

DOMES TO RENO

THE CALIFORNIA ZEPHYR RETURNS

APRIL 15-18, 2004

By Chris Skow

The California Zephyr made her final runs between Chicago and Oakland over the Chicago, Burlington & Quincy, Denver & Rio Grande Western and Western Pacific Railroads March 21-22, 1970. It took some time getting used to the fact that the wonderful "Silver Lady" was gone and the Western Pacific was now a freight only railroad. As the hard facts took time to accept and sink in for the Western Pacific fans, the DRGW kept alive the "CZ" tradition by running the Rio Grande Zephyr between Denver and Salt Lake City three times a week, which turned out to be the one bright spot left in the United States passenger service as Amtrak accepted the operation of the nationwide rail passenger service. To the benefit of railfans and California Zephyr lovers all over the world, the Rio Grande decided to go it alone without Amtrak. The loss of the California Zephyr was not quite as hard to accept, because we could all travel to Colorado and Utah to ride and photograph a mini-version of the Silver Lady.

They say that all good things must end and as time took its toll on the Rio Grande Zephyr equipment the rumors started flying that the Rio Grande was looking for a way out of their popular passenger train. Meanwhile folks started making plans to book space on the last true passenger train in this country, just in case the rumors were true. Railfans from all over the world took no chances and scheduled their vacation time to the Rocky Mountain States with plenty of film packed. As time went on the rumors turned out to be true and on April 23-24, 1983 the Rio Grande Zephyr made her last runs. Now there was nothing left to remind us of "The Most Popular Train in the Country", as the California Zephyr was once called. Now the hard facts really started to sink in.

As time marched forward both California Zephyr and Rio Grande Zephyr passenger equipment and motive power was sold to the highest bidders or donated to railroad museums. As the CZ rolling stock started to be sent all over the United States, Canada and Mexico hope of ever seeing a CZ train set run again was fast fading. Then California Zephyr fans were shocked with the word out of Mexico that some of these beloved cars had been scrapped. Yes, there was talk about bringing back the California Zephyr for a special anniversary excursion but it never developed. But an interesting trend was taking place across America in the late 1990's as more and more "CZ" cars were being bought and rebuilt by private car owners and put back into full service under Amtrak specs. The turning point came in 2002 when rumors surfaced that there would be three California Zephyr passenger cars in charter operation based in California with more on the way.

Trains Unlimited, Tours started the ball rolling by bringing the Silver Lariat Vista Dome Coach and Silver Solarium Vista Dome Observation together to be on display in Oakland for the Western Pacific Railroad Historical Society 2003 National Convention on April 11-12, 2003. Also in conjunction with the convention a sold out "Domes Down the Valley" excursion from Oakland to Bakersfield roundtrip was operated on April 13. During the summer of 2003 more excursions using the "CZ" cars were to follow including a special "Feather River Railroad Days Vista Dome Express" from Oakland to Sparks in conjunction with Feather River Railroad Days in Portola August 22-24, 2003.

Arrangements are still being made for California Zephyr cars to be part of this historic set of excursions in April 2004. The plan calls for these excursions to be made up of approximately eight passenger cars and even a couple of Western Pacific F units. Six cars have been confirmed as of December 1 with two other cars pending 100% confirmation account they are being sold and a new owner is scheduled to take title in late January. As to the F units, it will all depend upon their repair work progress and availability by April of 2004.

Trains Unlimited, Tours now felt that the time was right to bring back a mini California Zephyr for the Western Pacific Railroad Historical Society 2004 National Convention which will be held in Reno, Nevada on April 16-17, 2004. The Feather River Rail Society was asked to take part in these historic excursions and in turn share in the projected profits. But most important of all this would bring a California Zephyr train set to the Reno area for the 2004 convention and for display plus offer a convention excursion and several other excursions not only to conventioners, but to the general public.

Under agreement with the Feather River Rail Society Trains Unlimited, Tours is handling all arrangements, reservations and ticket sales for five California Zephyr excursions that will run April 15-18, 2004. Trains Unlimited, Tours started accepting reservations in late October and ticket sales has been very brisk.

For reservations and a special California Zephyr information packet you can call the Trains Unlimited, Tours reservation office in Reno, Nevada at: 800-359-4870, 800-266-8751 or 775-852-4448. Email: tut@PSLN.com or on the web at www.trainsunlimitedtours.com

Correction, PRD Dates

The correct dates for Portola Railroad Days are August 27, 28, 29, 2004. Please disregard the dates printed in the calendar last issue.

SCHEDULE OF "CZ" EXCURSIONS FOR THE WESTERN PACIFIC RAILROAD HISTORICAL SOCIETY 2004 NATIONAL CONVENTION RENO, NEVADA

APRIL 15, 2004 THE CALIFORNIA ZEPHYR RETURNS***TRAIN 18***

Our private charter train will run eastbound from Oakland, California to Sparks, Nevada over Donner Pass on the old Southern Pacific "Overland Route". You ask, Why over Donner Pass? There are several reasons, but the best answer we can give you is the fact that this is the only route available for this charter at this time and of course the fact that the Western Pacific Railroad Historical Society 2004 National Convention is being held in Reno, Nevada. Passengers may board at any station where Amtrak makes regular train stops.

APRIL 18, 2004 THE CALIFORNIA ZEPHYR RETURNS***TRAIN 17***

Our sleek California Zephyr runs westbound Sparks back to Oakland, again over Donner Pass.

PRICES	OW	RT	OW	RT
COACH SEAT.....	\$249	189	\$459	339
PULLMAN ROOM.....	\$269		\$289	

*Ticket includes lunch-drinks-snacks

APRIL 16, 2004 CZ WESTERN PACIFIC CONVENTIONEERS SPECIAL

This will be a morning breakfast charter from Sparks to Truckee and return reserved for the Western Pacific Railroad Historical Society 2004 National Conventioneers, their invited guests and the general public. Departure from Sparks is scheduled for 8:00AM with an arrival back in Sparks at 1:00PM, with plenty of time for the afternoon and evening events at the convention. Passengers may also board in Reno.

PRICES	OW	RT
COACH SEAT.....	\$189	159
PULLMAN ROOM.....	\$239	
DOMEST SEAT.....	\$289	

*Ticket includes a full gourmet Breakfast and drinks.

APRIL 17, 2004 CZ DONNER PASS EXCURSION

This excursion is open to everyone and will travel from Sparks to Emigrant Gap on Donner Pass and return. This will be a all daylight trip and perfect for the entire family.

PRICES	OW	RT
COACH SEAT.....	\$139	119
PULLMAN ROOM.....	\$189	
CHILDREN AGES 4-12.....	\$-39	

*Ticket includes no limit open bar for all drinks & snacks

APRIL 17, 2004 CZ GOURMET DINNER TRAIN EXCURSION

This excursion is open to everyone and will travel from Sparks to Truckee and return in the evening serving a California Zephyr gourmet dinner. To add to the mood and experience there is a full moon on this evening.

PRICES	OW	RT
DOWNSTAIRS.....	\$129	
DOMEST SEATING.....	\$169	

*Ticket includes no limit open bar and all drinks & snacks plus full five course gourmet dinner. Also there will be a full moon to enjoy your dinner excursion.

RESERVATIONS & INFORMATION

SPECIAL CALIFORNIA ZEPHYR INFORMATION PACKET AVAILABLE

800-359-4870
800-266-8751
800-752-1836 from Canada
775-852-4448
530-836-1748 fax
email: tut@PSLN.com
www.trainsunlimitedtours.com