

# IRON HORSE QUARTERLY

Volume 5, Issue 4

October 2014

## *The Billy Jones Wildcat Railroad & W.E. "Bill" Mason Carousel*

### **Recapping a Summer Full of Activity**

*Breaking down all that happened at BJWRR during the busy season*

Peter G. Panacy  
Chief Executive Officer

Summer 2014 was yet another busy season for the Billy Jones Wildcat Railroad.

For starters, the railroad set out to enjoy its first full season operating *both* the Nos. 2 and 5 steam locomotives. Unfortunately, setbacks with the No. 2 kept the featured-BJWRR locomotive out of action for much of the summer schedule.

The No. 2 had its cylinders re-bored by Hillcrest Shops in Reedley, California. In addition, new pistons and rings were manufactured. These would properly fit the new dimensions of the cylinders, giving the 109-year-old locomotive additional horsepower and making the little engine much more efficient in operation.

But restoration and maintenance projects take time. Fortunately, the railroad could count upon the tireless efforts of various volunteers in helping getting No. 2 back into

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### **First Ever BJWRR Pumpkin Patch**

*Annual Halloween event gets a new look*

Peter G. Panacy  
Chief Executive Officer



*Halloween events have been a railroad tradition since 1995.  
Photo by Francesca Balistreri.*

The Billy Jones Wildcat Railroad has hosted a variety of Halloween events at Oak Meadow Park for almost 20 years. This tradition began in 1995 when the Los Gatos Police Department combined with BJWRR to host the Haunted Forest in Oak Meadow and Vasona Parks. That has given way to an ongoing celebration promoted by the railroad and working with the neighbors of Goblyn's Glen and Wicked Woods.

Goblyn's Glen and Wicked Woods have been features during October for many years now, thrilling and entertaining young and old alike. But BJWRR continues to add its own stamp on Halloween in the park.

2014 will see a brand-new addition to the plethora of activities guests will enjoy.

For the first time ever, BJWRR will host its very own pumpkin patch. In addition to rides on the train and carousel, visitors can select their very own pumpkins, locally grown in the region and available for reasonable cost. After riding the train and carousel, these guests will be able to make their way over to the patch and choose whichever pumpkin fits their fancy.

The snack shack will also be offering up a variety of tasty

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service. Bill Church, Brandon McCracken, Bob Poli, Bill Ulleseit and CJ Vargas—among other BJWRR staff—were instrumental in making this happen.

The No. 5 also saw maintenance as a troublesome retaining bolt required hours of hard work from the volunteer crew.

On top of that, BJWRR's passenger cars received some significant upgrades. A series of minor derailments along the mainline plagued a couple of passenger cars during the late spring and summer seasons. Close examination revealed that the old wheels had essentially worn themselves out, requiring new wheels and axles to be installed. This work is nearly complete, although a few more passenger-car trucks still await the upgrade.

This only summarizes a brief portion of what transpired at the railroad during the summer of 2014. It was a busy year and plenty happened. But, of course, we should not expect anything less. ♠

## A Call for Volunteers

*Volunteers are needed to perpetuate the railroad and carousel*

Peter G. Panacy  
Chief Executive Officer

To quote the late BJWRR historian Barbara Phinney, "It has been VOLUNTEERS who saved the railroad after Billy Jones' death on January 10, 1968, and built it into today's popular and lively train and carousel project."

Simply stated, volunteers are the life-blood of the Billy Jones Wildcat Railroad and W.E. Mason Carousel. Without volunteers, this organization would simply not have become the spot in the community it is today. True, the railroad employs two full-time employees along with roughly 15 part-time workers, but the remainder of the staff is comprised entirely of volunteer labor. This ranges from our board of directors all the way down to hard workers who keep the grounds looking clean and presentable.

But as is the case with many a non-profit organization, a continuous influx of volunteers is needed in order to keep BJWRR afloat. These ongoing additions not only bring their respective skills and labors, but also help in offering up new insight, abilities and ideas—all of which assist in making the railroad grow and prosper.

There is something for everyone at the railroad and

carousel. Volunteers don't necessarily need any sort of special skill or trade to get involved, although such skills certainly help. Ever dream of being a locomotive engineer? Yes, BJWRR can provide the opportunity for you to become one of those as well.



