

Pacific Limited 1994

By Steve Habeck

The Pacific Limited Groups' 1994 excursion schedule was an ambitious one, with many days on the road and a lot of territory covered.

First off was the "Golden Spike Steam Special," which ran from the Golden Spike Park in Council Bluffs, Iowa (UP Milepost 0.0) to Ogden, Utah, between May 4, and May 8, 1994 with a layover in Cheyenne, Wyoming on May 6, which allowed for tours of the steam shop and roundhouse. UP's Challenger 3985 pulled the 24-car train unassisted throughout the segment.

After the festivities at Promontory for the 125th anniversary of the driving of the last spike, which saw a UP executive special powered by E9's 949/963B/951 run from Salt Lake City to Brigham City and back, the 3985 and its support cars ran from Ogden to Salt Lake City with a short freight, putting on a great show on the climb out of Ogden.

The next segment was the "City of Los Angeles," running from Salt Lake City to Ontario, CA (east of Los Angeles) from May 13, to May 15, powered by 3985 and the E9's. Concerns about the E9's performance were put to rest immediately out of Milford, Utah (where the 3985 and its support cars were cut off to allow us to make Las Vegas at a reasonable time) as the E's took our 16-car train from a standing start in Milford to a 30-mph meet with an eastbound freight at Uvada in 1 hour -- 75 miles from Milford!

A layover day in Las Vegas was an interesting diversion, while 3985 caught up with us. Then it was on to Ontario, and a layover from the 16th to the 20th of May in UP's Montclair yard.

The 21st and 22nd of May saw the 3985 and the E9's running from Ontario to Barstow and back each day, with both runs being sold out. Much has already been written about the events that occurred on the 21st; Santa Fe made every effort to ensure a smooth run on the 22nd, which is precisely what occurred.

After a one day layover in Ontario, it was time to head back to Las Vegas and Salt Lake City on May 24-26 again with a layover in Las Vegas. On the layover day, May 25th, 3985 and the support cars ran ahead to Delta, Utah, where the E9's and train caught up with it on the 26th for the run to Salt Lake City. This completed the "City of Los Angeles" segment. A turn to Cache Jct. and back was made from Salt Lake City on the 28th of May; then the "Golden Spike Steam Special" concluded the May trips by running from Salt Lake City to Cheyenne behind 3985 on May 29th and 30th.

The next round of trips was collectively known as the "Feather River Specials," and were run primarily in conjunction with our 10th Anniversary Celebration, "Circle the Wagons." The train, pulled by the classy E9's, was staged for our trips by running down the Canyon on June 28th as an Operation Lifesaver move. On Friday, July 1, the train ran from Fremont to Portola, featuring stops at the classic ex-WP depots in Sacramento and Oroville, both of which are now popular restaurants. The train's passage through the Canyon was well-documented by hordes of camera-toting chasers on paralleling highway 70, which partially contributed to our many empty seats on this trip.

Upon arrival in Portola, the train was welcomed by an A-B-A set of WP F7's at Malfunction Jct., consisting of 805A, 925C, and 913! Buses then took the passengers to Reno, while the train went out to Reno Junction to turn on the wye, a process that was repeated after each Keddie turn.

Two turns from Portola to Keddie and return operated each day on Saturday, July 2, and Sunday July 3, coinciding with the museum's "Circle the Wagons" pageant. The UP dispatchers and crews, including UP engineer and FRRS member Kirk Baer were excellent in getting us over the road and around the wyes at Keddie and Reno Jct. on each trip. The turns operated at about half of capacity, except for the Sunday afternoon turn which saw about 475 passengers. FRRS member Vickie Krois, of Keddie, acted as our Quincy Jct. ticket agent on Saturday and Sunday, putting 52 people on the train (17 on Saturday, 35 on Sunday) on the morning eastbound turns. These people returned to Quincy Jct. on the afternoon westbound turn, after having about 1 1/2 hours in Portola to see the museum and related activities. After returning from Reno Jct. on Sunday night, Steve Lee of the UP agreed to a night photo session featuring UP 951 and our WP 805-A, posed very much as they are on our 10th Anniversary T-shirt! The photo session was conducted by FRRS director Vic Neves, and the results are to be featured in upcoming issues of the railfan magazines.

