

# AMTRAK

## SOUTHWEST DIVISION NEWS



Each year, the USC Train provided by Amtrak brings USC alumni and fans to a road football game selected for the season.

*Photos provided by Nori Nagumo.*



## USC Train spurs

# SCHOOL SPIRIT

Many traditions exist on the college football stage, and Amtrak is the foundation of a very special one in Southern California. The company provides a unique service for a one-of-kind football experience to fans of the University of Southern California known as the USC Train.

The USC Train is a weekend experience offered each football season in which USC alumni and fans take a first-class trip from Los Angeles to a USC game on Amtrak's Coast Starlight route. The USC Train occupies all of the first-class rooms, which gives the group exclusive access to sleeper cars and the Pacific Parlour Car. Passengers also enjoy free meals in the dining car.

At stops along the way, passengers hold pep rallies led by the USC Spirit of Troy band and USC Song Girls. Upon arrival at the game day location, patrons enjoy a thrilling afternoon of tailgating and USC football. This year, the USC Train traveled

to Eugene, Ore., for USC's game against the Beavers of Oregon State University Nov. 20.

"It's a great experience," said Kip Sturgeon, who coordinates the USC Train each year.

Sturgeon said Amtrak employees do an exceptional job making the trip pleasant and enjoyable for everyone on board, and credited Don Wong, sales and marketing associate, for being particularly instrumental in making the USC Train manageable.

"It just wouldn't work without Don behind the scenes. He's able to accomplish a lot of things for us," Sturgeon said. "Amtrak as a whole is extremely accommodating. The crews really go above and beyond the call of duty – from baggage handlers to train crews – everyone is absolutely amazing."

The USC Train is in its 16th year of operation. It began in 1995 by Ken and

Barbara Cotler, both USC football fans who sought a unique way to travel to games and contacted Amtrak about organizing the USC Train. Fifteen people rode the USC Train's inaugural run, and ridership has steadily increased every year since. This year's ride was the largest to date with more than 100 people making the trip to Eugene.

Proceeds from the USC Train are donated to the Trojan Marching Band. Tickets for the 2011 season go on sale in January. Anyone interested is encouraged to e-mail Sturgeon at [kip@ustrain.org](mailto:kip@ustrain.org), or visit the official website [www.ustrain.org](http://www.ustrain.org).

"Amtrak employees are always welcome to travel with us free of charge," Sturgeon said. "We'd love to have them on board."

## Saucedo earns PSSA award

Andy Saucedo holds seven years of experience with Amtrak, and in his time as conductor, he has developed into an exceptional employee. Just ask Ginger Brown, San Antonio trainmaster, who believes Saucedo embodies the ideal conductor.

“He is a prime example of what we all want in a conductor,” Brown said. “He comes out here, he works as a team, he’s a leader, and he goes above and beyond. Whatever the job that needs to be done, he’s able to take care of it and make sure it goes smoothly.”

For being an exemplary employee, Brown nominated Saucedo for Amtrak’s most prestigious honor, the Presidential Service and Safety Award. He received the award at Amtrak’s annual ceremony held Nov. 3 in Washington D.C. While honored to be selected, Saucedo credited the achievement to teamwork and his dedicated co-workers.

“I didn’t do it by myself, my co-work-

ers had a lot to do with it,” he said. “I cherish working with them and I believe it’s because of them I was given this award. They molded me into what I am today. I didn’t just get hired and became a conductor, a lot of the things I do is a replication of what they are and what they do. I’m basically a shadow of them. I took what they showed me and made it my own, and here I am today.”

While teamwork has been instrumental to Saucedo’s success, the conductor emphasized that a team cannot be successful without the effort of the individuals.

“It’s about coming into work and doing a good job and doing every that’s expected of you,” he said. “There’s certain situations that you have to put in extra effort and give more than what’s expected. It may not be your job, but you’re capable of doing it, and instead of finding someone else to do it, just do it yourself. That’s what I was taught, that’s what I see in a

lot of employees here, and to me that’s the most vital part.”

From something as simple as a cup of ice to a more detailed request, Saucedo believes every employee should help out whenever possible. By doing so, employees enhance the overall quality of service to valued customers.

“It’s very important,” Saucedo said. “The passenger doesn’t want to see any part of the employee that doesn’t want to do the task because it doesn’t belong to them. They don’t care about that, they just want it fixed, so it’s all of our jobs to take care of the passengers. We’re all on the train together.”

### Next stop ...

Check out next month’s issue for features on more award winners: Gaye Lynn Bekkeund, Fort Worth, Texas, lead commissary/lead ticket clerk; and Jill Moyer, Southwest Division OPS management manager.

