

Dispatcher

Issue #4 Railway Historical Society of San Diego, Calif.

Feb. 22, 1956

SANTA FE EXPERIMENTS WITH "AEROTRAIN" IN MAINLINE AND LA-SAN DIEGO SERVICE

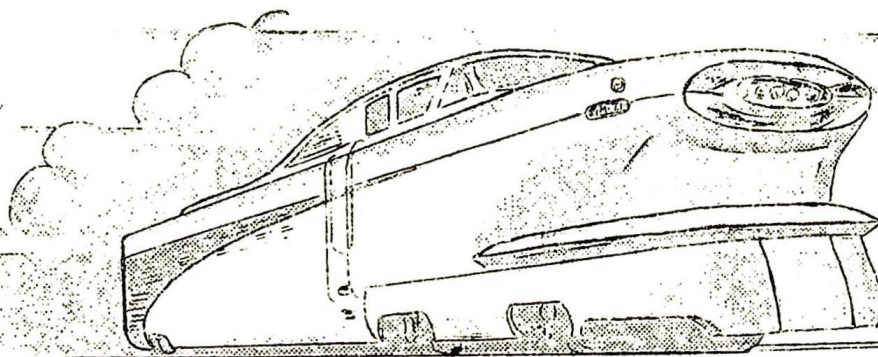
Santa Fe Railway will begin experimental tests of the new General Motors Diesel-powered "Aerotrain" with a special transcontinental rail fan trip departing from Chicago on Thursday, March 1, and arriving in Los Angeles on March 3, it was announced on Feb. 3 by R. T. Anderson, general traffic manager for the railroad.

Anderson said Santa Fe's tests will mark several "firsts" for the low-level, ultra-lightweight chair car equipment -- the first appearance of the "Aerotrain" on the West Coast, the first transcontinental run of the train and the first special trip for rail fans.

Approximately 150 rail fans from all parts of the country will make the Chicago-Los Angeles run under the sponsorship of Trains Magazine, Milwaukee, Wis.

Scheduled to depart Chicago's Dearborn Station at 7:15 p.m. on March 1, the "Aerotrain" will arrive at Dodge City, Kansas, at 8:20 a.m. (CST) on March 2. After breakfast at the Laura Loche Hotel, the rail fans will tour Boot Hill cemetery and will depart Dodge City at 8:35 a.m. (MST).

The train will make a 45-minute dinner stop at Albuquerque, N. M. at 7 p.m. on March 2 and stop at Gallup, N. M. at 10:10 p.m. the same date. On March 3 stops will be made at Winslow, Arizona, at 12:05 a.m.; Seligman, Arizona, at 3:33 a.m.; Needles, Calif., at 5:45 a.m. (MST) and it will arrive at Barstow, Calif. at 8 a.m. for a breakfast stop and a tour of Santa Fe's Diesel shops; it will arrive at San Bernardino at 11:10 a.m., and arrival in Los Angeles is scheduled for 1 p.m.



LATEST
SAN DIEGO
"AEROTRAIN"
SCHEDULE
SEE PAGE 4

After arrival on the West Coast, the "Aerotrain" will be exhibited to the public at Los Angeles and San Diego and will make experimental runs for two days in regular service (probably March 6 and 7) on the 127-mile run between those two cities, Anderson said.

Powered by a specially-designed single unit Diesel locomotive of 1200-horsepower and only 13 feet 7 inches in height, the "Aerotrain" consists of nine coaches each 40 feet long, 10 feet 9 inches high and 9 feet six inches wide. Each coach accommodates 40 patrons. In addition to seating accommodations, coaches contain lavatory facilities and a small pantry for snack service. Passengers ride at approximately the same height above the rail (43 inches) but the center of gravity of each coach is 45 inches, or 10 inches lower than standard. (Santa Fe Public Relations)

NARROW GAUGE REVISITED

by Rex Cuttall

As a follow-up after the fan-trip on the S. P. narrow gauge in Owens Valley last October, the writer decided to satisfy a long-felt urge to explore the abandoned right-of-way from the northern terminus of Laws as far as Montgomery Pass.

For the first few miles out of Laws, very little is to be seen, since much of the right-of-way has been disturbed by cultivation and cattle-grazing. Some 10 miles north of Laws, however, stretches of grade, abandoned 1943, are visible in a shallow canyon, which afforded the easiest grade to approaching Benton Pass.

