Welcome to Fall!

Wow what a year this has been. I cannot believe that my tenure as your president is almost over. It has been my honor to serve this great organization in this way. I was very lucky to have an excellent group of executive board members who helped us reach the goals I set when I took office back in Spokane. They certainly helped me reach my potential as your president and I thank them!

Speaking of reaching ones potential-------our 2018 PACRAO annual conference, “Capitalizing our Potential” is just around the corner and I am so excited to see all of you in Sacramento. The local arrangements committee and program committee have been busy all year setting up the conference and are very eager to host you in Sacramento.

The conference mini site is up and has lots of information about the hotel, speakers, sessions and things to do around town. The conference hotel is in an excellent location that is right across the street form the California state capital building. I hope you carve out some time to enjoy Sacramento as well as the conference.


I hope your new academic year is off to a great start. See you in Sacramento!

Rayanne Williams, PACRAO President

Aztec For Life!
All Aboard to Sacramento!
Dateline November 1989

It all started with a casual conversation during the June 1989 meeting of the PACRAO 1990 (Portland) Local Arrangements Committee. The LAC minutes of that June 14th meeting show that “the idea of our taking the train to Sacramento has caught on. Washington folks have expressed interest. Sacramento LAC Chair said he would provide transportation from the train station to the conference hotel (3/4 mile). [The gala evening in Sacramento is dinner/dance in the railroad museum!]”

Marilyn Kennedy, registrar and director of admissions at Oregon’s Mt. Hood Community College and a member of the 1990 Portland LAC, agreed to coordinate the Oregon ACRAO’s train arrangements. John Finney, registrar and associate dean at University of Puget Sound and PACRAO Treasurer-Nominee, an avid railroad buff, was “in.” Before you could say “choo-choo,” the Rail Committee was formed, including Marilyn and John plus Richard Riehl (of Western Washington but soon to depart for Indiana State University) and John Geer of Western Washington University. On August 1, 1989, a mailing from the Rail Committee was sent to all PACRAO members from Oregon and Washington with details about a group rate on the Amtrak Coast Starlight – Destination, PACRAO 1989 in Sacramento!

Two on-board workshops were planned: the pre-conference workshop was “conducted to assist in developing a personal conference agenda.” The post-conference workshop included “planning a strategy for converting conferences ideas into an action plan for our own campuses.” The workshops were free.

Initially, rates for the trip depended on where each participant planned to board. Seattle and Tacoma stops were priced at $158. Portland was priced at $146 and Eugene, $117. Initially as many as 41 people expressed interest. However, United Airlines offered flight deals that were nearly a match for the train. A bidding war soon ensued: Amtrak lowered its fare from Seattle to $104, but then so did the airline. In the end, many of the Seattle folks opted to fly to PACRAO instead.

In mid-September, John Finney sent an eleven-page document to the 28 confirmed participants. The first three pages included outlines for both the pre-conference workshop and the post-conference workshop, plus suggestions on where to meet up for discussions during the train ride. John also suggested a train trip to AACRAO 1990 in New Orleans on the Empire Builder and City of New Orleans trains! Not sure if he got any takers.

Pages 4-11 of John’s document was entitled, “How to Enjoy Your Long-Distance Ride on the Train.” This section was chock full of tips about how to get some zzzz’s on the train, how to eat on the train, tipping, the train staff and their jobs, how to spend free time (reading, watching movies, talking to others, napping), and some history about passenger trains. John’s mailing also included a list of the 28 PACRAOans who agreed to participate in the adventure.

Seattle folks boarded at 10:35 a.m. on Saturday, November 4th; Portland folks boarded at 3:05 p.m. that same day. Participants also boarded in Tacoma, Vancouver, Albany, and Eugene.

UPS and PLU folks waiting for Amtrak Train 11, the southbound Coast Starlight, at the Tacoma WA Amtrak station, 4 Nov 1989. We are waiting to depart for Sacramento CA to attend the annual meeting of the Pacific Association of Collegiate Registrars & Admissions Officers. From left: Martha Garrett, Camille Eliason, John Finney, Chuck Nelson, Mary Allen, Brad Tomhave, Jim Van Beek, and Mary Morgan. (Photo and caption: John Finney)
According to John Finney’s six-page, meticulously detailed report of the adventure, the eight who boarded in Seattle had a fine lunch on the train. Brad Tomhave recalled that by the time the group left Tacoma, including John as the workshop presenter, there were a sufficient number of participants, plus the time until the next stop with PACRAO folks, to begin the conference train agenda. At the time, Brad was relatively new to the profession and to PACRAO, and found that the train ride was an excellent opportunity to expand his perspective given the extended time the group had together.

By 5:42 p.m., the train had stopped in Portland and then in Eugene, where the remainder of the group boarded. Part of the group had dinner on the train at 7 p.m. and the rest at 8 p.m. After dinner, the eight Tacoman’s “wedged themselves into the family bedroom where Chuck Nelson treated us to an excellent reading of *The Little Engine That Could*. He had checked a beautifully illustrated edition out of the PLU library. After reading each page, he presented each illustration to the upturned awe-filled faces of the assembled multitude.”

The train staff awoke the PACRAO group about a half hour prior to their arrival in Sacramento at 6:05 a.m., four minutes ahead of schedule. Staff in two Hyatt Regency vans whisked the group off to the hotel; the 1989 conference started that afternoon at 5 p.m., giving the train riders a whole day to themselves! Christine Kerlin recalls that they arrived at the hotel too early to get into their hotel rooms. She has a vague, sleep-deprived memory of the group being directed to a large room, perhaps the hotel's bar or restaurant that was unused at that early Sunday hour, where they piled their luggage and sank into dozing and chatting until their rooms were available. But they were certainly there in time for all conference activities!

