

# The Dispatcher

*The El Dorado Western Railroad Newsletter*

March 2021



## **A SHORT Train, a SHORT Run, a LONG Journey** by Keith Berry

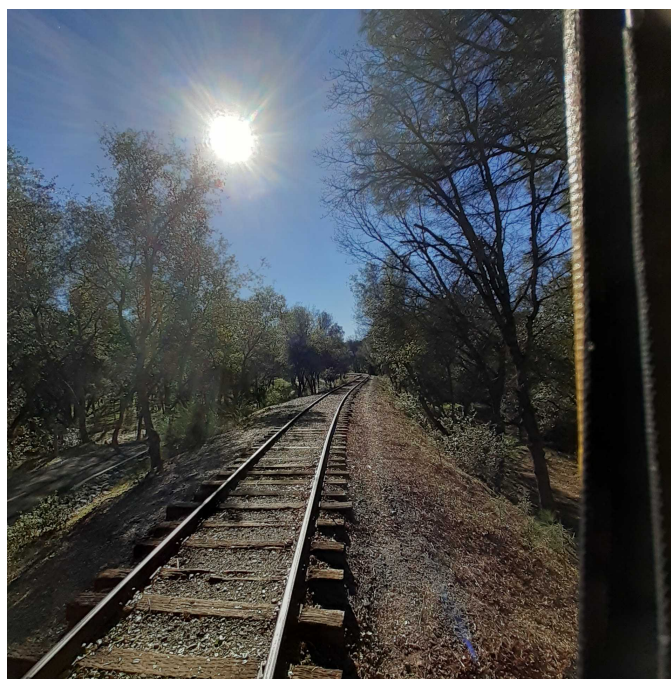
The moment had been a long time coming. The last Southern Pacific train had slowly crossed the road westbound over 30 years ago, pulling a vintage steam engine bound for the California State Railroad Museum. The railroad had waited silently for the next full size train.

That moment was at hand, a single locomotive slowly approached the crossing heading east to Diamond Springs, pushing a single rustic appearing passenger excursion flatcar. The train came to a stop short of the roadway, blew a single "stop" signal, and waited for the Road Conductor and flag crew to insure vehicle traffic was stopped. The Conductor activated the crossing lights, gave a come ahead hand signal, and the engineer opened the throttle. The air horns employed, the train followed the curved track, steel wheels singing against steel rail. Those on the bike trail cheered and clapped. The moment now realized. A short train making a short run, on a long journey!

The train had traveled far to reach that moment. The locomotive was donated by the CertainTeed Corporation of Chowchilla CA, becoming El Dorado Western Railroad #1. The locomotive, a two axle, industrial design, diesel powered, weighing 36,000 lbs, it is at home on the EDWR. The Excursion Car, a flat car built in 1929 for the U.S. Army, served during World War II hauling heavy armor and trucks to ports of demarcation. Owned by the California State Railroad Museum, the car has been adapted for excursion comfort, it now features a curved metal half roof, seating, and space for those who wish to stand or utilize a wheelchair. The passengers can feel the breeze, and hear the steel wheels sing against the steel track.

Many individuals rode the train east that day to Diamond Springs, including the Train Conductor, Maintenance of Way crew, and a professional Railroad Track Inspector. All evaluating the track and the right of way for fire fuel clearance, they had earned the moment. Others rode that day in spirit. Those who are now passed, those who dreamed of trains running on the Placerville Branch, those who spent many a day restoring the equipment, those who walked the tracks to remove obstruction, and those who initiated passenger excursion service with the A cars, serving over 22,000 passengers over 10 years in all seasons. They had dreamed, they had worked, they above others had earned this moment!

A SHORT train rumbled that day across Forni Rd, making a SHORT run, carrying the spirit of El Dorado on a LONG journey.



*A section of track, neat and tidy after hours of hard work, ready for the EDWR Train*

## **PUSHING UP THE GRADE**

Railroads confronted with steep or long grades employed extra locomotives to help "push" the train. The heavier the train, more locomotives were cut in ahead of the road engine, perhaps mid train, and in the rear just ahead of the caboose. Engineers used whistle signals to coordinate; going over the summit the lead engines would be backing off the throttle while the rear engines were still pushing hard. Modern railroads use "distributed power", using the traditional placement in train of engine units all remotely controlled by the engineer. The art of "pushing" is alive but on the El Dorado Western, well, "pushing" has recently been different!

