
THE DESERT WIND

Volume 9, Issue 1

A Publication of the Joshua Tree and Southern Railroad Museum

Winter 2005

The Car Barn is Up!



Bill Shepherd and his crew spent the better part of a month framing, sheeting, roofing and painting the new car barn to have it ready to occupy by the Fall Meet. Some took vacation time away from work to help out. The presence of this new structure radically changes the landscape of the property, and really sets the scale for the 7 1/2" gauge operation, portraying a

narrow gauge feel. New doors made of steel have now been applied by Greg, Brian and Allan Ratliff, aka "Three Companies" and now make the building lockable and secure. All Museum rolling stock has now been moved in. One track in the Barn is now active, the next three will be tied in once a few minor alignment changes have been made to the location of the mainline switch.

Thanks go to Bill and Mary Shepherd, Rudy van Wingen, Paul Lavacot, Tom Arnold, Greg, Brian and Allan Ratliff, Gary Conley, Terry Watson, Dick Pantoja, Kevin Kane, Nick Waite (who dug the hole) and everyone who helped bring this project to it's completion. -ed. ☀



Inside This Issue

- 1 Car Barn is Up!
- 2 Jack Sessums passes.
- 2 GSD Update.
- 3 Calendar of Events
- 3 Snow Arrives at JT&S.

So Long Jack.

We have lost a truly remarkable man...

Jack Sessums passed on December 15th, 2004 at home with his family by his side. Jack was an active member of the JT&S, but was also much more than that. He was a friend and mentor to many of us. I can say that he seldom missed a workday on the Grand Scale Division, even after the onset of his cancer. In fact his energy during track laying sessions put many of us to shame! His exuberance and raw enthusiasm will truly be missed. As a tribute to Jack we have elected to name the new 15" gauge bridge now under construction after him. Several JT&S members were in attendance at his memorial service.

What follows are excerpts of his obituary: -ed.

John Walker Sessums III, owner and operator of Sessums Engineering and a 45-year resident of Redlands, died at home Wednesday, Dec. 15th, 2004 of pancreatic cancer, he was 64.

He was known for his knowledge of trains of all sizes and his live-action miniatures for scenes in more than 30 major films.

One of his last achievements was a perfect replica of Walt Disney's train the "Lilly Belle" for the Disney Imagineering in Burbank. This train model was shipped to Hong Kong for the new Disney theme park.

Jack Sessums, born July 19th, 1940, in Dayton, Ohio, was the son of the late Maj. Gen. John W. Sessums Jr. who, upon retirement in Washington, D.C., moved the family to Redlands. Jack grew up in an Air Force family and graduated from Oxon Hill High School in Maryland, just outside the District of Columbia. The family moved to Redlands in 1959 when he was 18.

Sessums' life work as a design engineer and special effects consultant developed through his hobby and love of trains. That interest began when his grandfather in Durham, N.C. set him up in the cab of a steam engine as a small boy.

In addition to his engineering skills, Sessums had a passion for music, playing lead guitar with Redlands' Gross Prophet Band from 1970 to 1985.

Michael Sajbel, Sessums' cameraman during the past 25 years, spoke of the one-quarter-scale locomotive and expanded railroad that Sessums hand-built to carry people around his property. On several occasions he offered the ride and dinner in the Pullman car as an auction item to raise money for the Redlands Symphony Orchestra and the Redlands YWCA.



Jack at RLS last year.

"His friendliness to all who visited him and his philanthropy involving his railroad are still much appreciated," said Sajbel. "His enthusiasm for life and how things work was infectious."

One of Sessums' passions was restoring 1957 Chevrolets. He owned three, including a black convertible with red interior, a business coupe and a sedan all restored from the ground up.

*He is survived by his wife, Beverly Sessums of Redlands; two sons, John Walker Sessums IV of Redlands and Jeffrey Michael Sessums of East Highlands; and two sisters, Marion Fish, and Jean Fisher, both of Lake San Marcos. The family suggests memorial donations may be made in his name to the **Redlands Historical Museum Association, PO Box 470, Redlands, CA 92373.***

Longtime friend Gerald Sanders spoke with Jack before he passed when medical procedures made it difficult to speak. "He made this motion (a slow forearm hammer stroke), and when I leaned close, not understanding his motion, he whispered, I need to be building something."

Grand Scale Division Report

Progress continues...

The December workday saw the pouring of the turntable center foundation, as well as the laying of 65' of new track in the old "loop" alignment. Thanks to Bill Shepherd for forming the turntable center! Also thanks to Ken Eells for the donation of a themed "Goose Gas" pumphouse, which will add to the charm of the 15" gauge facility. Thanks go also to Lars Tempas, Tom Arnold, John Zitrick, Dick Pantoja, and our visitor John Ray from the Coyote

...continued on page 3

Visit our online gift shop at:

www.cafepress.com/jtsdiningcar

Proceeds go to worthy Museum projects!



Calendar of Events

•*Work Weekend Schedule:*

February 12-13, 2005

March 12-13, 2005

April 9-10, 2005

May 14-15, 2005

•*Narrow Gauge Meet*

March 18-20, 2005

Contact **Rudy van Wingen** for more info:
dmmcomo@sprintmail.com

•*Annual Planning Meeting*

April 9, 2005 - Everyone invited!

Logon at www.jtsrr.org for all the latest!



GSD Report *...from page 2*

Valley Railway. Progress continues to be made on Shay #6. Ken Kukuk has finished the new cab, and is applying the cut-down end beams, new bell, and other appurtenances. The base for the new sand dome is being cast in Portland, Oregon. Don't forget that Grand Scale Division workdays are always the 2nd Saturday of each month. Call me at **(562) 809-7455** or e-mail me at wsftco@earthlink.net for more info.☀

-Chris Allan, GSD Coordinator



New "Goose Gas" shed built by Ken Eells.

Snow Arrives at JT&S *by Brian Ratliff*

Just an update on JT&S over the Thanksgiving weekend. Mom and Dad got out there Wednesday afternoon and I got a message on my phone to bring out the plow. We arrived later Wednesday night.

Thursday morning after installing #5's pilot plow on #8 and firing up on the unloading track a run to clear the line was undertaken. A lot of the 12 to 18 inches of snow that fell last weekend had melted away, but up to 8 inches remained in the cuts and shaded spots around the grounds. All movements of #8 were well documented by the rail fans on site (Greg and Dad). The upper loop was cleared with a few attempts, as bucking snow gets it's name. The straight section behind the patio was about 5 to 7 inches deep in spots and you certainly had to use somethrottle to get through it.

After breaks in the action to allow film reloading the station clearing commenced. The snow on the shady side of the station including the roof was the deepest, about 8 inches over the rails. After quite a few runs at the blockage, paths were cleared

...continued on page 4

Snow plow...*from page 3*

on both outside tracks, leaving the center track for later.

Greg got the throttle for the high line job, only snow left there was before the bridge but it was plenty deep. Dad actually ran the Heisler to clear the center track of the station. He said he wanted a plow on his next engine.

Some folks have said you can't buck snow with a 7 1/2" gauge engine. I'm happy to report they are mistaken. It was a blast. It's been 24 years since the track has been started out there and it was worth the wait to clear the line with a snow plow on the 7 1/2". We'll be keeping the plow on #8 through the winter just in case.☀



Greg clears the trestle on the High Line.



Opening up the platform tracks.



Brian bucking with the Heisler.



P.O. Box 475
Joshua Tree, CA 92252

ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED

Phone/Fax (760) 366-8503
Email: dmmcomo@sprintmail.com
Website: www.jtsrr.org
Editor: Chris Allan