

SOUTHERN PACIFIC NEWSLETTER
Edited by Bill Fowler
February and March 2025



You may have noticed that I did not publish a February 2025 issue of the Southern Pacific Newsletter. The reason for this is two-fold.

First, the person who monitors more than twenty newspapers daily for Southern Pacific related obituaries was ill for several weeks; however, he is now on the mend and has returned to his duties.

Second, I have been writing the first installment of a series of articles for publication in *The Southern Pacific Experience* about the corporate history of the Southern Pacific. My recent research confirms that its apex, Southern Pacific was one of the greatest transportation companies in the world.

This work is original in that it will cover the founding and acquisition of essentially all the railroad and non-railroad companies of the Southern Pacific System. Rare maps and charts will be appended to the articles and these will provide the reader with an understanding of the immense complexity of the Southern Pacific empire.

After all the railroad companies either founded or acquired by Central Pacific/Southern Pacific have been covered, other aspects of what became the Southern Pacific System will be explored, including the development and operations of Southern Pacific's ocean and inland steamers, ferry systems, trucking companies, and various subsidiary and jointly-owned companies.

Additionally, ancillary issues such as land grants, reorganizations, and indebtedness will be the subject of subsequent stories.

The initial article explores the genesis of what was to become the first transcontinental railroad as told from a Central Pacific perspective. It also examines the construction of and purchase of many of Southern Pacific's main lines throughout California, Nevada, Oregon, Arizona, and New Mexico, and it touches on Southern Pacific's beginnings in Texas and Louisiana.

The story also covers a brief overview of the development of Southern Pacific's second transcontinental mainline from Lathrop, California to New Orleans.

Part two of the series will focus on Southern Pacific in Texas and Louisiana, Southern Pacific's acquisition of the Pacific Electric, the Northwestern Pacific, the Cotton Belt, and other railroad companies, as well as an introduction to Central Pacific's/Southern Pacific's corporate reorganizations.

If you are not a member of the Southern Pacific Railroad History Center, you may wish to join (<https://splives.org/join/>) to learn about how four men created what would become a vast company which would become to have an outsized influence on the development of a large portion of the western United States. For those of us who worked for Southern Pacific, we should be proud of having had the

opportunity to work for an incredible company!



Lawrence (Larry) Joseph Meng
January 6, 1943 ~ October 22, 2024

Lawrence (Larry) Joseph Meng. Larry, was born in Spokane, Washington on January 6, 1943. His parents were Joseph Meng and Dorothy McFarlane Meng. He passed away in Eugene, Oregon on October 22, 2024 from congestive heart failure.

Larry joined the United States Army shortly after graduating from Shadle Park High School in Spokane and served honorably for three years, two of those in Germany. He was very patriotic and proud to have served his country.

After military service he moved to Eugene, and began working as a clerk for Southern Pacific/Union Pacific, retiring with 38 years of service.

He married Linda Shaw and had two children, Lynette and Shannon, and they later divorced. He married Sallie Hill in 1986, gaining two stepchildren, Lesa and Jamie.

His parents, sister Cheryl Meng and stepson Jamie Hill preceded him in death.

He leaves behind his wife Sallie; daughters Lynette Meng and Shannon Winters, and her husband Gary; stepdaughter Lesa Eusted and her husband David; sister Gwen Eakle; brother and sister in-law Dennis and Judy Bottem; a niece and nephew; five grandchildren; and five great grandchildren.

Editor's request: When changing email addresses, please send your new address to billfowler@southernpacificjourney.org.



William (Bill) F. Currier, Jr.
March 15, 1935 ~ December 19, 2024

Bill Currier passed away on December 19, 2024 in Menifee, California.

Bill was born to Juanita Currier, née Poe, and William F. Currier Sr. in Tucson, Arizona. Bill grew up in a railroad family. Following in the footsteps of both his grandfather and father, spending his childhood moving from one Southern Pacific location to another, from Gila Bend, Arizona, Truckee, California, Calipatria, California, and finally, to the Los Angeles, California area.

He began his railroad career in the Los Angeles Basin as a brakeman. He then joined the Marine Corps, serving four years beginning during the end of the Korean war. After discharge from the service, Bill again worked as a brakeman while attending Cal-Poly, where he earned a bachelor's degree. He then attended and completed Southern Pacific's management training program, after which he was assigned to many positions in various locations managing personnel who worked in the operating department.

