

IRON HORSE QUARTERLY

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

JULY IS RIDER APPRECIATION MONTH!

The BJWRR celebrates our wonderful patrons by naming your own price day on Train and Carousel.

Francesca B. Alexander
Chief Executive Officer

Rider appreciation month is a way for the Billy Jones Wildcat Railroad to say thank you to our wonderful patrons. The BJWRR is a certified 501 © 3 non-profit organization which means we receive no outside funding. The BJWRR is able to sustain itself based on the money generated from ticket, retail, and food sales. Rider appreciation month is our thank you to our patrons, as they are the reason we are still here.

Carousel Day will kick off Rider Appreciation Month on July 10th. From 10:30am to 4:30pm, the Carousel will be an open donation all day. Patrons will name the price of each carousel ride by donating as little or as much as they can. Standard pricing will apply for the

train and Snack Shack.

This year we will once again bring back T-Shirt Fridays to Rider Appreciation Month. Starting July 1st, every Friday will be T-shirt Fridays! Wear any T-shirt from the BJWRR Retail Shop, and ride the train for free on Fridays. T-shirts must be official BJWRR shirts, and must be worn per person to warrant a free ride. T-shirt Fridays will go from 10:30am to 4:30pm.

This year we have added two new T-shirt to our shop, and will be available for T-shirt Fridays. Show your wildcat pride with our original design of the wildcat rr shirt with Jones on the back. Pictured below:



This year we have also brought in a more patriot option for T-shirt Fridays. Our flag train shirt showcases both our pride of the United States as well as our love of trains. These shirts will only be available for a limited time so make sure to get yours

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New Passenger Car Update

Phil Reader
BJWRR Advisory Board



*Taking a test run out with the frame of the passenger car.
Photo courtesy of CJ Vargas.*

Greetings!

For those who do not know who I am, let me introduce myself. My name is Phil Reader. Currently, I am on the advisory board of the Billy Jones Wildcat Railroad, although as a volunteer and as an engineer I am inactive at this time.

I first got involved with the BJWRR back in 1979 as a volunteer. I then spent most of the 1980's and into the early 1990's working for the railroad as the paid summer engineer, running the 2-Spot. This summer steam job opened many doors for me in the steam railroad industry. This passion for working on steam turned into a 37 plus year steam career. This career has taken me all over the country and on many a railroad. As such, I have served in engine service as a fireman, engineer, mechanic and as C.M.O. for several steam railroads. To this day, the little 2-Spot remains a favorite for me. We shared many a day and many miles together.

Why a new coach?

Well, let me tell the story. Three years ago my last remaining grandmother, Nelva Wallbridge, passed away peacefully. My Grandmother Nelva, along with my "other Grandfather," Johnny Wallbridge, knew that I always had a love for steam trains and they used to encourage me in this passion whenever and however they could.

With my grandmother's passing I received a small inheritance from her estate. She wanted to make sure that I got something to remember her by. For me, this money was rather unexpected and left me thinking on what to do with it. I did not want to just spend it on bills or taxes or on something that was worthless. I wanted something meaningful and unique.



Progress. Frame is up and the interior is painted. The seat slots are coming in next.

My first thought was to use this money to build a

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memorial park bench. However, such a bench was not going to cut it with me. What I wanted was some kind of memorial that would be long lasting and be enjoyed by many. Then it hit me. Why not a rolling park bench?! What if I used this inheritance to have a new coach built for the BJWRR as a memorial? The idea had merit. The more I thought about it, the better I liked the idea. Here would be a memorial that would be long lasting and give lots of enjoyment for thousands of people, both young and old. The next step was for me to bring up my idea to the BJWRR board of directors. I did this and the idea was approved.



Right off I could see the benefits of such a coach. Over the last several years the railroad had grown with the addition of two diesel locomotives and one new steam locomotive. The ridership at the park has increased significantly and running to the point that another coach was desperately needed to keep up with the increasing demands of ridership. Funding this coach is also a way for me to give back to the railroad as a thank you for the years of employment, and for helping me along the way in my professional steam career. This project is also a

“thank you” to the community of Los Gatos. I may not be from here, but I was always welcomed here. Also, it was my hope that such a project could be done in-house, using the railroad’s volunteers and that such a project would be a meaningful and worthwhile project; something that everyone could rally behind and be proud of. This has happened and to them, the volunteers, I would like to say Thank You! If not for every ones hard work, this coach would have never happened.



