

Dispatcher

Issue 24 Railway Historical Society of San Diego, Calif. Inc.

March 10, 1959

RHS of SD PLANS UNIQUE EXCURSION

An unusual excursion, planned for May 17, will include a train that is unique, station stops that are different, and travel in a foreign country.

Excursion Director Wally Duthie announced that RHS of SD Excursion #10 will be on the Sonora-Baja California Railroad (Ferrocarril Sonora-Baja California) with a special train operating from Mexicali down the main line to Miito (K76) or El Doctor (K107). Plans now call for a consist which includes a diesel-electric (formerly gas-electric) motor, a German-built coach, and a conventional coach. Motor was possibly the Tonopah & Tidewater Motor #99 which once served Ludlow, Crucero, Death Valley Junction and Beatty; the German-built car is one of a series of modern first and second class coaches used on the overnight passenger train; and the conventional coach is one of several former Southern Pacific coaches now owned by the Sonora-Baja California (known also as S. C. O. P.).

Duthie is awaiting confirmation of the equipment assigned and the fares to be charged.

Picture stops will probably be scheduled in the SCOP Mexicali yard, at the quaint town of Victoria, at the one-lane rail-highway bridge which crosses the Colorado, and at Miito or El Doctor. Other stops may be added. Duthie has requested that the railroad consider having the train load at the Inter-California station just across the border. If the request is not granted the train will depart from the new modern SCOP terminal which is located in southeast Mexicali.

Pacific Greyhound provides the only public transportation to Calexico-Mexicali, but patrons may use private cars or possibly ride a chartered bus if a sufficient number are interested.

RHS of SD members will receive an excursion notice as soon as trip details are available. Non-members should write to Wallace Duthie, 3380 Granada Avenue, San Diego 4, for information.

REVIEW OF RAIL NEWS

Imperial and Mexicali Valleys

For several months Southern Pacific has been routing all U.S. freight to Yuma via Niland rather than via the Inter-Cal. The San Diego train, known as the Side-winder on the El Centro-Yuma section, is routed via Niland. Other Imperial Valley trains include the Los Angeles freight via Niland to Los Angeles, the Perishable via Niland to Yuma, and the irregular local service to the Imperial Valley towns. Add to this service the mainline trains which by-pass the Valley proper.

The Inter-Cal (Compania del Ferrocarril Inter-California), except for Mexicali switching service, is all but dead. No trains other than international switching operate across the border. The sole mainline run is the Mexicali-Algodones mixed freight which runs only once a week - on Wednesdays. That's all! An old SP coach sits at the Inter-Cal station at the border awaiting its one weekly run. No trains operate through to Yuma. Inter-Cal apparently continues to lease SP locomotives for its remaining service.

On the Ferrocarril Sonora-Baja California it's a different story. Here we find an overnight passenger train, Mexicali to Benjamin Hill. Consist includes one diesel cab unit, several first and second class modern German-built coaches, perhaps an old conventional (SP) coach or two and one former Southern Pacific Pullman. The latter car operates through to Guadalajara and may soon run through to Mexico City. Other cars operate only to Benjamin Hill. Ferrocarril del Pacifico cars are used on the train from time to time. Also on a daily overnight SBC (or SCOP) run is the regular freight. The "Ranchera" train (whatever that was) has been discontinued. Track is not the best and top speed is 45 mph.

SCOP's Mexicali station is about five miles southeast of the border gate. Track runs from the Inter-Cal station at

the border southeast to the Sonora-Baja California terminal. Entire terminal - headquarters building, passenger station, freight station, shops, etc. - is fenced in. Inter-Cal track runs through the terminal area and then both lines share the track (Inter-Cal's track??) nine kilometers to Pascualitos. (SCOP's station is 5.78 KM. from the border.) At Pascualitos the Inter-Cal line veers to the northeast while SCOP goes directly ahead. SCOP's Mexicali plant is large and modern and the buildings are scattered over considerable acreage. Inter-Cal's station - well, it needs paint!

San Diego & Arizona Eastern Railway Company

Three car bodies, located at Tierra del Sol (formerly Hipass), and until recently used as living quarters, are to be sold or demolished. Old Hipass station is still there. Car body at El Cajon is also to be removed.....Observed: Roustabout, San Diego-bound, on the Silver Strand on Jan. 19. Consist included locomotives 5101-5102, a flat car, a box car, and SD&AE caboose 402. On a recent Sunday your editor also spotted a 40 car train eastbound through Tierra del Sol.....SD&AE 105 was scrapped at Purdy, Los Angeles, in February; 106 was scrapped same place 10-7-58; 103 is retired and is rusting away at Bayshore. (Strapac).