A recent December morning was cold, frost everywhere, the rail icy. A chipping crew was called for 8:30 am, working eastbound out of El Dorado, climbing the 2.2% grade. A four unit A car lash up led the Track Mobile pulling the chipper. Typically, the four unit A train operates with two units operating, the lead and the rear units. Icy track warrants multiple units pulling, traction and braking are compromised. Sanding the rail is the traditional practice to reduce wheel slip.

The A train headed east, the sunny areas were only wet going past Hagen's Crossing, then the rails curved and headed up the steep grade, still in shadows. The A car rear unit drive wheels were slipping, but the train kept moving, barely.

The crew stopped at a chipping pile, then tried to start, but could not move. Crew members hopped off and began pushing at the rear corners, other crew started scooping up sand in paper cups. Why were they having to push?

Another stop for a chipping pile, another hard start, more sand. The car drive wheels were polishing the rail. The crew on the ground pushing. Why? The question begged an answer.

Finally, the last chipping pile reached, the return would be down grade. "Why are you all pushing the consist, aren't multiple drive units enough, you're too old to be pushing a train up a 2.2 % grade"! The answer was unexpected,

**WE FORGOT THE KEY TO THE LEAD UNIT, THE SECOND AND THIRD UNITS ARE NOT EQUIPPED WITH BATTERIES, THE REAR UNIT IS PUSHING!**

We forgot the key ! So, the crew helped push the train up a grade steeper than Donner Summit!

It takes a special volunteers to keep pushing, when others would have returned to the station to secure a key ring. Only on the El Dorado Western, we are determined to look forward, look east up that old grade, and PUSH! Now about that key...!

## **TRACK UPDATE**

By Peter Schulze, EDWR Roadmaster

With the approach of Spring and the potential of afternoons extended by the Daylight Savings time change, we are even more rewarded by the many tasks and work items that have been accomplished over this past, very mild, dry winter !! AND, we are even more pleased with the prospects for "Spring Time" activities for EDWR !

The preparation and installation of railroad grade crossing signals (gates & flashers) at Forni Road deserves our first project priority !

Next, installing switch ties, ballast and especially two switch stands at the crossover at Shingle Springs. Additional track material has been donated, so even a better reason to move that job forward!

AND !! ...not be forgotten, our track-side signage needs to be displayed from El Dorado to the the EDWR end-of-track Diamond Springs Station !!

Oh, BTW, the other best project for each of us is to bring a friend out to the Railroad ! That way, they too can have as much fun as we do !!!

Thank in advance -



Volunteers working on Maintenance of Way, helping to make the dream of the full-size train come true!



**Railroad Rules on the "Steam Cars"  
(circa 1901)**

Railroads run on railroad rules; rules which were important enough to be formalize in the authorized rule book. The EDWR Rule Book is based upon GCOR (General Code of Operating Rules.) The saying is that railroad rules are written in blood-if a rule is important enough to be in the Rule Book, its the result of somebody getting hurt or killed! The operating rules reflect the railroads operating environment, and some have been around for 150 years!

The following rules are found in the rule book of a historic transcontinental railroad operating thru the western desert territories into California. Times were a bit different for those train crews out in the desert!

*Rule #303- Should employee be injured, no further pay or benefit to family. (No work-no check- family must leave railroad property)*

*#305- Employee may be terminated at any time without notice. (We assume this was limited to being fired, not fully terminated)*

*#314- Stepping off fast moving trains is prohibited- employee responsible. (No good thing happens stepping off a fast moving train)*

*#353- Conductor must eject any gamblers or lewd women annoying passengers or practicing their trades. (Refer to rule 314, ejecting from train infers throwing them from train)*

*#365- Conductor is to allow only one news "butcher" on a train during run. (This should control the news media from butchering the story)*

*#382- Live stock drovers must ride in drovers caboose only. (Best arrangement given they smell like their captives on the trail drive)*

*#391- Trainmen must water hogs as necessary. (Necessary for what-extra crispy?- Jimmy Dean would be proud)*

*#416- REAR Brakeman will be posted in REAR CAR. (How else could he be the rear brakeman, get up into that cupola!)*

*#547- Ticket agents cannot sell tickets for station where trains do NOT stop. (Refer to*

rule on ejection or stepping off fast moving trains)