*There is something for everyone at BJWRR and WEMC.  
Photo courtesy of BJWRR collection.*

In addition to the fabricators, mechanics, machinists, welders and woodworkers that maintain the railroad and carousel, BJWRR also involves IT support, writers, financial analysts, marketers along with good-old folk who don't mind simply picking up a shovel.

This eclectic combination has made what BJWRR is today. The organization and business has grown and evolved over the years. It will continue to do so as the number of challenges and changes confronting the railroad also increase in future time.

So how do *you* get involved?

Again, you don't necessarily need to have any sort of skillset to become active in the BJWRR community. You also don't need to make any sort of lifelong commitment—although the satisfaction of being a part of the railroad and carousel may convince you otherwise!

But giving back to the community is an inherent part of our nature. You can help us do this. Volunteering with the railroad, in whatever capacity, is a direct means to impact the community around you.

In short, we need your help and we guarantee you'll be glad you offered it.

The rewards may not come in pay or in plaques, trophies and celebrations. Rather you will be able to view firsthand your own efforts on the countless smiling faces that visit the railroad and carousel each year. Please get involved by contacting us (information on Page 6). ♠

## Holiday Cheer Is Drawing Near

*The Annual December Holiday Train is just around the corner*

Peter G. Panacy  
Chief Executive Officer

Yes, it is only October. Yes, holiday advertisements have already started to grace television commercials everywhere.

Yes, BJWRR is preparing for another wonderful Holiday Train in Oak Meadow and Vasona Parks.



*The Holiday Train has become a great winter tradition.  
Photo by Jim Koski.*

In cooperation with Vasona Park's Fantasy of Lights event, BJWRR will again look forward to promoting the festive train that runs through Vasona's light displays during the month of December.

The train itself is lighted and features holiday favorites to serenade passengers as they sip on hot cocoa and take in all the lights that Vasona and BJWRR have to offer.

Official dates for the Holiday Train have yet to be announced, but typically the train and carousel open Thursdays through Sundays in December with additional bonus nights leading up to Christmas Eve (closed on Christmas Day).

Tickets for the train are \$5.00 per person with children two years old and younger riding free with a paying adult. Disabled riders always ride free. There will be a small charge for parking in Oak Meadow Park. Overflow parking is available on University Avenue. Guests are encouraged to travel from East Los Gatos on Blossom Hill Road to avoid the traffic entering Vasona Park for the drive-through event.

Please visit the railroad's website—[www.bjwrr.org](http://www.bjwrr.org)—for updates and information as the event draws near. The 2014 Holiday Train promises to be one of the best yet as new lights and displays are continuously added. ♠

snacks and beverages for everyone's enjoyment.

The event kicks off on Friday, October 17 and runs Fridays through Sundays until October 31. An additional bonus night is scheduled for Thursday, October 30.

Hours for the train and carousel are from 5:30 p.m. until 8:30 p.m. All times are weather permitting, and inclement weather will shut down operations. Tickets range between \$5—\$18 depending on various packages.

For \$5.00, one gets a train and carousel ride. \$12.00 tickets include a train and carousel ride along with one any-sized pumpkin. \$18.00 tickets include unlimited train and carousel rides along with a medium-sized pumpkin.

As is the case with nearly every event BJWRR puts on, no reservations are required. Guests can simply show up and enjoy all the festivities provided by BJWRR, Goblyn's Glen and Wicked Woods. There is a charge to park in Oak Meadow, but overflowing vehicles and patrons wishing not to pay the fare are encouraged to park along University Avenue.

And what would Halloween be without costumes, candy and fun? *Both* children and adults are always encouraged to come dressed in their favorite Halloween costumes and attire. As stated, there will be plenty of snacks available for children, and adults, who need to satisfy that savory sweet-tooth craving.