The La Mesa Industrial Area siding may be relocated on the North side of the tract in order to facilitate highway interchange construction. Present location is poor because truck loading often interferes with traffic.....Former SD&AE right-of-way between Santee and Lakeside, acquired some years ago by the state, may become part of a Lakeside Freeway. Route is to be adopted and other necessary right-of-way purchased. Roadbed about 100 yards north of the Wagon Wheel to the Lakeside station is involved.

The City Council of Chula Vista in January directed City Administrator F. Sylvan Fulwiler to negotiate with users of the SD&AE branch along Third Avenue to move their operations.....SD&AE trains for some time now have been using the new bridge over a four lane section of U.S. Highway 80 near Coyote Wells.

AT&SF Escondido Branch News, Bob Weaver, reporter

Stakes are now in for a new Santa Fe spur in San Marcos which will serve Buy and Save Market's new warehouse. The new building will be a distributing point for Buy and Save's five large supermarkets (in Carlsbad, Oceanside, Fallbrook, Vista and Escondido) and will probably add much inbound traffic to the branch.

The "Escondido Switch Run" now serves as shippers four packing plants (Calavo's is the largest avocado packing plant in the world) in Escondido and the Crystal Silica Company's plant at Talica.

Eight lumber yards and builders' supply houses, two cement plants, six feed mills and stores, three warehouses plus team tracks in Vista, San Marcos, and Escondido furnish plenty of inbound traffic. It isn't a rare day when one can find several cars spotted at each industry. Of course all this means shiny rails and a very busy train crew.

Depot at Vista, built in 1913, was originally painted red. The semaphore order board was removed in the late thirties and clearance cards were used. Order board now in use was installed in 1953. The station was remodeled in 1941 when the office space was enlarged and the waiting room almost eliminated. Until 1949 when the Calavo plant burnt down and then was rebuilt in Escondido there were two men in the depot with at third man at times. The train stopped hauling express in 1946 when the combo was replaced by a caboose. Coal stove was replaced with a modern gas heater in 1955. The coal, stored under the station platform, was then used by the train crew for a stove in the caboose.

An 8-car bridge and building crew was recently in Vista replacing the red tin roof on the depot with red slate and also working on pile trestle near Buena. On occasion the crew of the San Bernardino-San Diego freight also make a run on the branch. 3100 class engines were used on the branch. Station Agent Robert Bobbett has a picture of #3140 at the depot.

Other Santa Fe News

Santa Fe's proposal to discontinue Carlsbad and Encinitas agency stations as of January 22 has been held in abeyance due to community protests. Santa Fe also

A feature issue (and usually an accompanying news issue) is published quarterly by the Railway Historical Society of San Diego, Calif., Inc. Subscriptions come with a \$2.50 Society membership or separately at \$1 a year. Dispatcher address is 7861 Normal Avenue, La Mesa, Calif. Editor is Eric Sanders.

SHOP TALK

The Dispatcher would appreciate readers mailing in any information they have on the Sonora-Baja California. Material will be used for an excursion brochure and for a special edition of the Dispatcher.

Dispatcher would like to mention the names of subscribers who have taken out a Society membership. They include: John W. Barriger III, Tom Eastlick, Ross Fry, Rev. Thomas P. Garrett, J. W. Grosdidier, Robert Kubach, E. J. Lupien, S.C. Mickler, and Paul M. Wilson. Welcome to you fellows who have taken out a 1959 membership. Miss anyone?

Thanks to ERA's Headlights which also gave us a plug for Issue 19.

Kind comments have come from J. L. Watson, Vaughan Sanders, Henry Alvarado, and Everett Edwards. Personal (San Diego) recollections received from William T. Newman and Bill Garner will be run when space permits. Randolph L. Kulp, 602 St. John St., Allentown, Penna., wants pictures of Mack rail cars and locomotives for a forthcoming publication. Can anyone help him?

Good book order lists are available from Owen Davies, 1214 No. La Salle St., Chicago 10.

Look in Feb. 1959 Popular Mechanics for a good UP turbine story.

Dick Pennick says look for rail items (large or small) in Arizona Highways 11-48, 6-50, 7-44, 6-49, 11-50 and 5-55.