After the conference, the return train departed at 11:11 p.m. Wednesday evening. Brad Tomhave recalled that “On the way home, we had time to compare notes on how well each of us accomplished our individual agendas and to share a few thoughts on ideas each of us was taking back to our respective institutions.” He added, “I would like to emphasize how valuable the time was. While official PACRAO sessions are beneficial, I think the informal time with other PACRAO folks had its own value and those conversations on the train made the trip worthwhile.”

The trip home was not without excitement! Early Thursday morning, the engineer put on the emergency brakes after spotting a car on the tracks. John’s journal recorded, “An inebriated woman had driven onto the rails after missing the road crossing she was aiming for. Her front tire was flattened, and her car was damaged and could not move. Too bad she and her companion were too far blitzed to get out of the car when they saw the train coming. Lucky for them the train stopped fifteen feet before striking them. After a while, the Starlight backed up, and got around the car on the adjacent siding track. Most of us (including me) slept through this entire episode, which was reported subsequently to us by one or our PACRAO colleagues in the 1410 car.”

Later, the train was halted again, this time for a track repair; there was a seven-inch gap in the rail! These two incidents put the train 90 minutes behind schedule, but the delay did afford the group a beautiful view of the sunrise over the Cascade Mountains. By 12:30 p.m., the Eugene group departed and at 3:39 p.m., the Portland group left the train.

For the exciting conclusion to this story, see the next page for some final words from John Finney’s journal:
"We departed Portland at 3:56 P.M., one hour and 26 minutes late. At Centralia eight Tacomans assembled one last time in the family bedroom for a lights-out session of conversation and stargazing. Before long we swept over Interstate 5 and past the Nisqually River delta, for a final half-hour of Puget Sound-skirting; then through Steilacoom in a flash, under the Narrows Bridge, through the Nelson Bennett tunnel, past the Ruston Way restaurants, and finally into Tacoma's Amtrak station at 7:08 P.M., one hour and thirty-three minutes late.

After years of solo rail-riding, I appreciated the opportunity to have good friends along and to share experiences with them. It could happen again. In two years the PACRAO conference will be held in Salt Lake City, a destination of Amtrak's Pioneer, which traverses the beautiful Columbia Gorge and the mountains of northeastern Oregon. There's talk of another "PACRAO Workshop on the Train" in 1991. I hope so."

The End!

This story was made possible by many PACRAOans who contributed their memories, photos, documents, train tickets, and entire journals. Special thanks to:

Bob Tufts, for turning over two jammed-packed banker's boxes of PACRAO treasures dating back as far as 1979. Like all true registrars, Bob saved everything, including many documents, memorabilia, and photos about this train ride; he inspired this story!

John Finney, for sharing photos and captions, and especially for sharing his "JOURNAL OF RAIL TRIP TO SACRAMENTO, CALIFORNIA FOR THE ANNUAL MEETING OF THE PACIFIC ASSOCIATION OF COLLEGIATE REGISTRARS AND ADMISSIONS OFFICERS (PACRAO) NOVEMBER 4 - 9, 1989."

Christine Kerlin, for sharing pictures, providing captions, and editing/adding to an earlier draft of this story.

Brad Tomhave, for sharing tales and memories of the trip.

Herb Chereck, for filling in some of the blanks!

Stay tuned to the PACRAO Newsletter for more glimpses into PACRAO's history.

Respectfully submitted, Sue Eveland, PACRAO Archives.
Did you Know?

This year’s conference in Sacramento, CA will represent the 92nd Annual Meeting for PACRAO.

Join us by registering today and help celebrate 92 years of Annual Meetings.

Michelle Dodge – VP Membership

It’s never too late!

If your school has not renewed for the 2018-2019 year, it’s not too late. Some wonderful things happen when your school has renewed their membership. The membership is an institutional membership that allows your institution to have as many members as you would like for no extra cost. With the membership you get the following: access to webinars, the newsletter, information regarding the annual meeting and access to job postings.

As we prepare for the conference in October, remember that the primary contact for the institutional membership also gets additional recognition. In appreciation, you will receive a beautiful patch that identifies you as a primary contact. Please consider attending the Primary Contact Session, which happens Sunday, October 28 from 3:00 pm – 3:30 pm.

We really hope to see you at PACRAO in Sacramento!

KEEP CALM AND RENEW YOUR MEMBERSHIP
A huge thank you to our 2018 Business Partners. Their support will certainly help us *Capitalize our Potential* at this year's conference! Be sure to visit their booths as well as all of the other exhibitors.

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Herff Jones & SCRIP-SAFE
Sacramento 2018—Conference Swag

Remember to bring swag from your institution for the daily raffles hosted at the 2018 hospitality booth. This is your chance to share your school’s pride with other PACRAO members. Bring on those t-shirts, mugs, water bottles, blankets, sweatshirts and any items that show your school mascots!

2018 Local Arrangements Committee
Lisa Erck, Chair, University of the Pacific
Monterey Sims, Co-Chari, University of Phoenix
Heather Hall, San Francisco State University
Cheryl Gaughan, Point Loma Nazerene
Myrna May, Point Loma Nazerene
Dinorah Fleiciano, University of the Pacific
Tara Atkinson, University of the Pacific
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