BJWRR is starting a new tradition and the organization hopes this year's festivities will be the best yet. The combination of fun, pumpkins and spooky entertainment promises to be a wonderful addition to another lovely fall at the railroad and carousel. ♠

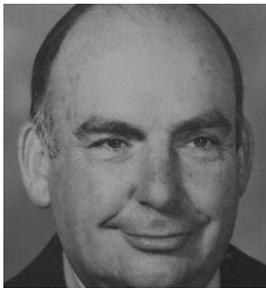


*Come enjoy ghoulish train and carousel rides, tasty snacks and take home your own pumpkin from the BJWRR pumpkin patch!*

*Event starts on October 17.*

## Remembering Albert B. Smith

*One of BJWRR's principal benefactors and volunteers*



*Al Smith was involved with BJWRR from 1970 until his death in 1993. Photo courtesy of the Los Gatos Patch.*

Peter G. Panacy  
Chief Executive Officer

Two men come to mind when thinking about the Billy Jones Wildcat Railroad and W.E. "Bill" Mason Carousel—Billy Jones and Bill Mason. Their namesakes are forever enshrined within the accolades of this organization.

But one could state that former Los Gatos mayor and Orchard Supply Hardware president was just as essential in getting the railroad and carousel to the point where it is today.

I never had the pleasure of meeting Smith. My employment with BJWRR started in 1995—well over a year after Smith's passing in December of 1993. But stories of Smith's involvement transcend time, giving us the chance to revisit this iconic figure in the history of both the railroad and surrounding community.

Many know of Smith's involvement with OSH. He was one of the prime reasons why that company grew into one of the preeminent hardware stores in the South Bay. Ever wonder why OSH calendars always feature trains?

Smith loved trains.

We'll get to that in a moment, but we cannot forget the involvement Smith had with other various entities. Smith was an active member of the Campbell Rotary Club and once president of the chapter. In addition, Smith was heavily involved with Cal Poly and the Swanton Ranch north of Santa Cruz—a ranch that remains active to this day.

But Smith is best known around here for his involvement with BJWRR. Mike Kotowski wrote back in a 1993 edition of *The Iron Horse Quarterly* that Smith was enamored with Billy Jones, having lived at Vasona Ranch just down Winchester Boulevard from Jones' Los Gatos orchard.

Kotowski reminds us that Smith was well acquainted with

Mason—the first president of BJWRR. The two were primary forces in establishing the financial and organizational base for the railroad during its inception.

But Smith's involvement did not just end there. Smith eventually became board president of the corporation. Beyond that title, Smith was an active volunteer, benefactor and even an engineer.

"His involvement went way beyond board membership," Kotowski wrote. "He could often be seen taking time off from his duties at OSH to take a group of children on a tour of the roundhouse or run the little engine through the park to their sheer delight."

Perhaps Smith's most recognizable contribution was BJWRR's first diesel locomotive—No. 2502.

By this point in 1992, Smith had resigned as president of the BJWRR corporation, electing to spend most of his time working on his ranch north of Santa Cruz and its own railroad—Swanton Pacific. There, he had one of his own diesels, labeled No. 502 after the local Boy Scout troop Smith supported.

Still involved with BJWRR, Smith purchased a brand-new diesel-hydraulic locomotive from Custom Locomotive Works in Chicago, donated it to the railroad and dubbed it No. 2502—hence the second "502."

No. 2502 would be the primary locomotive on BJWRR's fleet when the No. 2 underwent extensive repair in 1994.

Smith passed away at his Swanton ranch on December 18, 1993 after a lifetime of service to numerous organizations including our own. While his presence may no longer grace us, his efforts and contributions live on in his memory to this day. All of these have been well worth his efforts. ♠



*No. 2502 was a 1992 gift from Smith to BJWRR. Photo courtesy of Phil Reader.*

## In Memoriam: Loreita Ulleseit

June 1, 1932 – August 19, 2014



Peter G. Panacy  
Chief Executive Officer

Loreita Carmen (Medeiros) Ulleseit passed away on August 19, 2014 after a long illness with her husband William Ulleseit by her side.

Loreita accompanied her husband during his long tenure as the railroad's chief engineer and board member. Two of her sons, William Jr. and Glenn, also worked at the railroad as did her grandsons.

A native of Hawaii, Loreita moved to California in 1942 and attended the Berkeley School for the Blind. She married William in 1953 and the two became actively involved in the Wildcat Railroad when it operated at Billy Jones' ranch until 1968.

Loreita also participated in the establishment of the Billy Jones Wildcat Railroad in Oak Meadow and Vasona Parks once the non-profit corporation was established.