*#631- Do NOT give whiskey to injured passenger unless in shock, six doses max. (So let him suffer until he goes unto shock)*

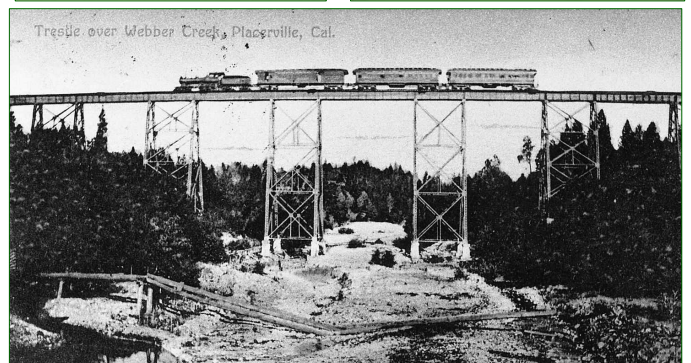
*#637- If passenger suffers broken limb, train crew is to straighten and align break. (This should be fun!)*

*#638- If burned, apply linseed oil or white paint. (Where is that whiskey!)*

*#727- Inferior slower trains must take siding for faster superior trains, be in clear. (Makes sense, refer to rule on being injured while being ejected from train)*

A young man named Clarke Berry, my grandfather, was a passenger on this railroad about the year this rule book was placed in service. He rode west thru Indian territory to reach California and take up farming in the San Fernando Valley. He survived his trip! Thanks to a small dark red rule book, 1/2 inch thick, operating rules # 105, dated November, 1901.

**Ship and travel all the Way-on the Santa Fe!  
The Atchison, Topeka, and Santa Fe Railway**





**ODE to the Senior Railroad Volunteer!**

*Running trains slowly, we do not care,  
We don't have to be anywhere,*

*Yes we're old, we're called retired,  
we prefer to say we're the working tired!*

*Moving slowly, our thinning hair is gray,  
working track on the Right of Way.*

*We ride the trains, travel here and there,  
We love attending Railroad Day Care!*

**Spotlight on RAILROAD VOLUNTEERS**

Since the Annual Volunteer Recognition Dinner was canceled due to the pandemic, the 2020 awards were handed out on February 7<sup>th</sup>



*Claudean Arnold received a special acknowledgment for her many years of great volunteer service*



*Ken Asmus received the EDWR Meritorious Service award*



*Bruce Cunha received the Golden Spike Award, the 2020 EDWR Volunteer of the Year! This is Bruce on the EDWR's Regulator, sweeping the tracks. Thank you Bruce!*

**General Manager's Report by Mary Cory, County Museum Administrator**

As we have been doing for several years, the El Dorado Western Railroad volunteers began 2021 by identifying the projects on the year's "To Do" list, and assigning them a color to indicate their priority level. Every year there is a daunting number of projects listed in red (high priority) but it's been an effective way of staying focused and working as a team.

This year, we are looking forward to getting the full size train underway. During 2020, restoration work continued on the #1094 Caboose, the section of track between El Dorado and Missouri Flat Road was restored, and maintenance of way continued. Even though regular operations were closed down and volunteer meetings were suspended as the result of COVID-19, the outdoor work of restoring the railroad continued (following Public Health guidelines, of course!)

Bringing El Dorado County's railroad heritage to the public continues to guide our vision for the El Dorado Western Railroad. Thank you to all of the volunteers for their commitment to this program, and thank you to all of the El Dorado Western Railroad's supporters, riders, and well-wishers!

*For the latest EDWR Schedule, check the County Museum website at <http://museum.edcgov.us/el-dorado-western-railroad/>*

*The Dispatcher is published quarterly by the El Dorado County Historical Museum. Articles contributed by Keith Berry, the editor is Mary Cory. Comments can be directed to [mary.cory@edcgov.us](mailto:mary.cory@edcgov.us)*



**Currently railroad operations are following Public Health guidelines. Face coverings are required, 6 feet distance from others and frequent hand sanitizing are also required.**

*Schedule: 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Sundays boarding in El Dorado, at 10AM, 11AM, 12PM, 1PM. Tickets are sold on a first come, first served basis. Tickets go on sale at 9:30am. For more information, call (530) 663-3581; like us at [www.facebook.com/ElDoradoWesternRailroad/](http://www.facebook.com/ElDoradoWesternRailroad/)*