NEWSLETTER COVERED THESE ITEMS BUT, FOR THE RECORD.....

42 attended the January Installation dinner. President Corky won the bicycle. In the next room was the annual gathering of the San Diego Model Railroad Club. Rex Cuttall covered both dinners.

30 attended the United States Gypsum Plaster City excursion. Many also took an informative tour through the plant.

Santa Fe news continued

planned to discontinue the Railway Express agency at Encinitas.

Santa Fe's Oakland-Bakersfield main line was blocked all day January 11 because of a nine car derailment caused by an automobile running into the side of the train. Fog obscured the wig wag.

The Atchison, Topeka & Santa Fe Railway Company sold 19 Gas-Electric Motor Cars to Luria Bros., Chicago, during September and October, 1958. The numbers were M-117, M-121, M-123, M-124, M-125, M-130, M-131, M-152, M-153, M-154, M-155, M-156, M-157, M-175, M-178, M-180, M-182 and M-187, according to list furnished by Prof. S. R. Wood. Even the flying skunks are being de-scented. There were no changes in the steam and diesel motive power. (Richard V. Dodge news item.)

A high note of optimism for the rail travel future characterized the 103rd annual meeting of the American Association of Passenger Traffic Officers in Santa Fe. Numerous innovations in merchandising and service were discussed by the group as possible avenues to stem the downward trend in rail passenger traffic to increase revenues and to adequately compete for the travel dollar. Among the travel incentives being tested on some railroads are slumber coaches, package tickets which include rail, Pullman, meals, etc., American plan travel, organized tours, show trains, tray meals, numerous special fare arrangements, rail travel credit cards and the travel now-pay later plan.

Addition of lightweight Duplex-type sleeping cars to the Grand Canyon of Santa Fe Railway between Los Angeles and Chicago has been announced. This type of car finds favor with many travelers because it costs only ten per cent more than a lower berth and yet affords private room convenience for single occupancy.

Dining Club meal coupon books on Santa Fe Railway's Hi-Level chair car streamliner starting Feb. 16 will be available. Books are good for all meals and offer a saving of about 20% under top menu prices. (Santa Fe Public Relations Dept.)

Southern Pacific News

Having been refused permission by the California P.U.C. to discontinue eight trains the Southern Pacific Co. has now petitioned the Interstate Commerce Commission for authority to take the contemplated action. Trains are the Los

Angeles-Sacramento West Coast, a San Francisco-San Jose round trip, and two Oakland-Sacramento round trips. (LA Times)

Shasta Daylight continues on a daily schedule.

On January 20 steam service ended on the F. C. de Nacozari.

Union Pacific News

Union Pacific Gas Turbine #61 coupled in multiple with geeps 300-301 came into the Los Angeles area in January. Returned the next day. (PRS)

Union Pacific used steam until about Thanksgiving Day. (PRS) Most of Cajon Pass now has welded rail. (More is to be laid on Santa Fe between San Bernardino and Fullerton) (PRS)

Pacific Fruit Express plans to move its car shops from Colton to Tucson next summer.

PERSONALITY PROFILE #1

A JAGGED PROFILE OF

RICHARD V. DODGE

A descendent of the "Damn Yankees", the Block Island, Rhode Island, branch of the Dodge family and of Sir Francis Drake on the mother's side.

A Native Son of San Diego, having arrived January 2, 1889, at the northwest corner of State and Ash Streets.

The first recollection of riding in the cab of a steam locomotive was on one of the Coronado Railroad's dummies from the ferry landing to the race track on Fifth Street.

Obtained primary and secondary educations in Middletown School and Russ (San Diego) High School.

Began railroading in 1900 on the Southern California Railway now Santa Fe as a trespasser.

Graduated from Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute of Troy, New York, in 1912, with a degree of Mechanical Engineer.

Worked on the Baltimore & Ohio Railroad, out of Mt. Clare Shops, Baltimore, in charge of the Dynamometer Car and as a material Inspector, in 1916 and 1917.

Employed by Southern Pacific Company in 1920 at Stockton, California, in the Maintenance of Way and Structures Department, transferring in 1924 to the Main Office in San Francisco.

Returned in that year and was tolerated by the San Diego Gas and Electric Company for 29 years.

Retired in December 1953 to devote more time and energy in riding the rails, photographing steam locomotives and delving into local railroading history.

Ad finis.