Finally, I have given a name to this new #6 coach, “The Live Oak.” I chose this name due to the fact that my family is from the old Live Oak district of Santa Cruz and that my grandparents lived on the end of Live Oak Avenue next to the old Southern Pacific Santa Cruz branch line. So, for me, “The Live Oak” name is just fitting.

Finally, it is my hope that “The Live Oak” will give many smiles, miles and good memories for all who will ride the rails of the of the Wildcat Railroad for many years to come. ♠

All photos courtesy of BJWRR.

at your next visit.



*The Flag tee is available in both child and adult sizes.
Available for a limited time only.*

To conclude Rider Appreciation Month will be Billy Jones Day. On July 24th from 10:30am to 4:30pm, all rides on the train will be an open donation. Ride aboard the legendary #2 Steam Engine, and join us around noon for a special scheduled double header.

On Billy Jones Day, much like carousel day, patrons get to name the price of the train ride. They may give as little or as much as they can, and ride the train all day long- as our name sake did it on his orchard. The event has been a long standing tradition, and is a way to say thank you to all our wonderful patrons who continue to support the railroad year after year.

All proceeds made on these special days, and every day, will help keep the Billy Jones Wildcat Railroad alive for future generations. Every penny we make goes back into preserving our train, carousel, and snack shack. From all of us at the BJWRR we would like to give our sincerest Thank You, and we hope to see you riding the rails soon.



Progress Through Change

*Part III: Father & Daughter recount their experiences
working for the BJWRR.*

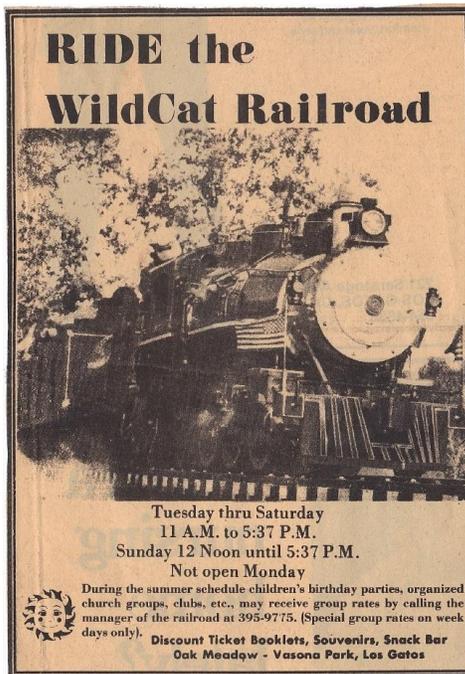
Elizabeth Johnson
Team Leader

In the last issue, I explored how the addition of the carousel, barbecue, and special events has broadened the railroad's attractions and enhanced the BJWRR's culture. The changes detailed in this issue reflect how the railroad has remained considerate to both customers and employees.

When my dad first started working at the railroad in 1976, tickets cost just 50¢! For me, it is difficult to imagine practically anything costing under \$1, but prices were much lower due to inflation. For example, in 1975 the average new house cost \$48,000; the average new car cost \$3,800; and the minimum wage was \$2.10 per hour. As a college student who graduated from a private university and is currently attending a public university, I am shocked that in 1975 the average public university tuition was \$1,819 while the average private university tuition was only \$3,776. While prices at this time were much lower than today, the railroad's ticket price of 50¢ was still cheap, compared to the 1976 average movie ticket price of \$2.14.

By 1992, the railroad's ticket price was \$1, according to an article in the *Los Gatos Weekly-Times* that my dad saved. Again, this price was still much lower than most entertainment options at the time, since the average movie ticket price in 1992

was \$4.15. Ever since I started working at the railroad in 2008, the railroad's ticket price has been \$2. This cheap price is almost unheard of, especially when comparing to other local entertainment options, such as Great America, the Santa Cruz Beach Boardwalk, or Happy Hollow. The railroad's low prices relieve some of the pressure that families face living in an area where the cost of living is so high.



