



TWO BELLS

The occasional newsletter of the
Operations Department of the
Pennsylvania Trolley Museum

October 2010

<http://ptmops.org>

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DFCramer-photo



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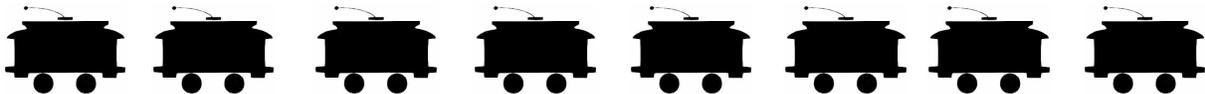


2010 Requalification

You should send back the ANSWER SHEET and CONTACT INFORMATION SHEET as soon as possible. If you are required to submit a visual acuity form, send that along in the envelope provided.

Take the instruction sheets for 4398 and 1758, punch them with a three hole punch and place them in your **OPERATORS MANUAL** at the end of the Operation of Cars section. Bring the manual with you when you come to qualify on the cars. Please realize that both of the cars are still undergoing testing and may not be available. You want to make sure there will be an Instructor available and the cars you wish to qualify on can actually get out onto the railroad.

Our goal is to qualify as many Operators as possible before the end of the season. If you do not qualify this year, you will be qualified when we go back to group instruction for the 2011 Operating Season. We do appreciate your patience and enthusiasm for these projects, but please realize the volunteers in the shop are doing everything they can to make sure the cars operate in a safe and consistent manner.



Know the Route

Operators often get frustrated with the Nachod Signal System when it goes out of sequence. The single major cause of this is traveling too fast through the contactors. If at all possible, do not pull power when going through the contactors and speed should be no more than 5 miles per hour. (Rule 303) Cars must be drifted through section insulators. (Rule 301) There are three section insulators on our route. You must stay focused on the job of operating the streetcar!

We are in the process of getting yellow diamonds for the spring switches at Redman Wye. (Rule 251) All three switches at that wye are sprung and normal operating conditions, when using the wye, is to operate from Richfol to the Trolley Display Building to McClane Loop and back to Richfol. Please refer to the Operations Page <http://ptmops.org>, print out **Operating Order 09-02** and place it in your Operations Binder. Using this wye is not part of normal operating conditions.

Keep your eyes and ears open. An observant operator noted bolts on the track and prevented a major incident with our Open Car. Keep up the good work.

Learning from Others

Over the past nine months I have had the opportunity to visit museums and historic sites from Massachusetts to Illinois to South Carolina and always enjoy observing how they present their relevant, and sometimes irrelevant, material and more importantly; how they treat their guests. It is often a better experience to not introduce yourself as someone directly involved in a museum so you get the standard treatment. The visits included National Parks and Historic Sites, State/Local Historic Sites and smaller museums similar to ours.

Costs are going up, funding is tight and lack of volunteers are becoming issues everywhere that I traveled. It is remarkable how far we make our donations work for us and that is due to you, the volunteer. We are not immune to the world around us. We can use more dedicated volunteers such as yourself and often, you can be the catalyst to get someone involved. Discuss volunteer opportunities openly with your friends, family and most importantly; our visitors.

The visitor experience is my main objective in observing when I travel to other sites and like to compare it to what we offer. The worst visitor experience I had this summer was at museum, similar to ours, that offers a demonstration ride and tour. I will not comment on the operations portion of the ride as every museum has their own set of operating rules. The ride began without any sort of explanation as to what we going to experience. Our group consisted of my wife and myself, a set of grandparents with two elementary age grandchildren and a single mother with three elementary age children. There were also two teenage boys along who were associated with the museum. We rode for a while and then stopped for an almost 25 minute tour of their limited facilities, but were not within walking distance of the parking lot. We were held captive. The docent completely ignored every child and female in our group. At one point I heard the mother telling her children that it was almost over and they could be on their way. On three occasions during our time the volunteer stated he was there to play with the really big toys. At least he was honest! The information he presented was factual and he answered questions from the grandfather. He completely ignored any questions from the children. Eventually we made it back to our cars and the two families made a beeline for the parking lot.

A completely different experience was visiting an historic home. We were given tickets for an exact tour time and directions as to where to meet the docent. Comfort facilities were pointed out as well as places to get a drink of water before the tour began. As we walked down the street to the waiting area, several docents passed us and greeted us warmly. We gathered with the rest of our group at benches provided under the shade of trees. **Continued on Page 4**

About ten minutes before our tour was to begin, the docent arrived and explained exactly what we would be doing and our time commitment. While we waited for the rest of our tour group he asked and answered questions. The tour moved out right on time and the docent always made sure to be facing us when he spoke. As we moved through the tight quarters of a mid-19th Century home, he took time to point out items of interest and answer questions, but kept the group moving as there were groups both in front of and behind us. At the end of the tour the docent thanked us for visiting and offered to use our cameras to take a photograph in front of the house. Those not wanting photographs or had further questions were free to leave. One picture per couple kept the process moving and he then stayed to answer any last questions. The entire process took less than 40 minutes and no one looked as though they could not wait to get out of there.

What can we learn from these experiences?

The first is to realize the customer is the reason we exist. Without people coming through the front door, no museum will be able to sustain a future.

Children are important. As I worked throughout the summer as part of the crew, the mainstay of our visitors come with small children. Learn how to interact with them. If you do not know how to do this, ask and observe.

Get to the Visitor Center at least 5 minutes before your tour begins to gather the guests and tell them what they are going to experience. They want your direction, you are the specialist and their teacher. You have 20 minutes to get them from the Visitors Center to departure. The car leaves at :35 past the hour. Do not drag them through every car in the car barn or try to tell them everything you know about every car. Tell the story of the Electric Age. Do not try to talk to the entire group while the car is in motion. You should move through the car while it is in motion to answer any questions. Do not become so overbearing that they do not get to enjoy the ride. The ride is the main reason why most of them visit and gives us a chance to let them experience the sights and sounds of a time from the past. That is one of our greatest assets.

Run on time. The ride is part of the tour. You will get the breaks you deserve and keep the museum running smoothly. Make sure every visitor watches the video and refer to it during your time with them. If they have not seen it, they will want to after your tour.

A major rule in show business is: **KEEP YOUR AUDIENCE WANTING MORE.** They can certainly participate in more than one tour, which includes the ride. The last thing we want is for them to leave saying, "That guy would never shut-up!" Answer more detailed questions after you have unloaded the car and sent the majority of visitors back to the Museum Store. Give them a reason to visit again. We want our visitors to tell their friends about the great time they had at the Pennsylvania Trolley Museum.

See you at the museum.