:00pm

HO Modelers: Fridays at the Museum, 7:00pm.

Caboose Crew: Saturdays at the caboose, 8-11am. 🚂

Rail Bosses

Dan Alves, President, aiim@juno.com

Dick Miner, Vice President, BoothR8@aol.com

Phil Goble, Treasurer, "CaBoss", Phil.Pam@Prodigy.net

Jamie Foster, Secretary, "Train Orders" Editor, Webmaster, jamie@jf2.com 🚂

No. 10 Hood Gets to the Museum

The hood of Santa Maria Valley Railroad (SMVRR) No. 10 arrived at the Mall parking lot by trailer.



No. 10 (CN 30019) and No. 20 were the first new GE 70-ton diesel switchers purchased by the SMVRR in 1948. Eventually, the SMVRR would own eight of these 600hp units (one was actually a similar GE U6B, No. 60). No. 10 was retired in 1992 and scrapped in 1994/95. By then, many of its parts had been used to service Nos. 70 and 80, still in service today. Early in its career, a tug-of-war was conducted by the SMVRR with No. 10 up against No. 21, an SMVRR mikado steam locomotive. The diesel won. The original paint scheme was GE yellow stripes on dark green. This paint scheme was later reversed on the SMVRR. As many as 5 of these units were used together to haul 130 or so empty sugar beet gondolas. 🚂



Member Drives Golden Spike for New Railroad

The Santa Ynez Valley Redwood Railway (SYVRRy) was officially opened with the driving of a golden spike on August 2, 2003!

The SYVRRy is an elevated, Lionel, outdoor railroad completed this summer. Command-and-control as well as traditional operating modes are available.



Pictured above, the cabforward "bites" its own tail as it traverses the Tehachapi Loop section of the layout. The SP caboose on the lower left track is the end of the cabforward's train.



Above is a long view of 4 parallel tracks along the SYVRRy in the redwood garden. Most of the SP cabforward is hidden behind the foliage, but not so the train of PFE cars behind it. On the upper level, also mostly behind foliage, is a Daylight passenger train.



Caboose Update

Recent work on the caboose included installing grab irons (right), re-stenciling the placard (below), and continued work on finishing the roof. You can see by the placard that the journals haven't been repacked since 1979. But that's OK, it hasn't put on many miles since then either.



("SMVRR" continued from previous page)

man/conductor. Bob asked Dave Jennings, the general manager, about the possibility of a cab ride, and Dave said that he would see what he could do.

Dave gave us a brief rundown of where the crew would be working that day, and we initially set up right on Jones and Thornburg to get in some "street running" which is always popular with rail buffs. We noticed right away that the track crew was replacing a rail on the short pass just west of us and had a target attached to the main line rail "blocking" the track. The locomotive



View from cab looking down line to the "Green Canyon" trestle.

("SMVRR" continued next page)

("SMVRR" continued from previous page)

couldn't pass till the target was removed for an all clear and was delayed about a half hour.

The next location was at Bell siding, which is used to store inbound cars. The crew picked up three reefers for the potato packing sheds on Depot Street, a load of lumber and a hopper of plastic pellets bound for the "Airbase".

We got some excellent shots from the diamond where the north/south line crosses the main as they shoved the three reefers into the loading area. Potatoes are about the only fresh vegetable crop shipped anymore, however at least one shipper is experimenting with some broccoli shipments by rail to the east coast.

After they were done at the potato packing sheds we rushed down line to set up at the McCoy Lane crossing for a shot of the train now consisting of the hopper and lumber car. Bob uses two cameras to get two different angles of an oncoming train or he sets them up to capture the oncoming shot as well as the departing shot. The film is spliced later to complete a "run-by".


We got some shots of the switching at Okonite Cable Company where an empty boxcar that had been loaded with aluminum was picked up and the hopper was left on the drill track. The lumber car was left on the main at the lumberyard. We had a radio tuned to the railroad's frequency and so knew that they were on the way back to Bell to do some more switching.

