

The Travel Town



A Publication of the Travel Town Museum Foundation

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President's Greetings

2002 turned out to be the most exciting year we've seen at Travel Town in a long time – maybe THE most exciting ever! Of course, the biggest news of all is that the Museum's long-awaited *Locomotive Pavilion* building is now under construction. Alleluia! Ground was officially broken at a celebration ceremony on May 2, 2002, and as this newsletter goes to press the structure is nearing completion. Many of us worked long and hard to see that groundbreaking day come; it was truly a banner day in both Travel Town's life and in my own!

As the structure nears completion, I would like to take a moment to personally thank the many, many individuals who have stood behind this important project through all the years of planning and preparation - from the late, great Councilman John Ferraro to the hundreds of Travel Town visitors who lent their collective voices of support. Now we're watching the construction progress from week to week on this monumental building, and what a tremendous thrill it is! As of this writing, the steel framework of the building is in place and most of the painting is complete. Laying of the new railroad tracks under the shed should be completed this week, to be followed by installation of the roofing, clerestory window glass and finally pouring the concrete sidewalks between the tracks. I am most happy to report that the Travel Town Museum Foundation itself is playing a supporting role in the project's successful completion, having raised over \$30,000 to supplement the City and County funds appropriated to the project. If you haven't been by the Park lately, now is a great time to get a glimpse of the ongoing construction work on this fantastic building.

But the Locomotive Pavilion is not the only thing that been a-building at Travel Town this year ... In January, Museum volunteers finished laying new track at "Cahuenga Junction," forming the first segment of the "Zoo Railroad" to be built outside the perimeter of the Travel Town Museum complex. This coming summer, we hope to see continuing construction progress on the *Crystal Springs and Cahuenga Valley Railroad* track as more rail is laid east and west of the new junction. If you don't mind getting a little dirty, the Museum's volunteer track crew is always looking for new members!

On the restoration front, work on the interiors of both the historic Union Pacific Dining Car 369 and the famous Union Pacific club car, "The Little Nugget," is moving ahead with leaps and bounds. Both

projects have received an extra surge of volunteer energy and enthusiasm owing to construction of the Locomotive Pavilion (which will provide a long-awaited protective covering for these two historic artifacts!). I would like to take a moment to give special thanks and recognition to some key volunteers who have really helped move the interior restoration work forward: Marcel Cote, Rosie Prater, Richard Zuber, Leslie Hamilton and Joy Klein. One final note on the Dining Car: thanks to great work spearheaded by museum volunteer, Greg Ramsey, ALL of the brakes on the 369 are now connected and working again, after about 50 years of sitting idle – I know the Museum's operating train crew personnel will really appreciate this the next time they need to move this "heavyweight" car to another position at the Museum!

Hope to see you all at Travel Town this summer!

Greg Gneier, President
June, 2003

"Just Whistle While You Work . . ."



These enthusiastic volunteers are re-distributing, tamping, and dressing the ballast around this track near the Cahuenga junction. The group includes (left to right): Project leader Greg Gneier, Luis Saladas from GP Rah, Greg Hulett, Ann Bui, Xuan Li, Alick Tan, Eddie Nono, John Vertrees, and Steve Ekizyan.

Museum's Motorcar Restoration Back on Track!

After sitting dormant for 18 months, the mighty Winton engine in Santa Fe Railway Motorcar M.177 roared to life again on November 9, 2002, signaling a resumption of restoration work on this historic Travel Town artifact! The Museum's effort to return the 73-year-old self-propelled railroad passenger car to full operating condition is now under the leadership of volunteer Bryan Reese. Built by the Pullman Car and Manufacturing Company in 1929, the M.177 carried passengers, mail and express freight along a Santa Fe Railway branchline in Oklahoma from the 1930s until its retirement and donation to Travel Town in 1957.

A "motorcar" is somewhat unusual in railroading – instead of a locomotive pulling a string of baggage, mail and passenger cars, a motorcar is everything all rolled into one! The front portion of the motorcar has a cab for the engineer and a powerful gasoline engine to move it along. In the middle is a room for baggage, express and U.S. Mail. The rear of the car has two passenger seating sections, one for smokers and one for non-smokers. In the mid-20th century, several railroads used these self-propelled single-car "trains" on branch lines where passenger and express traffic was light. If the load was especially heavy, however, an additional passenger coach or express car could

be coupled to the back of the motorcar to make a two-car train. Here in southern California, the Santa Fe ran a similar motorcar back and forth between Los Angeles and San Bernardino.



Photo by Dale L. Brown, Jr., Copyright 1997

Very few of the old motorcars survive today; those that do are mostly in museums. Travel Town's M.177 is extra special because it still has its original 1929 Winton gasoline engine. Though many of the motorcars were built with gasoline ("distillate") engines, most had those engines replaced by more efficient Diesel engines later in their careers. M.177's historic 400 h.p. Winton engine was completely rebuilt several years ago and is once again in running order. The immediate focus of the renewed restoration effort is to rebuild and reinstall the large General Electric main generator. Once coupled up to the gasoline engine, the generator will make electricity to run two large electric motors that are mounted on the wheels. The Museum's goal is to eventually put the restored M.177 motorcar to work on the Crystal Springs and Cahuenga Valley Railroad, now under construction between Travel Town and the Los Angeles Zoo!

