

Volunteer Spotlight - Alan Maleig



Allen Maleig poses with 745 at Gretna Fest 10/3/2010.

Bill Hamblin, Jr. photo

“How do you get into this?” That’s the question Allen Maleig asked Harry Abbott at SteamFest in Audubon Park three years ago. “I had played on SP 745 when it was on display at Audubon Park when I was a kid,” he said. He had heard about SteamFest and decided to go over and see what the locomotive looked like since it had been restored. He was immediately impressed that the engine was operational. “I went right over to the membership desk and joined LASTA on the spot,” he said.

Allen was born and raised in New Orleans. He is a “retired” auto mechanic with 33 years of experience in the trade. However, he is still working part-time, training a new employ-

ee at the garage where he works. “Auto repair has changed a lot in 33 years,” he said. “For instance, there are now 40 different transmission oils, and soon a mechanic will need to purchase a \$30,000 diagnostic machine just to get set up in the business.”

Allen also manages his family’s apartments on Jefferson Highway in New Orleans East. He lives in his grandmother’s old house, which he has been remodeling “after the storm [Hurricane Katrina]”.

“The front two rooms of the home are my train room,” he said. He is building a model railroad, “but my hobby slowed down because now I get to work on the real thing,” he adds.

Allen said, “I can’t wait to go to the Yard on Saturdays, and it has been nice to meet and work with so many good people at LASTA.” Allen’s interest is the machinery; the locomotives, cars, work equipment and trackwork. “It is a bunch of nice people at LASTA and we all put our heads together to get things done,” he said.

“I share the same interest in machinery as Mr. Richie [Jacobs],” Allen said. Allen said, “it was a thrilling experience to cross the Huey Long Bridge on a train, and I have done this

four times to and from Gretna Fest.”

He claims to be “organized but disorganized,” but fellow Yard workers offer a different perspective.

“Allen is a great mechanic,” said Yard Boss Wayne Minnick. “One example was when we could not get a borrowed post hole digger going to put fence posts down and he was able to bring it back to life.”

Richie Jacobs notes that “Allen is a strong man; he has been there every time we needed him, including working with us to save the Bisso engine”.

In March and April 2012, he has been working with Mr. Charlie Gholar laying track. “Mr. Charlie, he’s a worker,” Allen said. At one point recently Allen directed the Maintenance of Way gang himself.

Allen has earned the reputation of being a model volunteer: he helps, he offers to help, he’s dependable, and he’s reliable. “He doesn’t pick what he wants to do ... he does what he’s asked to do. As one volunteer put it, “just point Allen in a direction and the job will get done.”

Allen Maleig has managed to get into it in a very big way.

Jonathan Sturges

LASTA Postpones Steam Fest

The LASTA Board has decided to postpone Steam Fest for 2012, previously set for May of this year. While LASTA searches for another Steam Fest Coordinator, the Board is reviewing ideas for moving the event from the “Fly” at Audubon Park to a more popular and accessible location. The goal is to find a location which will allow 745 to actually build up to full steam and move along the track for the enjoyment of patrons. The ability to carry passengers for a short distance is also under consideration, but may not be feasible due to insurance constraints.

A LASTA committee has been in discussions with several Louisiana communities to host such an event, and coordinating with a seasonal festival outside of New Orleans is also a possibility.

The unfortunate reality of the current world in which we live (as it relates to private steam locomotive operation) is that track capacity, host railroad restrictions and insurance concerns rule the day. This makes production of an “animated” steam event extremely difficult and costly unless held on private property. For a non-profit, this is all but impossible

unless coordinated with a “tourist” railroad company or metropolitan entity that can cover the insurance and work with a host railroad.

The Board continues to look for opportunities to get 745 and consist out of the Yard and onto clear rails. If you would like to get involved in the coordination, planning and execution of our next appearance, please contact LASTA President Bill Morris at: 985-652-6021 (Home) 504-858-5450 (Cell) or tphoger@yahoo.com

Bill Hamblin, Jr.