(Editor's note: Dick sent us an addition which we proceeded to lose....something about working during World War II - part-time, that was - in the San Diego & Arizona Eastern Roundhouse generally getting messed up while trying to keep the steamers all shined up. The above profile was prepared by Dick Dodge at the request of the editor. One loyal reader, Ross Fry, to be exact, suggested that brief biographies be included in our copy.)

ANNOUNCEMENT

The Railway Historical Society of San Diego authorized the Dispatcher to again change its subscription rate.

Effective immediately the Society will allocate \$1 per year per member to the Dispatcher. The Dispatcher was also authorized to institute a new rate of \$1 per year to non-members.

For this rate the Dispatcher will publish four quarterly feature issues which will include at least two pages of multilithed copy with a picture or two. Usually the feature issue will be accompanied by a mimeographed news issue.

Old subscriptions will be honored without additional charge.

The Dispatcher editors feel that the new plan will provide readers with an improved service.

SAN DIEGO AREA NEWS FLASHES.....Pacific Air Lines has applied for a San Diego - Catalina run, two round trips summers, one round trip winters. PBY's will make the 48 minute one way trip.....Pressure building up for SDTS bus service to Bostonia and also to North La Mesa. Bostonia area is presently served by the El Cajon Valley Lines.

BRIEF HISTORY AND DESCRIPTIONOF SOUTHERN PACIFIC KEELER BRANCH NARROW GAUGE LINE

The 70.4-mile narrow gauge line in Owens Valley between Keeler and Laws, Calif., is the remaining part of the original 300-mile narrow gauge Carson & Colorado Railroad, built between May 10, 1880, and August 1, 1883, from Mound House, Nev., south to Keeler, Calif. It was an offspring of the now-defunct Virginia & Truckee Railroad and was intended by its builders, U.S. Sen. William Sharon and Banker D. O. Mills, eventually to run from the Carson River to the Colorado River and to handle a mining traffic which actually never reached expectations.

Originally there was no southern rail connection for the line and all freight and passenger service moved to and from the north and east by Nevada connections. Southern Pacific purchased the entire line in March, 1900, when traffic was at low ebb. Soon afterward, a new mining boom developed along the line in Nevada (but not in California) and SP soon broad-gauged some 116 miles of the route within Nevada.

A decade later, at the southern end of the line the building of the great Los Angeles Aqueduct required new railroad facilities to handle construction materials in volume. In 1910 SP finished its standard gauge line from Mojave to Lone Pine and on beyond for four miles to intercept the narrow gauge rails at a transfer point named Owenyo. Through traffic on the narrow gauge now could move in and out via Mojave to the south instead of via Reno to the north. As Nevada mining traffic again dwindled one portion after another of the northern end of the narrow gauge was abandoned. The last section to be taken up was the 30.7-mile strip from Laws to Benton, Calif., in February, 1943, the rails going to the war effort. The present line, Laws to Keeler, is unchanged since that date.

Except for an occasional railfan excursion, there has been no passenger service on the line since 1932. Completion of a good road (U.S. Highway 6-395) through the Owens Valley paralleling the railroad had brought a sharp decline in passenger patronage after 1925. Today the railroad has no passenger equipment. Open gondola freight cars formerly used for the infrequent railroad club excursions have been rebuilt into flatcars with the former wooden benches removed and the company no longer runs railfan excursions due to lack of safe passenger-carrying equipment.

At one time there were 16,000 miles of narrow gauge railroad track in 42 states of the nation, and in Western states alone there were more than 100 narrow gauge roads. Today the Keeler Branch is the last narrow gauge common carrier west of the Rockies. Its less than 200 tiny freight cars (box, flat, gondola and cattle cars) have wooden floors and frames difficult to keep in repair. These cars are able to carry less than a third the weight handled by a modern standard gauge, steel freight car, or about the same as a large highway van. Since October 16, 1954, motive power has been furnished by 450-horsepower SP Narrow Gauge Diesel Locomotive No. 1, the most modern thing on the historic line, while Steam Locomotive No. 9 (built in 1909) is kept ready for standby service. Most of the rail is the original 35-pound-per-yard (as compared to modern mainline 136-pound) rail made in 1880 in England. The traffic is about 85% talc in its various grades, either bagged or bulk, from three principal shippers at Laws, Keeler and Zurich. On a 5-day week operating basis, traffic presently averages only about three standard gauge boxcar loads per day--a far cry from the peak year of 1929 when 60 men worked on the transfer docks at Owenyo. The ratio is about 7 to 1 in favor of the outbound traffic.