If you are interested in helping with the M.177 Restoration Project, please contact either project leader Bryan Reese or Volunteer Coordinator Nancy Gneier at 323-668-0104.

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Meet Johnny Ruh

When the Union Pacific Railroad's "new" Streamliner City of Los Angeles rolled out of Chicago on its 'maiden voyage' in December 1937, a smiling Johnny T. Ruh was poised behind the bar in the spectacular "Little Nugget" club car. A Chicago native and veteran Union Pacific barkeeper, "Johnny T" quickly became a regular fixture inside the now-historic club car, dispensing good cheer to the likes of Gary Cooper, Jack Benny and Cecil B. deMille as the top-notch Streamliner sped to and from Los Angeles. Imagine the characters he met, the stories he heard and the sights he saw: Donald O'Conner tap dancing on the tabletops, Bing Crosby singing along with the car's mechanical bird, Mae West just being Mae West!

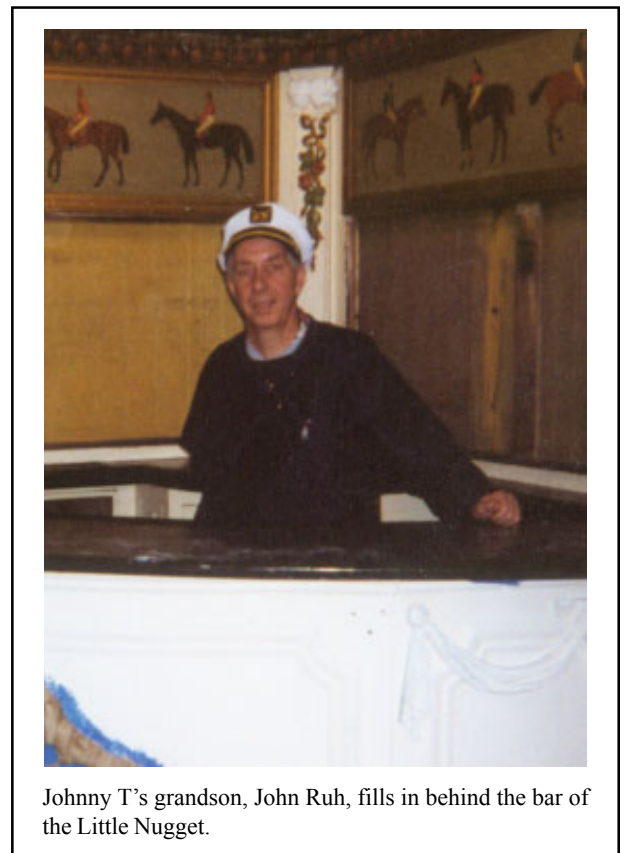
Johnny T is one of the special elements that make "The Little Nugget" and her story such an important part of the Travel Town Museum collection. Now, some 65 years after Johnny T's first run on "The Little Nugget," we'd like you to meet another John Ruh from Chicago: Johnny T's grandson – and the newest addition to our fundraising team!

Over the past year, grandson John has raised over \$1,000 for our restoration work on the historic "Little Nugget" car. In honor of his grandfather, Mr. Ruh has done a fantastic job of contacting his relatives and conveying to them the importance of the restoration work that is being undertaken here at the Museum. Through Mr. Ruh's tireless efforts, many of his family members have joined the ranks of our "Little Nugget Club" and will have their names inscribed on a special plaque to be displayed with the restored car.

While we are thrilled with each new addition, membership to the "Club" is not limited to relatives of Johnny T! You can upgrade your Patron membership to the "Little Nugget Club" simply by donating at the \$250 level. Remember, it is tax deductible, and it goes towards a really great cause!



"Johnny T" Ruh, the first barkeep on "The Little Nugget," serves up good drinks and good cheer to the stars



Johnny T's grandson, John Ruh, fills in behind the bar of the Little Nugget.

All photos this page courtesy of Mr. John Ruh

Community Involvement & Education

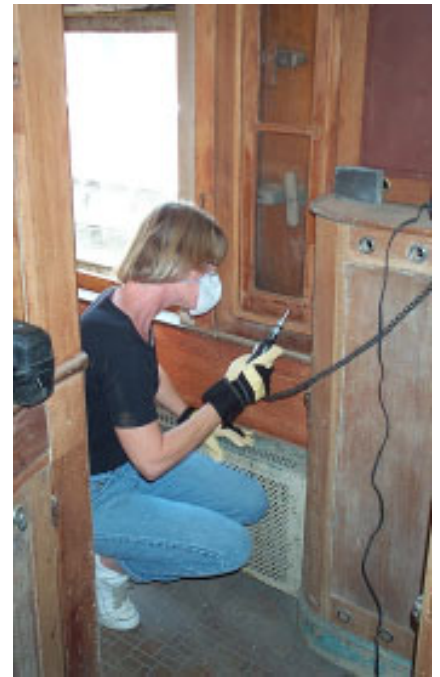
Volunteers Work Miracles!