On Monday, July 4, the train headed west down the Feather River Canyon from Portola, again stopping at the ex-WP depots in Oroville and Sacramento. Arrival in Fremont in the early evening concluded a busy weekend of excursions.

The following Friday, July 8, found the E9's and train on the move again. A late afternoon departure from Fremont brought us into Oroville around 9 PM, setting the stage for the centerpiece trip of the Feather River excursions. On Saturday, July 9, the sold-out train left Oroville early in the morning for the run to Westwood and back. Again, many photographers were on hand throughout the Canyon, and on the Highline, to document this event. The E9's really put on a show on the 2.2% grade from Greenville to Almanor, pulling the grade in full throttle at a steady 17 mph. Upon arrival in Westwood, the passengers had an opportunity to detrain and tour the town while the E9's ran around the train. The train was then pulled backwards back to Keddie, where the E9's ran around the train again for the run back to Oroville. Arrival at the ex-WP depot in Oroville was essentially on-time, concluding a mostly-successful trip. On Sunday, July 10, the train returned to Fremont from Oroville, detrained passengers, turned on the wye at Niles, and headed for Oakland. On Monday, July 11, the train began the long return trip to Council Bluffs by running from Oakland to Portola with guests from APL (American President Lines) on board. After detraining the guests in Portola, the train continued home as a deadhead move.

Financially, the 1994 operations did NOT go well. The Pacific Limited Group incurred a loss of \$18,000. The Pacific Limited Group officers have analyzed the 1994 operations and believe the poor performance is a result of several factors and conditions that did not meet expectations, including inconsistent support from the Salt Lake City office, high on-the-road expenses, and poor ridership on several segments. Efforts to remedy these conditions are already underway.

The Pacific Limited Group wishes to thank Julie Graham, manager of the Old Spaghetti Factory in Sacramento (the ex-WP depot) for working with the restaurant owners

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to obtain permission to use their facilities during the station stops. Special thanks are also due to Gary Quilici, owner of the Depot Restaurant in Oroville (the ex-WP depot) and his staff, for allowing us to make his facility a depot again for a couple of weekends.

Lastly, and most importantly, the efforts of the FRRS volunteers who donated their time and travel expenses and put in long hours in hot weather need to be recognized.

When I offered to take on the planning for the July 1994 trips in August of 1993, due to Hal Lewis' workload in preparing for the May 1994 trips, I had no idea what the next 10 months would be like. The learning curve was steep and full of obstacles, and very early on in the planning stage it was clear that help would be needed. Right from the beginning, Norm Holmes was involved, as we tried to coordinate Pacific Limited and "Circle the Wagons." Also participating from the earliest planning stages were Gary and Pat Cousin of the FRRS, and Hal Lewis and Bob Bunch of the Central Coast Chapter-NRHS. Several others contributed key pieces of the planning puzzle as the trips got closer.

On the "Thank You People" page elsewhere in this issue, special recognition is given to a group of FRRS members and other volunteers from Southern California, who, due to a misunderstanding between myself and Hal Lewis, were not notified in advance that they had been selected to work the Barstow turns. These people, gathered up through persistent efforts of Pete Solyom, were able to help out on very short notice when Gary Cousin and I discovered the lack-of-notification error, and saved Pacific Limited from having to run short-handed with full trains.

If anyone who volunteered their time and effort is not recognized on the "Thank You Page," I apologize for my oversight. I attempted to maintain car host lists from the trips specifically for this acknowledgment.

Again, many thanks go to all the FRRS volunteers who worked the Pacific Limited excursions, and/or supported the trips by working at the museum. We could not have accomplished what we've done without your help.

Steve Habeck
FRRS Pacific Limited Rep.

