

THE SILVER LADY RETURNS

by Norm Holmes

The long awaited return of the last WP California Zephyr unit was realized July 18th. The former WP 805A left Louisiana on June 26 only to spend a week in Gregton, Texas because of a mix up in reporting marks on the bill of lading. Once this problem was solved (a phone call to the UP agent in Shreveport) the unit was once again started on its homeward journey. It came via North Little Rock and North Platte to Salt Lake City. From SLC west it graced rails not traversed in 17 years. It arrived in Portola safe and sound--Home Again.....

The acquisition of the FP7-A ends a three year effort to obtain this important piece of WP history. When the California Zephyr was discontinued on March 20th, 1970, 805-A, along with its sisters were placed in freight service out of Stockton. In Sept, 1972 805-A was traded in to GE for credit towards the purchase of GE U23Bs. A subsequent sale by GE found the unit on the Wellsville, Addison & Galetton, a short line in Pennsylvania. WAG was abandoned in 1977 and the unit, along with several SP F7's were transferred to another short line in Louisiana, owned by the same people. 805-A, now Louisiana & North West No. 49, was operated on that line until a few years ago when GP-9 locomotives were purchased.

We first wrote to LG&NW in Oct 83 in an attempt to obtain the locomotive as a donation. Next, Dale Sanders struck a deal whereby if we could obtain a GP 7 or 9 from the UP we could trade it for the 805-A. Uncle Pete has been very generous towards our museum, but wanted no part of this "deal". About this time, LG&NW was receiving inquiries about its F units and set a price of \$50,000 for any unit. This put a stop to the less than serious contenders. \$50,000 was a very high price at the time, but just to see how interested rail fans were in preserving the unit, Dale placed a full page ad on the back cover of his CTC BOARD for several months soliciting pledges for the purchase of 805-A. Nearly \$4,000 was pledged, but that was a long way from \$50,000. Through a series of negotiations by Dale and Mark Hemphill of MDT, the price was reduced to \$40,000. The Society could not come up with that amount and could not obligate itself with a loan and it looked like the 805-A would be lost. Finally four Society members, decided to put up the money as partners in the purchase of the unit. When LG&NW was told of a firm purchase by the group they dropped the price to \$35,000. a deposit was quickly sent..... One member had to drop out after the deposit was made and the Society's Board of Directors voted

to have the Society be the fourth partner.....

Steve Habeck, Larry Hanlon and John Ryczkowski along with the FRRS paid the \$35,000.00 to Mountain Diesel Transportation who handled the purchase of the unit for the group. The California Zephyr and WP LIVES in Portola.....

Now that the 805 is home, the Society still has a loan to be repaid. Response to our letters to people who pledged money for its purchase has been great, but there is still alot to be repaid Your contribution to this cause would be appreciated..

The following have made contributions to the 805 fund.....

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| Richard Rowe | Harold E Meeker |
| Bill Williamson | Dave Mitchell |
| Richard Severance | Tim J Low |
| Pat Feesl | Richard Wilson |
| John Scheibe | Kenneth Eckley |
| Peter Parrish | Lavonne Valentine |
| John McCorrick | Dave McClain |
| K.M. Coe | Richard Holmes |
| Ken Conner | William Holmes |
| Robert Johnson | Carter Cram |
| Mary Myers | Kyle Brehm |
| Ronald Edgar | |
| Mickey McGrady | |
| David Rhodus | |
| George Comer | |
| Jeannie Meyers | |
| Carol Devincenzi | |
| Ward B McCartney | |