She was an active member of the Lion's Blind Center of Santa Clara County, including being a longtime member of the Muzikats kazoo band. Loreita was instrumental in securing assistance for the Blind Center from the railroad. BJWRR often held fundraising and charitable events to benefit the center throughout the years.

Aside from her noteworthy involvement, Loreita enjoyed visiting the railroad with her husband on frequent occasions. Loreita could often be seen accompanying William during his engineering shifts and during the railroad's many special events.

Loreita was laid to rest on Tuesday, August 26, 2014 at the Los Gatos Memorial Park after a funeral service attended by friends and family.

She will be dearly missed. ♠

## In Memoriam: James Jefferson

BJWRR loses a great friend



James Jefferson (right) with his wife Diane in 2005. Photo courtesy of the BJWRR collection.

Peter G. Panacy  
Chief Executive Officer

Longtime BJWRR engineer and board of directors' member James Jefferson passed away peacefully on Friday, August 22, 2014 at his home in Pacifica with his wife, Diane, at his side.

James was descended from an engineer who was present, and photographed, when the Union Pacific and Central Pacific met in 1869 at Promontory Point, Utah. James discovered his own love for trains at the tender age of two years old, and maintained that interest for the rest of his life.

During World War II, James enlisted in the Navy but hostilities ended before he saw any action. After his service, James was employed by Ampex. He met his wife Diane there, and the couple married in 1972.

Shortly thereafter, James and Diane became involved with the BJWRR. Both signed on as engineers and Diane still operates the locomotives today.

Additionally, James was named to the board of directors and also served 12 years as the railroad's safety program administrator. He was responsible for drafting many of the railroad's operating and safety procedures that are still implemented to this day.

James resigned as an engineer in the late 2000s, citing failing health as an obstacle. But he remained involved, both as a volunteer and as a member of the railroad's advisory board.

James was laid to rest at a small family service shortly after his passing. He will be dearly missed. ♠

## CALENDAR OF EVENTS

### **OCTOBER 17<sup>TH</sup> THROUGH 31<sup>ST</sup> -- THE PUMPKIN TRAIN**

The first-ever pumpkin patch at BJWRR, with Halloween-themed fun for the entire family! Event runs Fridays through Sundays, October 17 – 31 with a bonus night on Thursday, October 30. Hours are from 5:30pm until 8:30pm, weather permitting. Tickets range from \$5.00 – \$18.00.

### **NOVEMBER 1<sup>ST</sup> -- START OF WINTER SCHEDULE**

Beginning November 1, the train and carousel will be open Saturdays and Sundays from 11:00am until 3:00pm, weather permitting.

### **DECEMBER 6<sup>TH</sup> -- LOS GATOS CHILDREN'S HOLIDAY PARADE**

Come see the railroad's float in the annual Los Gatos Children's Christmas/Holiday Parade in downtown Los Gatos on Saturday, December 6 at 11:00am.

### **DECEMBER (DATES TBA) -- THE HOLIDAY TRAIN**

BJWRR hosts its annual Holiday Train in cooperation with Vasona Park's *Fantasy of Lights* event. Hours are 6:00pm until 9:00pm, weather permitting. Tickets are \$5.00 and a small parking fee applies to Oak Meadow Park. Dates have yet to be finalized, so check our website continuously for more information!

Billy Jones Wildcat Railroad  
P.O. Box 234  
Los Gatos, CA 95031-0234

ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED

## **The Billy Jones Wildcat Railroad & W.E. "Bill" Mason Carousel, Inc.**

General inquiries and correspondence to the Billy Jones Wildcat Railroad & W.E. "Bill" Mason Carousel, this newsletter, or its Board of Directors should be addressed to:

BJWRR  
P.O. Box 234  
Los Gatos, CA 95031-0234

(408) 395-RIDE office    (408) 354-2841 fax  
EMAIL: info@bjwrr.org

Persons interested in volunteering in the machine shop may also call (408) 395-6269.

Visit our website at [www.bjwrr.org](http://www.bjwrr.org) for further updates and information.

The Billy Jones Wildcat Railroad is a non-profit 501(c)(3) organization working with the cooperation of the Town of Los Gatos and the Santa Clara County Parks Office.

Contributions are tax deductible.

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