The branch line is part of Southern Pacific's San Joaquin Division, headquartered at Bakersfield. However, due to its historical connections with the Nevada lines, agreements with the railroad brotherhoods still require that crews be assigned from Salt Lake Division personnel. This means that relief personnel usually must come almost 300 miles by bus from Sparks, Nev.

Keeler Station was closed in August, 1957, and SP presently is awaiting a decision from the California Public Utilities Commission on an application to close the Laws Agency and to handle all business on the line from the Owenyo Agency.

Hollywood has made numerous Western movies on the line. Examples of the railroad's old-time rolling stock are widely preserved and on display in Bakersfield, Los Angeles, Independence, Carson City and Reno. Railfans come hundreds of miles to see the narrow gauge in operation.

The narrow gauge was built along the east side of Owens Valley, nearest the greatest potential of mining traffic, while the parallel highway and population developed several miles away on the west side. Even today as the tiny train runs from Keeler to Laws--through 70 miles of drifting sand in desert terrain ranging from 3605 to 4105 feet elevation--its crew sees only a couple of paved road crossings and not a single retail store. (Editor's note: Above story was released by the Southern Pacific Public Relations Department. Note should be made of the fact that the Bishop Chamber of Commerce has appealed far and wide for help in retaining the line in part because of its increasing importance in attracting tourists to the region.)

VERDE VALLEY HOLIDAY by Richard V. Dodge

Railroad fans are unpredictable!!

The Central Coast Railway Club set up an unusual excursion, using three forms of power. A special train was to operate on March 8, 1958 from San Jose to Chico, Calif., via Western Pacific Railroad to Marysville using the remaining steam engine No. 94 and via Sacramento Northern Railway from Marysville to Chico using an electric freight motor and finally a diesel. This diversity looked like a winner but the trip had to be cancelled due to lack of patronage.

On the same week end the Verde Valley Holiday, one of the John M. Ferris Tours, was scheduled and the response was amazing. This excursion, leaving Los Angeles on Friday, March 7, was operated over the Santa Fe via Ashfork, Drake and up the Verde Valley branch to the terminus at Clarkdale, Ariz. The special train of 12 cars, including six Pullmans and two chair cars, headed by 4-unit passenger diesel number 29, covered the entire route. Probably this was the first

such passenger train to run over the branch line.

Many stops for the taking of photographs were made at scenic points, including one at Hell's Canyon Bridge at Drake.

The mines at Jerome and the smelter at Clarkdale, now owned by the Phelps-Dodge Company, have been shut down for several years. At Clarkdale, the Chamber of Commerce had arranged for transportation by school buses and private cars to take the tour members to see Jerome, now advertised as the country's largest ghost town, Tuzigoot National Monument and Cottonwood. The departure from Clarkdale was made at 6 p.m. M.S.T. on Saturday the 8th.

About midnight, there was a young blizzard at Seligman.

Whenever Dick Dodge is aboard, something always happens. So, about 11:15 Sunday morning, the train made a hurried stop in the midst of no place. Then it was discovered that the Pullman, named Choctaw Tribe, in which he was riding, had developed a hot box.

In air conditioned cars you can't always smell the "stinkers". The Choctaw Tribe was exiled into a siding in Siberia, the next station west. "Curley" Emerson, Santa Fe Passenger Traffic Department, played the part of the brave fireman and doused the smouldering waste with a bucketful of water. The Choctaws surrendered and were interned with the Comanches for the remainder of the journey.

On arriving at the Los Angeles Union Passenger Terminal, Bill Henry, Santa Fe Fireman, accomodatingly, said to Dick Dodge: "We have a ride coming up. Can we drop you off somewhere?" Quick-as-a-flash Curley chirped in: "There's a high bridge right over there." 3-22-58

THE LAST WORD: Yes, Southern Pacific has petitioned to abandon the Owens Valley line...Sometime a sheet of corrections including Al Rose's comments about Pennick's Pickering-West Side story...PE wants to abandon Azusa-Glendora...New SD&AE spur, west lead, at Western Pipe, 48th & Market (Judd)...LAMTA will remove tracks on 2nd St. from Bdwy to and including the curve connection at Central Ave...LAMTA involved in labor troubles. Vote soon between the two groups that it inherited from ICL and LATL. Also a current wage demand. And finally, reminding RHSoFSD folk: sign up for a 1959 membership - failing that at least send in your \$1 subscription. See you all at the March 2 meeting.