

Webbers Wanderings

FAIRPLEX GARDEN RAILROAD, MARCH 4

Sunday, March 4 was a gorgeous, "top down from the beginning" type day as Hoady Holst and Gary Weber, in the '58 Edsel convertible, joined the Southlanders Edsel Owners gathered at the Fairplex in Pomona. We met in the parking lot in front of the NHRA Museum before 10:45 AM, then were led into the fair complex to the very large model train layout.

As we approached the parking area around the railroad we couldn't help but notice a "new" (to us) '59 Edsel Ranger fordor sedan waiting for us. It was wearing Michigan Historical Vehicle license plates, and had only a bit over 38,000 miles on the odometer, and it showed, with everything on it nearly perfect. It is a rare six with a stick shift, just recently imported to SoCal.

When we finished ogling the new Ranger, we found the docents for the railroad club eager to give us our own personalized tour inside the layout. How personalized? One of the first bits of "landscaping" along the tracks was a trailer park and old auto wrecking/repair/sales establishment. On the "used car" display in front was a 1:24 black/red Edsel, just for the Edsel owners, beside a '56 Chevy convert. 1:24 seems to be the proper scale for the G-Gauge layout.

This display was just one of many around the nearly two miles of track (over 9800 ft.) with both steam and Diesel locomotives pulling really nice long trains of cars. The display attempts to follow the role of the railroad in our history, from the discovery of gold in 1846 and spanning into the future.

There is a mountain area where old style supply trains with loads of ore come from the mines and logging trains move timbers to the lumber mill. An old west town represents the type of temporary life style associated with the early development of California. Leaving the early California area the displays take us through representative life through the 20th century.

This display began in 1924 as a project of a high school shop teacher, who was asked to build a diorama of a local dam for the Corps Of Engineers. To add interest to the display he also built a Pacific Electric trolley car which ran in a small loop around the main display. By 1935 the small railroad had outgrown the space available in the Fair's main tent and moved to a larger piece of land outdoors for further development.

By the end of the Fair season in 1996 the deteriorating railroad display was turned over to a local garden railway club for upgrading for the 1997 season. The old 1/2" scale track and hand-built rolling stock was replaced with commercially available G-Gauge track and trains, and club members displayed their own buildings and trains. Today, the railroad continues to be developed and maintained by a volunteer group of men, women, and young adults until it has gained worldwide recognition not only as the oldest, but also possibly the largest such garden railroad available for public enjoyment on a year-round basis.

After we enjoyed this great personally guided tour it was off to lunch at the La Paloma. On the drive up White Ave. from the Fairplex our caravan had to pull over to let an oncoming emergency vehicle rush by. Then we waited as the following Fire Dept. pumper truck tried to rush down the street, but was blocked by an apparently brain-dead lady who didn't seem to notice the flashing lights and loudly blaring kaxon on the big truck right behind her! Would have been funny if it wasn't so scary to think that there are folks like that out there driving among us.

Lunch was great, the weather was great, and the tour was great. Wish some more of you could have enjoyed it with us.

WEBER TO SHUT UP!

That's right. Gary Weber will no longer talk to us!

For a while. He is scheduled to have his voice box removed on March 27. But never fear. He's planning to return in the near future with a mechanical voice. R2D2?