Marcel Cote, above, volunteers during the week to help with the restoration of the Dining Car. In this photo, Marcel is taking hinges off the Pantry Room door, to be stripped and sanded for re-painting or staining, depending upon the condition of the wood beneath. Marcel has single-handedly removed all the paint in the pantry of the car, and is now working in the dining room. The photo shows a dining room with 60-year-old paint still covering the walls, most of which has now been removed!



The above photo is of a very dedicated volunteer doing one of those jobs that is not glamorous but very necessary for the continuous care of railroad cars. **Todd Brown** is cleaning and vacuuming to keep the sleeping car in presentable condition for tours. Being so close to the freeway and the horse trails, dust is a never ending problem at Travel Town.



Here is volunteer **Rosie Prater** doing some detail sanding and cleanup in the dining car. While a lot of the paint can be removed quickly with a heat gun or with stripper, there is still a great amount of fine work that needs to be done with a dremel tool, a keen eye, and lots of patience. Rosie, a teacher in Oxnard during the week, enjoys working with her hands on weekends when she can come down and help us out.

Travel Town Hosts Ventura County Boy Scouts



This January, Travel Town had the pleasure of welcoming BSA Troop 234 of the Ventura County Council. These Boy Scouts worked on their Railroading merit badge in a workshop that the Travel Town Museum developed under volunteer Greg Ramsey's leadership. The boys got a great education about railroading, including how diesel and steam engines work, signaling, and what different types of cars are used for.

For more information on this program, please contact the Museum Foundation.

Volunteering Opportunities Available!

Have you wanted to give back to your community, yet are not sure how to do it? Volunteering at Travel Town may be a great way!

Docents: Educational classes are offered for people interested in learning about railroad history. Volunteers then become docents for the Museum, giving tours through passenger cars and around various exhibits. Positions are available weekends and weekdays.

Restoration Staff: Like to work with your hands? Enjoy working on tasks and seeing them through to completion? We're looking for people with woodworking experience who are willing to follow directions to help restore these railcars. Attention to detail respecting historic design details is important!

Volunteer Administration: Like working with other people, especially teenagers? Many high school students volunteer their abilities, time and talents for us, and we need more adult supervisors to help guide and lead them. Make a huge difference in their lives and in the Museum by helping them help their community!

For information about registering to volunteer, contact Nancy Gneier at the Museum Foundation Office at 323-668-0104.

Electrician Needed!

We're looking for a commercial electrician to do some minor re-wiring work on one of our railroad car restoration projects. We'd like to hire someone from the "Travel Town Family" if possible.

If you or someone you know might be interested, please contact Greg Gneier, Restoration Project Director, at 818-968-3678.

Now Leaving the Platform: Guided Group Tours!

The Travel Town Museum Foundation is now offering guided tours for groups who visit Travel Town. These are especially popular with school-age groups who visit the museum during the week. Tours usually include an explanation of how a steam engine works, a walk through the diner and sleeping car, and discussions about cabooses and railroad jobs.

If your group will be visiting the museum and would like a guided tour, please contact the Travel Town Museum Foundation office at 323-668-0104. Tours may be limited because of work going on at the Museum. Please suggest any special requests when you make your reservation. If you are bringing a large group to the museum (20 or more), please register with the City Museum Office. Their number is 323-662-5874.

A Little "Wristy Business"

This is Leslie Hamilton, one of the talented artists of "Wristy Business" who have *volunteered* their fantastic skills to re-create the faux finishes inside the Historic Landmark car, "The Little Nugget." Our project director will not let just anyone work in this car without passing his stringent requirements! All reproduction work must meet with his approval before it is even begun, and a special thanks



goes to these ladies who know, understand and amazingly create perfection for the reproduction work. On top of that, Leslie and Joy Klein are an absolute hoot to work with (and no, it's not just all those paint fumes!). Please come to the opening of the Locomotive Pavilion and see the fantastic work these ladies have done for us when we will have this car open for viewing.

All Aboard!

A warm welcome to all who have joined the Travel Town Museum Foundation in the past year. For information on becoming a patron of the Travel Town Museum Foundation, contact Nancy Gneier at the Museum Foundation Office at 323-668-0104.

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Foundation Fundraising by Nancy Gneier

In addition to the fundraising work done by Mr. John Ruh (see article on back cover) it gives us great satisfaction to report that the Travel Town Museum Foundation recently received a \$20,000 grant to help underwrite the inclusion of ultra-violet protective glass in the Locomotive Pavilion building, currently under construction at Travel Town.

Due to budgetary constraints, this special glass had to be cut from the original City and County funding appropriated for the project. This recent grant brings the total of supplemental funds generated by the Travel Town Museum Foundation to \$32,000 for the pavilion. We are proud to be able to support the Recreation and Parks Department in completing this long-awaited capital improvement project.

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