## One-of-a-kind service provides unique experience

**F**ranklin Shearer and his wife, Lucille, have been dedicated Amtrak riders for years, traveling across the country by rail. While the couple has always received fine service from Amtrak employees along the 15,000 to 20,000 miles of track they cover each year, they have never received service quite like that from Efren Cuadro, sleeping car attendant. For that, Shearer, a member of Amtrak’s Customer Advisory Committee, nominated Cuadro for Amtrak’s honorary Customer Service Award, a recognition bestowed Nov. 3.

Residents of Hershey, Pa., the Shearers traveled to Phoenix, Ariz., in May to visit a college friend who recently retired. It was on their return trip aboard the Sunset Unlimited that they met Cuadro. Shearer will never forget the greeting he received from the sleeping car attendant that evening.

“He greeted us at the door of the car by name,” Shearer said. “Welcome aboard, Mr. and Mrs. Shearer.”

Cuadro then proceeded to take the couple’s bags and escorted them to their bedroom.

“I thought, ‘Wow, I don’t recall being greeted by name and having our bags taken to our rooms for us – ever,’” Shearer said. “That was a very nice gesture on his part, and that was just the start of what proved to be a very pleasant experience with him.”

Upon arriving to their bedroom, the Shearers were greeted by another surprise. They found their beds were already prepared as

Cuadro went on to explain the features of the room.

“Efren, realizing the time of the night, felt that we probably wanted to go straight to bed – and he was absolutely right,” Shearer said. “We didn’t have to tell him. He had them made.”

Shearer then made a pair of requests for a 7 a.m. wake-up call and a continental breakfast at 8:30 a.m., both of which were fulfilled promptly the following morning. Cuadro continued to attend to the couple’s every need throughout the day. He brought water, blankets and extra towels and wash clothes, and even swept the bedroom floor and emptied the trash can.

“I don’t recall an attendant who came in the room and changed the trash can,” Shearer said. “Efren was on the spot, he checked on us periodically, and he did exactly what we asked without forgetting anything or having to be reminded. The day went like clockwork.”

The Shearers were so satisfied at the completion of their trip, they felt Cuadro’s exceptional service was deserving of recognition.

“We were so impressed with him, we decided to nominate him for the Customer Service Award,” Shearer said. “The award is for an employee who not only does his or her job well, but goes above and beyond the requirements of the job, and we felt Efren did just that. He was a very nice attendant who bent over backwards to provide extraordinary customer service.”

# Bernal credits teamwork for individual achievement

When John Bernal was selected for Amtrak's Presidential Service and Safety Award, the mechanical foreman out of San Antonio was reluctant to take credit for the achievement. He preferred, instead, to accept the award on behalf of his co-workers.

"It feels great to receive this, but I think it's the whole department that is deserving of the award," the 12-year employee said. "San Antonio Mechanical is a great group of employees who have a lot of spirit. We're a small department, we're all close, and we're a team. Everybody is supportive and we share this award because we all do the best. There's no place like San Antonio. Without them, I wouldn't be here."

Ginger Brown, San Antonio trainmaster who nominated Bernal for the PSSA, was

overjoyed to see the mechanical foreman receive the award and agreed the San Antonio crew is an exceptional work force. The team's dedication and work ethic are due, in large part, to Bernal's leadership, she said.

"John is an excellent employee. I'm so happy he won the award," she said. "The San Antonio crew base goes above and beyond because of his leadership skills. He motivates them to

do the job properly, and he instills that safety belief. It's amazing what they do."

Bernal has contributed to service and safety in a number of ways in 2010. Though he is no longer a member of San Antonio's Safety Committee, he has remained active with the committee and has made numerous contributions to improving railroad safety throughout the year.

Citing examples of his work, Brown said Bernal personally welded a special gate around the side of the building so both passengers and employees could not take a short cut through that area to get to the parking lot. Bernal also took time during his off days to install lights on a platform near Union Pacific's busy main line and Track No. 3 at the San Antonio depot. As a direct result of Bernal's influence, Brown said employees wear proper PPE at all times on the platform, or wherever necessary, which contributes to the Mechanical Department's safety record.

"Mr. Bernal goes above and beyond to not only set a good example for safety by wearing his Amtrak-approved safety gear, but he also insists and tactfully enforces our policy with the entire department," Brown said. "I'm proud to say that no one steps on this property without wearing the proper safety gear to inspect the train."

According to Brown, Bernal never misses an opportunity to discuss and address potential safety concerns, which has resulted in procedural changes in yard operations. Bernal's efforts, as well as the efforts of his team, have led to a very successful 2010 and will set the stage for the upcoming year.