A few miles north of this latter point, the steepening grade becomes plainly visible, as it swings eastward in a large arc, to recross the highway about half a mile below the summit.

The approach to Benton Summit is through a narrow rocky gorge, traversed by a small stream, which has played havoc with the old embankment in many places. It was on this particular piece of right-of-way that the writer picked up a fine Indian artifact, made of obsidian, which proves that old railroad grades conceal more than just spikes!

A short grade from the summit to the once important station of Benton revealed very little; the old right-of-way can be seen running through a few front yards.

After leaving Benton, however, the task of tackling Montgomery Pass begins in earnest. Although still eight miles from the Pass, the grade starts climbing steadily, with much curvature. After a few miles on the east side of the highway, the grade swings west to the far side of the valley, where it can be seen for several miles. Gradually, the highway and the old grade approach each other, until the former crosses the old line.

At this point, well up on Montgomery Mt., the final assault and most spectacular part of the climb commences. This is also an excellent jumping-off place for those who would follow the right-of-way on foot. This portion of the grade is practically intact, save for a few minor washouts, and one is impressed with its solidity and excellent construction; its embankments are quite wide enough to accommodate a standard gauge track, this section was abandoned in 1938.

The writer explored this section of the grade on foot, and found it very re-

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warding. The line turns sharply eastward into a wooded canyon, with much winding and reversing. After perhaps a couple of miles one is startled to see a tell-tale still in position, to warn long-departed brakemen of a nearby tunnel. A short distance round a curve, the tunnel portal hove into view. The entrance was pretty well collapsed and filled with rubble. Some galvanized iron facing, reminiscent of the O. & L. was still in place at the portal. The pitch blackness inside, which hinted of a collapse somewhere, and the loose condition of the rock structure, made further exploration of it inadvisable.

A short hike over the hill above the tunnel brings one to the west portal. It was soon seen that the bore followed a considerable curve, and was perhaps some 500 ft. long. The west portal was in better shape than the east, but a few feet back the roof had been daylighted, so that it was completely blocked.

The tunnel marked the turn of the grade to the west again, and, after passing under another set of tell tales, the line meandered around small canyons, and gave a view every so often, of the grade far below. Spikes were plentiful, and a good many old ties were scattered about, some of which gave up nails of 1910 and 1914 vintage.

As the approach to the summit becomes closer, the piñon-pine trees are more numerous, and the grade runs through quite a forest of them, which is reminiscent of the narrow gauges of Colorado.

The climb is nearly over, and a small valley with a farmhouse and one or two old sheds mark all that is left of Montgomery station, at an elevation of 7100 ft.

From this point, the down grade commences, and on this side of the mountain it proves disappointing. It has none of the spectacular curves and scenery of the south grade, being a more gradual descent into the high desert country. Very little is to be seen from the highway, until the approach to Tonopah Junction, where the grade finally swings in the direction of Mina and Hawthorne.

In thinking back over the days when the narrow gauge was a going concern, what (Continued page 5, column 2)

Subscriptions 5 for 50¢; 10 for \$1.
Write 7861 Normal Avenue, La Mesa, Calif.

STEAM BY SOME MEANS

Everyone knows that the Western Pacific is a 100% Diesel road. So when the California-Nevada Railroad Historical Society announced an Excursion to Loyalton, Calif., Reno, Nevada and Bieber, Calif., for September 25, 26 and 27, 1955 the fans who bought tickets just went for a train ride, or for some night life in Reno or something.

The first unusual thing was that the excursion train of 15 cars was to be a part of Train No. 2. Number 2 is the single Budd car unit, known as the Zephyrette". When the train backed into Oakland Pier, there was the Budd car on the head end---behind a four unit Diesel locomotive.

We traveled with that consist to Portola. There the Budd car was cut out and went its own way to Salt Lake City.

The excursion train with its four units then ran to the junction at Hawley and down the branch line to Loyalton. Everything was white with frost.

Clover Valley Lumber Company's Mallet #4, was spotted for pictures but in such a position that the light was "foul." This engine has a 2-6-6-2 wheel arrangement and is a compound. That is, the steam expands first in a small or high pressure cylinder, driving the rear engine, then passes into a larger or low pressure cylinder, driving the head engine, before exhausting to the atmosphere.

The train had to back from Loyalton to Hawley, then proceeded to Reno Junction and down to Reno.

Western Pacific built its Reno branch over a part of the Nevada-California-Oregon Railway and its station and office building in Reno was once the general office of this narrow-gauge line.