Conclusion: Circle the Wagons Report, By Norman Holmes

Allen Wiebe set up his Yogurt stand and slush machines; all income, over \$600, was donated to us. Jim Druckmiller contacted a number of railroad model manufacturers and other organizations asking them to donate items to a raffle. A raffle booth was set up which generated additional income.

Our small, but well stocked Gift Shop could not accommodate the large crowd expected so a Gift Shop Annex was set up in one end of the UP baggage car. The interior of the car was painted, carpet installed and shelves erected. A set of stairs was constructed and a display case and place for the cash register was borrowed. Jack Hathaway was in charge of the Annex which took some of the load from the Gift Shop. It really turned out nice. A number of railroad museums use baggage cars as their only Gift Shop.

Publicity for the event started with Pentrex arranging for a flyer to be designed and this was then published in several of their railroad magazines at no cost to us. This same flyer was sent to all model railroad shops in the west and to our membership. Ads were run in local papers and in Reno. A nice program was printed which included ads from local merchants to help offset the cost. D&L Distributing company, in addition to supplying our drink stand, made up a banner announcing our event. The banner was erected across the Gulling Street bridge by Sierra Pacific Power Co.

A final accounting is not yet available, but with ticket sales, food sales and profits from the Gift Shop, we probably came out about even. There were a lot of expenses and a lot of work put in by a lot of people, all of which made our first really big event a success. Without the volunteers this celebration would not have happened. We are very grateful.

On the "Thank You People" page elsewhere in this issue, we have listed all of those who helped with this event as best we can recall. If you've been left out, our apologies, it was not intentional.

Conclusion: The Canadian ALCos at Portola, By Kent Stephens

Most remained in service until the big cutback in VIA routes several years ago. The majority were stored serviceable five years ago and put up for sale by Canac International. 6776 was last used March 3, 1989, 6860 was last used on March 25, 1989. (As most fans know, both Canadian National and VIA are owned by the Canadian government. Canac International is owned by Canadian National and functions as a business under CN, handling purchases, sales, consulting, bidding and contracting.)

Just over a dozen FPA-4's had been sold by Canac by June 1994 in three years - our 6776 was the fourteenth to be sold. All have been sold to museums, tourist railroads and several private individuals in the U.S., including Napa Valley's four units and one on the Grand Canyon Railway. (See TRAINS August 1994 issue p. 29 for color photos of two FPA-4 units.)

The B units haven't been as fortunate in escaping the cutting torch. Only two of the 12 B units have been sold, class engine 6860 to Portola and 6863 to a group on the East Coast, which according to reports, may scrap it for parts for their ex-Long Island FA-2. Portola's FPB-4 may be the only survivor.

Reading these numbers you may think Canac still has a number of units for sale at Montreal. Not so. When Norm Holmes inspected them in late May, Canac International had only six A units and four B units left, including the two we bought. (Two additional A's were there that had been sold to the scrapper but hadn't been moved.) The remainder - nearly half the A units and most of the B units have been sold for scrap. The scrapper in late May had two FPA-4's, one mostly scrapped and one fairly intact, and stacks of trucks from scrapped units.

The museum's major reason for buying FPA-4 6776 is to place it in Portola's famed locomotive rental program, which has become a major source of income for the museum. Western Pacific F7A 921D is the only unit available in the combo part of the rental program's second hour, and is receiving excessive wear in constant use in the very popular combo program. It is planned to retire 921D from the rental program after 6776 becomes serviceable.

As has been announced, one of the highlights of the 9th Annual FRRS Railfan Photographer's Day (Saturday, September 17, 1994) is to have FPA-4 6776 and FPB-4 6860 in operation powering a matched VIA passenger train of two coaches and a sleeper. See you at Portola on the Saturday. (Sources: The Second Diesel Spotters' Guide; The Diesel Builders, Vol. 2; American Locomotive Company and Montreal Locomotive Works, By John F. Kirkland. Thanks also to Doug Cummings of X2200 South and Norm Holmes for assistance in the article.)

to a raffle. A raffle booth was set up which generated