Back at Bell the boxcar was left on the main while the locomotive drifted down the spur to one of the freezer plants served by the railroad. They picked up a loaded reefer, put it on the main with the boxcar and then replaced it with an empty. The train then crossed Stowell Road where we got additional footage and then we had our first dilemma. We knew that they were going to switch the truss factory and we also knew that they were going to make a pickup at the refinery on Sinton Road. We wouldn't have time to shoot both. Bob was going for the best shots, so I told him, "let's go to the refinery, that's your best shot."


We got set up at Carr and no train. We waited, and still no train. We had the radio on and no traffic. I told Bob that they were probably tied up for beans. We called Dave on his cell phone. Dave told us that he was at the junction switch, which was a mile or so west of our location. The next thing we knew he shows up in his company car. By this time we could see the headlight on the locomotive. They had added another reefer and an empty lumber car from the truss factory. Dave said that there should have been two more reefers, but something must have happened to delay them. They picked up the one tank car of petroleum distillates that was at the Carr loading rack. Dave told us that they have a hard time getting enough tank cars (from the UP) to supply the refinery. The next stop was Guadalupe. Bob wanted a shot of the train arriving at Guadalupe and hoping the Starlight would be going through at the same time.

I asked Dave "where do we get on?" He replied, "Meet me at the west end of the receiving yard" which is Barsug. We could ride from there back to Carr. I told Bob


Be a Docent

It's easy, it's fun, you meet lots of people, and you get to run trains as much as you'd like! The afternoon really does fly by. Contact Dan to sign up! 

Dues are Over Due

Please pay your dues as soon as possible. While the Museum operates principally on volunteerism, a little cash is also mandatory now and then. 

Holiday Lionel

You might want to sponsor an 8-by-8 foot Christmas Lionel display at the Museum! Contact the Museum. 


he had a choice; he opted to skip the Guadalupe shot and ride the train! That's a no brainer, right?

We set up at Barsug and got the train, which consisted of an empty lumber car, two reefers, a boxcar and the tank car as they headed into the interchange at Guadalupe. There was no return traffic. Dave told us that the next day over twenty cars were due to be picked up. Dave had the crew stop at the west end of Barsug and that's where we got on leaving Bob's car.

Bob opted to ride the front of the locomotive so he could film the trip. Vince stayed with him while I made my way back to the cab where Tom opened the door and said "welcome aboard." After introductions, I took the fireman's seat and we started back to our destination at Carr where David would be waiting to take us back to Bob's car. I can't begin to tell you how awesome it is to ride in the cab of a locomotive! I managed to take the last shots on my roll of film. I had a long conversation with Tom. He asked me what we were doing and I related to him Bob's project. I mentioned that he had called me because I wrote "the book". He said you wrote that book? He went on to say that he had a copy and really enjoyed it. He remarked on the amount of research I had done, he seemed really impressed. Here he was making me feel important while all the time I was impressed riding up there in the cab with him!

As we rode along we came to road crossings. It was so cool to be in the cab looking down at the cars stopped for us and not the other way around. We crossed the newly re-built trestle that crosses "Green Canyon." Dave told us that they re-built it in just three days, working on a weekend. That's another story. We were traveling long hood forward and when the locomotive swung across the road at the junction to head for Santa Maria, that was another experience. It looked like we passed the switch entirely before she answered her helm.

Well, the ride wasn't long enough; Carr came up way too fast even though the locomotive poked along at just nineteen miles per hour. David picked us up and took us back to Barsug, where we caught the Starlight on tape and then headed for home ourselves. What a great day.

We are really appreciative of the SMVRR and all the help they were to us on this project. 

KSMR Radio

by Jim Hilliker

[The following information about KSMR, the radio station whose history is intertwined with the Santa Maria Valley Railroad's history, was graciously provided by Jim Hilliker, a longtime radio historian now living in Monterey but who grew up in Santa Maria. If anyone has pictures of the antenna on the roof of the railroad office building, or of musicians jamming inside, we'd love to share them here...]

It appears that KSMR was not related to today's KSMR-1240 AM, which was first licensed and went on the air around 1945 to 1947. (I was on the radio on KSMR in 1962 and '63, a tape-recorded Christmas program of songs our school classmates performed).