Some enjoyed a party put on by Harold's Club, others took a sight seeing bus ride to Carson City and Virginia City while a few of us rabid steam locomotive picture fans went over to the Southern Pacific's roundhouse at Sparks. There two "back-up" articulated consolidations were found outside, ready to go to the scrappers. "Shop Goat" number 568 was spotted for us. As soon as enough steam was raised, the 3804, a simple-expansion 2-8-8-4 articulated consolidation with cab in the rear, was run out of the house.

The next morning, after considerable confusion over the question of Daylight Time as advertised or Standard Time, New

Bieber, on the "Inside Gateway," was reached. That is where the Western Pacific's freight line from Zeddie meets the Great Northern. With the Santa Fe, these roads form an inside freight route from San Diego to the Columbia River.

On the return portion of the trip, a stop was made at Westwood, Calif., where the Fruit Growers Supply Company's roundhouse is located. Their two rod engines, #102 and 104, were outside, the light was fine but---the engines were spotted side by side.

On the way down the Feather River, it was announced that there would be a surprise. Every fan train should have steam, at least part of the way.

At Oroville, the four units of Diesel smells were cut off and what backed down and coupled onto the train but the Southern Pacific's 4-8-4 number 4442! It was a lovely ride from there to Oakland. over the Western Pacific's track.

What cannot rail fan clubs do?

Richard V. Dodge

October 26, 1955

THE LOCAL SCENE

AT&SF SD&AE OTHER

SANTA FE. A verdict of accidental death was returned by a Los Angeles coroner's jury on Feb. 6 after its inquest into the Santa Fe train wreck which killed 30 persons and injured 147 others. Twenty-five of the dead were San Diego County victims. The accident occurred Jan 22 about 5:40 p.m. on Redondo Junction curve, Los Angeles. Jury foreman Earl Vaughan said, "....No person is criminally responsible therefor."

Engineer Frank B. Parrish of San Bernardino apparently suffered a mental blackout. Homer Smith also of San Bernardino was the fireman.

The train involved was the two car RDC train operating out of Los Angeles as Train 82 bound for San Diego. The train overturned on the 15 m.p.h. curve while doing an estimated speed of 70 m.p.h. The two cars overturned and skidded on their sides down the track. (Tribune)

Celery business is about half over with 500 cars to date routed north via Santa Fe. Locomotive 2300 broke its crankshaft and is out of service for four months. A GE 567 engine may be installed in it. #2348 was replaced by #2347. #2347 developed a loose traction motor (Page 4)

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SOCIETY NEWS

At the February 4 meeting of RNSofSD arrangements were completed for the re-modeling and painting of car #135. Work day at the Del Mar Fairgrounds was set for Feb. 25. Time to be 9 a.m.

Jack Stodelle reported on the San Luis Obispo meeting for the Western Railfan Conference.

Plans for the Plaster City excursion were also discussed. Next meeting date was not determined.

THE LOCAL SCENE

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 4)

and was replaced by #2366. Engineer W. J. Stoner retired January 31 after 45 years of service. He worked the freight yard. (Middlebrook)

Santa Fe is building a 29.5 mile line from Hesperia to Cushenberg in the South Mojave Desert area at the foot of the Praverse Mountain Range. (Duncan, et al)

SAN DIEGO & ARIZONA EASTERN. Car-loadings at Tecate Brewery have been increasing. A reported five cars per day go eastward to Mexicali and other Mexican points. (Duncan). The line's cotton tariff for U.S. cotton trade has been reduced so the railroad is now in a bargaining position to obtain its share of the load (Union-Tribune). A new moveable scaffolding stage has been constructed to help with roof repairs in the Carriso Forge tunnels. It is light and is constructed so the car will roll in either of two directions. Former combines 177 and 178 and former cafe-parlor-observation (Continued in next column)

AEROTRAIN SCHEDULE

Aerotrain schedule for the San Diego area, according to Phil Middlebrook, is as follows:

EXHIBIT-SAN DIEGO

March 6 and 7. 8:15 to 10:15 p.m.