"It's been a great year," Bernal said. "We're just going to keep doing the best we can."



San Antonio employees John Bernal, mechanical foreman III, and Andy Saucedo, conductor, both receive an Amtrak Presidential Service and Safety Award. Pictured, from left, are Bernal; Joseph Boardman, Amtrak President and CEO; and Saucedo.

## A step above THE REST

Conductors can easily go unnoticed in their day-to-day work, but Nancy Wolf is undoubtedly an exception. Amtrak passengers would agree that Wolf, who serves on the Southwest Chief between Albuquerque, N.M., and La Junta, Colo., has a definite knack for standing out.

"She is visible both outside and inside the train," said Gene Hughes, Amtrak Customer Advisory Committee member. "With the exception of taking

and beyond, Hughes nominated Wolf for Amtrak's Customer Service Award. She was selected for the award, and Hughes had the honor of presenting it to her at a ceremony held Nov. 16 in Los Angeles.

One way in which Wolf stands out, Hughes said, is she takes the time to inform passengers of points of interest along the Southwest Chief route. Not only does she deliver standard announcements, she points out towns, landmarks and other oddities along the way. From the Raton Pass to old mining towns to a gathering of elk, Wolf ensures every

passenger tickets, conductors appear to be among the missing as we travel from point A to point B. An exception to the invisible conductor is Nancy."

Because of her ability to go above

passenger on the train knows what's approaching. It is a practice that was once a regular part of the Southwest Chief experience, but gradually faded through the years. Hughes is happy to see it brought to life once again through Wolf.

"In many ways, Nancy provides the narrative that was provided in days past," he said. "It makes you more comfortable and the experience more pleasant because you have a learning experience while riding the train. Nancy adds, in a very positive manner, to the quality of the trip."

Hughes would know the difference. He and his wife, Margaret Ann, travel as many as 40,000 miles on Amtrak each year. The couple agrees Wolf is step above other employees.

"Seldom do you have a conductor who provides the type of service that Nancy does," Hughes said. "She's just tremendous. I wish there were a way to clone her."

# MEETING THE CRITERIA

The purpose of the Amtrak Customer Advisory Committee Customer Service Award is to recognize those Amtrak employees who have shown consistent, exemplary customer service. Richard Bent, ACAC SDW, feels Gloria Binder meets that criteria. He, therefore, nominated the Pacific Surfliner train attendant for the award. According to Bent, Binder repeatedly shows thoughtfulness, courtesy and initiative when it comes to passenger service and care.

“On numerous occasions, I have either experienced her caring and self-motivated approach to passenger service myself or watched her help other passengers often without being asked,” Bent said.

On one particular occasion, Bent arrived in Fullerton, Calif., very early in the morning on the Southwest Chief and connected to a southbound Surfliner. Normally,

the Surfliner is much like a commuter train and passengers move off and on very quickly. Bent was carrying a couple pieces of luggage plus a camera bag and a computer bag. Without being asked, Binder hustled over to assist the overloaded passenger.

“Gloria spotted my unwieldy predicament, and without prompting, grabbed my carry-on and helped me get situated,” Bent said. “I also watched her help another woman who was similarly burdened. This is particularly helpful because there are no downstairs baggage accommodations on the Surfliner and often one must haul their luggage upstairs while the train is moving.”

On another trip, Bent boarded a Surfliner in San Juan Capistrano for Los Angeles in Business Class. With snack items getting low, Binder swung into action once again.

“Gloria came over and asked if she could get me anything. Attendants don’t have to do that,” Bent said. “She proceeded to bring me a whole variety of snacks and drinks and even found some tea for me.”

Later, when Bent inquired about Wi-Fi availability, Binder promptly checked on the situation and sought a solution.

“She even had someone turn a switch on, but the system was not yet working,” Bent said. “As a passenger, I rarely see this kind of thoughtful care anywhere, and I have always seen Gloria attentive, and looking for a chance to help out.”

## Congratulations!

Amtrak congratulates these valued employees for their 35 years of service. Gifton Graham, manager On-Board Services, presented awards to the following:



Maynard Harley, left



Lloyd Berry, right



Robert Williams, right

## BE AWARE OF SLIPS, TRIPS AND FALLS



DECEMBER  
2010

## Correction

In the September/October edition of Amtrak Southwest Division News, Mike Chandler, superintendent Metrolink commuter operations, was quoted in the article “Safety paramount in Amtrak, Metrolink operations” as saying “The safety message we’re sending to our train crews is ‘Safety over Service’.” This quote should have read “Safety over Schedule.”

## Got a great story? Let us know!

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