

Last Run Made By Sacramento Northern Here

By JACK RYAN

The old Sacramento Northern Railway made the last run of its 44-year career from Oakland yesterday as the slanting rain beat a soft requiem on the venerable cars.

Only a handful of mourners were on hand to say goodbye too, as the train ground out of the ancient depot at 40th St. and Shafter Ave.

And as the train inched its way up Shafter, few passersby stopped to look. Most of them kept their heads bowed against the rain as though they were searching for a grave for the old equipment.

It was a quiet and dissipated Shafter Avenue office yesterday morning as yard crews and dispatchers went about the job of making up the last train out of Oakland. And as if they hated to part with their old friend, the 8:30 a.m. departure was put over until 11 a.m.

But it wasn't until 11:35 a.m. that Conductor Walter Butterfield, 59, reluctantly called "all board" and the two tiny electric engines began straining to move the nine cars.

FAREWELL TO SHAFTER

In the lead engine, Engineer Les Paul, 60, moved the controller ahead slowly and remarked: "Well, I guess the people on Shafter are having their prayers answered this morning."

In the engine at the rear, Engineer O. H. Schinder, 62, called out to a yard man: "Well goodbye Johnny. Don't get into any trouble in San Leandro."

The old train maintained its funeral pace up Shafter until it crossed College Avenue and then picked up a little speed.

In the cab of the lead engine with Paul, Butterfield chatted quietly with the brakeman, Charles Dowd, 51. The three men had worked together for a number of years.

"Well, I'll make \$15.08 for this eight hours," Dowd said. "But it will be the saddest

money I ever got from this railroad."

Butterfield nodded.

STALLS ON GRADE

—And as if the train had taken a cue from the men in the cab, it stopped on the steep grade between the old Rockridge and Temescal commuter stations.

The rain had slickened the rails and the two engines couldn't move the load until four cars were uncoupled. They were shunted into a siding at the Temescal station and the rest of the cars were then brought up. It was only a 10 minute delay. Then it moved on again.

As the little train moved briskly over roadbed, past the ghosts of the former commuter stations of Thornhill, Havens, Canyon, Redwood, Pinehurst, Valle Vista, etc., scores of homeowners nearby the right-of-way turned out to wave goodbye to their old neighbor.

NEIGHBORLY TOUCH

"These people are genuinely sorry to see us go," Paul said, adding with a trace of bitterness in his voice: "Not like those on Shafter Avenue. It was the new people moving in on Shafter that caused the trouble."

The attitudes of the three men brightened even more when a long line of little children and their mothers lined the side of the tracks as the train moved out of the Shepherd Canyon Tunnel.

"Those kids are sure going to miss us," the brakeman observed. "They used to stop playing at school recesses when we'd pass by. Yup, they're sure going to miss us."

Trainmen explained that the heavy steel doors at the mouth of the timber-lined tunnel were installed to close off draft in case of fire. However, there is no record that they were ever used.

A dozen or so cars were parked on a bridge over the tracks as the train approached the Moraga Valley and more well-wishers were waving the train good luck.

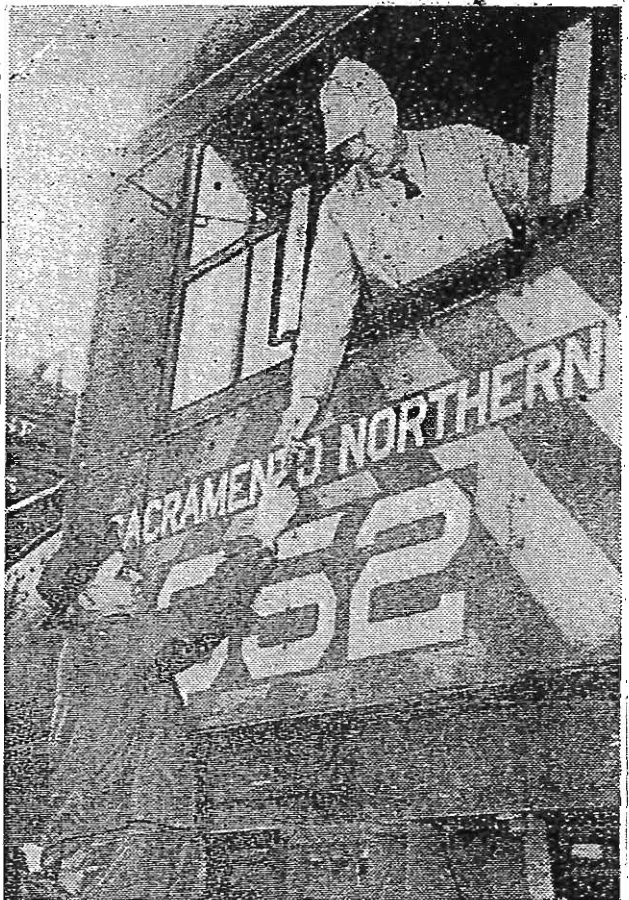
FRIENDS TO LAST

"Yeah," said Butterfield, waving heartily from the open window of the cab, "they're all our friends and we're leaving them behind."

Then he turned to a newsman and said:

"Son, This won't be your last story like this. Railroading is dead and I predict you'll write the obituary of all of them."

It was the last run on the railroad between Oakland and West Lafayette.



MOVEMENT ORDERS — Conductor Walter Butterfield hands orders for final freight run to Engineer Les Paul.