SERVICE ON SAN DIEGO-LOS ANGELES LINE

March 6: Trains 80, 81, 82, and 83

March 7: Trains 80, 81, 82, and 83

March 8: Train 81 only

EXHIBIT-LOS ANGELES

March 4 and 5 at Santa Fe Auto Dock,

2050 E. Washington Ave., 10am to 4pm

Arrives Los Angeles March 3 from Chicago

LOCAL SCENE CONTINUED

car #03 are at Dubbers (MP 96). Also at Dubbers is flat car SD&AE 4502 still painted the original colors but actually an MW. La Mesa roustabout runs occasionally at night. Union Oil tanks served by a La Mesa siding have been removed. On the day of the Plaster City excursion RNSofSD observed a double-header 50 car freight train westbound. (Duncan)

RAPID TRANSIT. The formation of a public transit authority will be the theme of a conference to be called March 1 by San Diego Mayor Charles C. Dail. Clarence A. Winder, San Diego's utility rate consultant who recommended the formation of an authority, will be the speaker.

According to the San Diego Union, Mayor Dail was authorized to take the action by a board of directors, San Diego Division, League of California Cities. City Manager O. W. Campbell of San Diego spoke favorably of a transit authority. Mayor Walter Hodge of National City questioned the proposition.

SAN DIEGO & CORONADO FERRY CO. First test holes in the \$200,000 survey of potential bridge or tube routes between San Diego and Coronado were made yesterday by a state geological crew. Depth of tests will range from 60 to 300 feet. All work will be completed by July. First tests were made near Fourth and Glorietta in Coronado. Discussions are underway between the state authorities and the U.S. Navy.

METROPOLITAN COACH LINES. State PUC hearing on MCL's proposal to substitute the Bellflower rail line has been set for March 7-9.

ALONG THE LINES

by Douglas Ian Duncan

On May 21, 1952, two Budd built RDC-1's began making their daily double round trips along Santa Fe's "Surf Line" between San Diego and Los Angeles. Every few months, the Rail Cars would have an unfortunate mishap and would be temporarily replaced by a train of four Pullman-Standard coaches and a two or three unit locomotive. The railroad made one change after another to the Budd's---steps on the "A" ends were removed and the floor was reinforced---the horns were changed twice---and finally the "A" ends were painted in the familiar Red and Yellow of all AT&SF passenger locomotives. Despite all efforts, the RDC's seemed doomed. Last January 22, just three years, eight months and a day after their initial run, the units overturned on a sharp curve near the Los Angeles round house. Thirty persons were killed and several score more were injured---marking one of the worst railway disasters in California. The railroad has now indicated that the Budd Cars are through on the "Surf Line."

It does seem strange, however, that some 227 or more RDC's, used on many lines throughout the United States and Canada as well as abroad, operate with almost unmatched success, and yet, here in Southern California, Santa Fe's DC191 and DC192 have an unmatched accident record---a record not shared by the regular "San Diegan" trains even though they operate at speeds equal to or faster than the Rail Cars. For my money---I'm sorry they won't run again.

* * *

(Continued from last month)

Still further north, UP has a two car passenger train into Moscow---the home of the University of Idaho. This train is taken off of number 20, out of Portland, Oregon, at Ayer on the Oregon Short Line (UP in this part of the nation) and runs through southeast Washington to Moscow.

Out of Spokane, Washington, a two car train makes a daily trip 130 miles to Plummer and Wallace, Idaho through beautiful rolling hills. The chair car and baggage car, in bright Union Pacific yellow and grey, leave Spokane at 8:15 a.m. and arrive at Wallace at 1 p.m. An hour and fifteen minutes for lunch---and then the return trip.

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SANTA FE LOCOMOTIVES

R.P. Middlebrook & Richard Dodge

From information received from Professor S. R. Wood, the Atchison, Topeka & Santa Fe Railway Company disposed of 77 of its steam locomotives during the Fourth Quarter of 1955.

Fortunately, four of these will be preserved for the benefit of posterity. Prairie type (2-6-2) engine number 1079 was donated to the City of Coffeyville, Kansas, and #1880 to the City of Newton, Kansas.

Pacific type (4-6-2) engine number 3415 was donated to the City of Abilene, Kansas, and Hudson type (4-6-4) #3450 was given to the Southern California Chapter, Railway & Locomotive Historical Society, for exhibit in the Los Angeles County Fair Grounds in Pomona, Calif.

Most engines were sold to the usual run of scrap metal merchants, but several striking sales were noted.

Prairie type engine #1133 was purchased by the Hamlin & Northwestern Railway, Hamlin, Texas. Pacific type #3420 was sold to Youngstown Sheet & Tube Company, Chicago, and Santa Fe type (2-10-2) locomotive #3928 went to the Chrysler Corporation in Detroit.