The railroad's food prices have also remained low throughout the years. According to my dad, in 1976 popcorn, cotton candy, and sodas cost 25¢, while hot dogs cost 50¢. Currently, a small soda costs \$1.50, a hot dog costs \$3, and the concession stand's most popular item, snow cones, cost just \$1. These low prices are largely possible because the railroad is a nonprofit organization. In addition, some customers make donations at the ticket booth and concession stand, and other generous donors

contribute toward specific projects, such as the new car currently being constructed. Furthermore, the BJWRR is blessed with many volunteers who give up their time to keep the train running. These low prices make a day at the park affordable for a wide variety of families.

While ticket prices have remained low, employee wages have remained above the minimum wage, attracting quality employees. When my dad first started in 1976, he made \$1.10 an hour, and he finished at around \$3.35 an hour in 1985. Rising with inflation, starting wages have gone up from \$8.35 when I first started in 2008 to \$11/hour currently. By making sure that employees are paid well, the railroad consistently attracts valuable employees who are assets to the railroad. By making sure that employees are compensated well, the railroad makes sure that these employees work well. Since most employees are high school or college students, these competitive wages allow many of us to save up for our first car, or in my case, textbooks and my laptop for college.

The railroad has been able to strike a balance between remaining affordable for customers and maintaining competitive wages for employees. By remaining faithful to both customers and employees, the railroad wisely ensures quality service for the public. ♠

Sources:
<http://www.mybudget360.com/cost-of-living-compare-1975-2015-inflation-price-changes-history/>
Average Movie Ticket price by year - Made Deal

In Memoriam

BJWRR Volunteer & Board Member Jim Sugai

Francesca B. Alexander
Chief Executive Officer

James “Jim” Sugai, long-time volunteer and former Board of Directors member passed away on June 27th, 2016. He was 97 years old.

Jim Sugai was a long-time volunteer, who first became involved with the Billy Jones Wildcat Railroad when it acquired the carousel in the 1980’s. Jim poured in over 200 hours of his time to restoring and painting the carousel horses in the 10 year restoration process.



Jim Sugai as we will always remember him, always smiling.

Jim was very involved with the carousel through the years, and even became in charge of it when he joined the board of directors in 1999. In addition to his work on the carousel, Jim became very involved

in gardening around the station. He was the reason the garden area across the depot always looked so bright and beautiful.

Jim was also the head decorator for the BJWRR Christmas Parade float featured in the Los Gatos Children’s Holiday Parade, and for two years in the San Jose Holiday Parade. The float won grand prize numerous times in the Los Gatos parade, and took home grand prize the first year we participated in the San Jose parade. Jim and I were featured on the television broadcast holding up the grand prize trophy.



San Jose Parade 2009. Jim Sugai holding the grand prize trophy. Photos courtesy of BJWRR.

Jim was a huge asset to this organization, and will be missed tremendously. His memory will live on in the carousel and in the garden area, as the railroad plans commemorative plaques for Jim in the areas he loved most. ♠

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

JULY 24TH – BILLY JONES DAY!

In honor of the man who founded our railroad, the BJWRR will host open donations for the train all day. Guests can “pay what they want” to ride the train. All proceeds benefit the BJWRR.

AUGUST 15TH - START OF FALL SCHEDULE

Beginning on August 15th , the train and carousel will be open Saturdays and Sundays from 10:30am until 4:30pm. The carousel will additionally be open Friday from 10:30am until 3:00pm. All times are weather permitting.

AUGUST 20TH -- “END OF SUMMER NIGHT RIDE” PASTA DINNER

Bring summer to a close with a delicious spaghetti dinner and evening train ride, all provided by the BJWRR. Dinner starts at 5:30pm. No reservation required. Ride tickets extra.

SEPTEMBER 5TH – LABOR DAY

BJWRR will be open Monday, September 5th from 10:30am until 4:30pm in observance of Labor Day.

SEPTEMBER 30TH – SCREEN ON THE GREEN

Town of Los Gatos Presents Family movie night! Show starts at 7:30pm! Before the show, starting at 6:00pm come ride the train and carousel! Then get all your movie snacks in our snack shack before finding a cozy spot on the lawn!

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:

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Persons interested in volunteering in the machine shop may also call (408) 395-7433 or visit bjwrr.org

Visit our website at 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.