After assignment to Eugene, Oregon, he met Terry Hatton who was also a career Southern Pacific employee. They realized an affinity for both railroading and each other. They were married in Eugene in 1979, and spent the subsequent years moving throughout the western part of Southern Pacific's system, including Portland, Oregon, San Francisco, California, and Long Beach, California. Bill was best known for his management style. He always listened to people, was level-headed, fair, and always brought out the best in those with whom he worked.

Bill retired from Southern Pacific in 1992. He then became director of operations for the start-up of the Metrolink Commuter Rail System in Los Angeles from 1992 to 1997,

after which he retired again and moved to Omaha, Nebraska., to be with Terry after the merger of the Southern Pacific and Union Pacific until she retired in 2001. During this period, Bill consulted for railroad companies in Australia and on the east coast of the United States, after which he and Terry relocated to Menifee.

After retirement, Bill gave back to the community as president of a local hospice, and serving on a HOA board. He also was interested in and involved in environmental issues.

He spent hours on his bicycle, training, and participating in Cycle Oregon, a 500-mile, week-long bike ride, as well as traveling with Terry and gardening.

Bill is survived by his wife, Theresa (Terry) Currier (Hatton); step-daughter, Marcella (Marci) Solander; daughter Mary Lisa; and sisters Kathleen Ouellet and Cynthia Currier. Daughter Susan and brothers Don and Rick preceded him in death.

Do you have a story about your Southern Pacific career that you wish to share with others? If so, please submit draft or brief outline to Bill Fowler at billfowler@southernpacificjourney.org.



James Patrick (Pat) Marsh, Sr.
1938 ~ 2024

Surrounded by his family, James Patrick (Pat) Marsh Sr. passed away on December 24, 2024 in Tucson, Arizona at the age of 86 where he had lived and worked all his life. He worked and retired as a special agent investigator with Southern/Union Pacific. He served in the Air National Guard and retired with 30 years of service. He was also a 4th-

degree member of the local Knights of Columbus.

He is survived by his wife of 64 years, Maria C. Marsh; son Michael P. Marsh (Dustin); three daughters Christina M. Marsh, Katherine M. Marsh, and Sherrie M. Marsh; seven grandchildren; nine great-grandchildren; and several nieces and nephews.

Pat was preceded in death by his parents William E. and Margret J. Marsh; daughter Suzanne M. Marsh; son James P. Marsh Jr.; and brothers Paul Marsh and William Albert (Al) Marsh.

Pat, as most knew him, was a beloved husband, father, grandfather, uncle, and mentor to many in the community. He will be forever loved and missed.

Seeking Assistance

Someone is urgently seeking contact information for Bob Connor, whose last known position for Southern Pacific was assistant terminal superintendent at Englewood, Houston, Texas.

If you can help, please contact Bill Fowler at billfowler@southernpacificjourney.org.



Roderick "Wildman" Kidder
July 28, 1948 ~ January 10, 2025

Roderick "Wildman" Kidder, 76, passed away on January 10, 2025 at his residence in Arnaudville, Louisiana.

Roderick, known to many as Wildman, was born on July 28, 1948 in Arnaudville. He honorably served his country in the Army/National Guard, and he was a proud member of the Veterans of Foreign Wars in Cecilia, Louisiana. His dedication to service continued throughout his professional life as he worked for Southern Pacific/Union Pacific and the St. Martin Parish, Louisiana Sheriff's Department. Known for his love of family and Cajun music, Wildman enjoyed spending Sundays at Pat's Fisherman's Wharf Restaurant in Breaux Bridge, Louisiana, surrounded by loved ones and friends. He will deeply be missed by all.

He is survived by his wife, Cynthia Desoto Kidder; daughters, Rachael Kidder and Renaye Delino and her husband, David; one grandchild; and sister, Cheryl Collins and her husband, John.

He is preceded in death by his wife, Margaret Landry Kidder, and his parents, Wilson Kidder and Georgie Stelly Kidder.

Editor's note: Joseph C. Moreaux says, "Wildman went to work in the signal department on the Lafayette Division on October 5, 1970. He was the labor representative for the signal department, locally and on the national level for several years."