No 4-8-4 or 2-10-4 type was retired.

In part replacement, ten Alco 2400 Horse Power Diesel Units were acquired. These were assigned road numbers 602 to 611. In addition, six Fairbanks-Morse 1200 Horse Power Diesel Switchers, numbers 544 to 549 were purchased.

Bill Garner reports as of Jan. 1, 1956, Santa Fe had 104 steam locomotives assigned to various divisions, 31 held for disposition, and 26 retired, authorized for sale, scrap, or other disposition.

NARROW GAUGE REVISITED (Continued)

would we have not given to have been at a good vantage point in the pass, to revel in the sight of a brace of little ten-wheelers struggling manfully up the hill with the "varnish," complete with Messrs. Sharon and Mills scowling from the rear platform.

CONTINUED FROM COLUMN ONE THIS PAGE

Yes---this Idaho country is all right! For this writer, it was like turning the pages of history back thirty years. OK! Let's go for a ride.

Ug5 PLASTER CITY LINE

Reported by Eric Sanders 1956

Operation of the narrow gauge railroad at the United States Gypsum Company's Plaster City plant was observed first hand February 13 by 22 members and friends of the Railway Historical Society of San Diego. H. E. Hammer, works manager, and Bob Swearingen, employment manager, handled arrangements for the Society's round trip on the 26 mile line.

Engineer was Billy Calbert; fireman-brakeman was Leon Parks. On most runs the consist did not include a caboose. The fireman doubled as a brakeman.

In the Plaster City feature published in the last issue of the Dispatcher, note was made that the operations described dated back to 1945. Changes noted during this month's trip included an almost complete replacement of equipment, construction of new terminal facilities and much rebuilding of roadbed. On approximately two-thirds of the line, 90# rail had replaced 70# rail. Culverts had replaced almost all trestles. Shop facilities had been moved from the quarry to the main plant.

Today's equipment includes one caboose-observation car, one water tank car, one flat car, two skip cars, and fifteen double-truck gondolas. The water tank car, the flat car and the skip cars date back to Pacific Portland Cement Co. days. All other earlier equipment had been scrapped.

United States Gypsum's sole motive power is a 75 ton double-truck H. Z. Porter Diesel. Built in 1946 the locomotive is equipped with a 660 hp. Cooper-Bessmer engine and is geared for a top speed of 35 m.p.h. Cruising speed is 30 m.p.h. Actual operating speed on the level varies from 20 to 30 m.p.h.

The 75 ton job pulls the fifteen car train on two or three round trip schedule six days a week. Outbound running time is 70 minutes; inbound running time is 75 minutes. About 30 minutes is allowed at each end of the line. Overhead loading from a crusher is the practise at the quarry. At the Plaster City end of the line the crushed gypsum is dropped out the bottom of the hopper cars.

A short section of the grade at the outer end of the line is 2.5%; much of the remainder of the big grade is 1.5%.

In 1945 gypsum rock was blasted from the mountain-side and then loaded by steam shovels into the skip cars. After a slide which resulted in the death of an employee, the shovels were moved to the top and the gypsum was carried by dump truck to a crusher from which the gypsum was dropped into the gondolas. Each gondola or hopper carries 50 tons; a train carries 750 tons.

Gypsum is shipped west and east on the San Diego & Arizona Eastern Railroad in box cars or flat cars depending upon whether it goes in the form of plasterboard, agricultural gypsum and other products. The SD&AE carloading amounts to 20 to 70 cars per day. Average output is 50 cars daily.

A five man section crew maintains track and right-of-way. On order are two H Diesels, each rated 500 hp.. They will be operated in tandem and will pull 20 hopper cars (five more are on order). The 75 ton job will become a standby but when in use will pull a maximum of 17 cars as against today's 15. Only one train at a time will be operated, however. Presently-planned expansion calls for a 70% growth in production.

The line's landmarks of today are:

0.00	Plaster City main plant	15.50	Carrizo Trestle	23.3	Nat'l Gyp. Xing
0.2	Passing track	16.00	Ballast spur (S. lead)	24.00	Release retain.
?	Coyote Wash (twice)	16.00	Branch line (sev. times)		(inbound)
6.00	Navy Base Road	19.00	Begin. of grade	25.00	Final curve
12.1	Spur (S. lead)	22.3	Siding (S. lead)	26.00	Quarry