KSMR started out as KFRC, licensed to the Santa Maria Valley Railroad, Santa Maria, CA on September 2, 1925. 100 watts of power on 1430 kilocycles. During February of 1926, the station changed call letters to KSMR to better identify with the owner/licensee of the station, Santa Maria (Valley) Railroad.

The Federal Radio Commission (FRC, predecessor to the FCC) moved KSMR and other stations around the AM band dial to avoid interference from other stations. KSMR was moved from 1430 to 1060 and then 1100 kilocycles on the AM band radio dial during 1927. Still 100 watts of power, fairly typical for a local radio station in those days.

KSMR was finally assigned to operate on 1200 kilocycles with 100 watts of output power on November 11, 1928, still owned by SMVRR in 1929 and 1930. In 1931, the FRC list shows that possibly the railroad had sold KSMR, as the licensee/owner was now listed in June of 1931 as Santa Maria Radio.

Sometime in either 1931 or 1932, KSMR radio was sold to a group in Bakersfield. They took possession of the license and broadcast equipment, moved the radio station to Bakersfield and changed the call letters to KERN-1200 kilocycles, station of the Bakersfield Bee newspaper.

KERN is still on the air today in Bakersfield, a news-talk station on 1410-AM, but it began its radio life in 1925 in Santa Maria...

I don't know why Hancock sold the station... Maybe hard to make it operate at a profit in a small town during the Depression?

KSMR, first as KFRC, was Santa Maria's first radio station.

The very first radio station in Santa Barbara County, according to the old FCC files (including FRC and Dept of Commerce, Radio Division files 1922-1932), was a small broadcasting station, KFHJ owned by the Fallon Company in Santa Barbara, and it was licensed in December of 1922, beating out KFRC/KSMR by 3 years or so.

Looks like KFHJ went out of business and off the air for good between 1924 and 1925, but haven't found the exact date yet.

Radio was quite the new fad in the 1920s, and KFRC/KSMR came along during



radio's first tumultuous decade, when radios were either crystal sets or battery operated and difficult to use, and finally, the easier to use, one-dial all-electric radios came along, starting in 1927 and 1928.

It was a big part of Santa Maria for around 6 years.

I found a couple of listings for times/hours KSMR was on the air in 1928, only 1 to 3 hours a night, usually off the air Sundays.

By the way, I was checking on history of the old KDB radio, 1490-AM in Santa Barbara. That station started out as KFRC radio in December 1926 for Fallon Company Radio. Came on the air only one year and 2 months after KSMR.

So, the 1490-AM license in S.B. is the 3rd oldest station overall in Santa Barbara County and the oldest continuously operating radio station in the county.

KFRC changed call letters to KDB in January of 1929. Was on 1500-AM from 11-11-28 until it moved to 1490 on 3-29-41.

KDB changed call letters to KAPN on 10-12-69, but changed back to KDB 10 days later, 10-22-69.

But, the historic 3-letter call sign of KDB disappeared for good from 1490-AM after 61 years, when KDB-1490 became KSPE and is now KBKO radio. Station has broadcast in Spanish for some time. I believe the old KDB call letters are now on FM in S.B., for a classical music station.

Corporate Sponsorship

Your SMVRHM has just created a Corporate Sponsorship program.

\$200 - \$499 Bronze Spike Level

Bronze benefits include a line listing in Train Orders (newsletter) and on the SMVRHM web site, a listing on the corporate sponsorship banner at all museum functions, discounts on museum events, and 2 invitations to a sponsorship reception.

\$500 - \$999 Silver Spike Level

Includes everything in Bronze Spike Level plus a business card size ad in Train Orders and on the SMVRHM web site, and 2 free tickets to Choo Chew Saturday.

\$1,000 - \$4,999 Golden Spike Level

Additionally includes 1/8 page ad in Train Orders and the SMVRHM web site, and two museum t-shirts and hats.

\$5000 and above Platinum Spike Level

Additionally includes 1/4 page ad, a copy of Hal's Book, 6 free tickets to Choo Chew Saturday, and 10 invitations to sponsorship reception.

Please contact Rob Himoto for more information: smvrrfan@aol.com, or 545-8977.

