



An Alco/GE S-1, similar to the one recently arrived in Portola, is inspected by dignitaries and military personnel at the Oakland Army Base in the 1940's. There seems to be quite a bit of interest in the slot in the knuckle.
 - Norman Holmes Collection

More New Equipment Arrives!

by Norman Holmes

Hill Air Force Base in Utah has yielded yet another government surplus locomotive to our world renowned collection of diesel locomotives. USA 7372, Alco/GE S-1 #69514, built in 1942 arrived on a flat car November 7th. It was last used at the Ogden Defense Depot about 4 years ago, and had been stored at Hill awaiting disposition. The unit appeared to be in good condition and even had a set of batteries (since frozen with cases cracked because of going dead while in storage).

We had applied for the locomotive last October along with the GE 80 tonners (and an Alco/GE MRS-1), but were told it was going to another government installation. When we loaded the 80 tonners last June, we asked about the S-1 and were told that it was going to be placed in General Sales. We again applied for it and were subsequently awarded the locomotive. Arrangements were made with Union Pacific to supply a flat car to move the locomotive (UP would not move it on it's own wheels because of it's friction journal bearings). The flat was moved to Portola where we placed rails on the deck and then moved to Hill AFB for loading. On Monday Oct. 24th, Dean Hill and Norm Holmes drove the now familiar 600 miles to Salt Lake City. The next day the Toole (too-will-eh) Army Depot (locomotive shop on base) pushed the Alco onto the flat car. The tie down was completed and the work approved by UP's car inspector. The car arrived with the locomotive on board in good condition. Since the batteries were unserviceable, a reconditioned set was purchased from Union Pacific's Salt Lake Shops and brought back to Portola in Norm's pickup.

On Saturday, November 12th, in a light rain, the flat car was spotted on the ramp track, the rip track swung over to connect with the tracks up the ramp and the cable tie downs released. WP 707 coupled onto 3 flat cars

for idlers and the 7372 was pulled off the flat car onto our museum trackage. It sounds easy, but there was a lot of hard work involved. Those doing the work were: Galen Anderson, Bruce Cooper, Dean Hill, Norm Holmes, Hap Manitt, Shannon Smith, Hank Stiles and Gordon Wollesen.

After the 7372 was put in the diesel house, the rip track was put back in place. It snowed on Monday, so on Monday the Burro crane was started and coupled to the flat car to see if it would move it so we could remove the rails and return the car to the UP. The Burro had no trouble moving the car thus making it easier than to water and start a big engine.

On November 19th, Norm Holmes, Hank Stiles and Gordon Wollesen installed the reconditioned battery set and tried to fill the radiator only to find it already full of anti-freeze solution! The starter button was engaged and we found the newly reconditioned battery set had an insufficient charge to rotate the engine fast enough to start it. WP 608 was started and jumpers placed on the Alco. With a shot of starter fluid sprayed in the air intakes, the 7372 came to life. A bird nest complete with dead bird flew (?-ed.) out of the stack and the unit roared to life, making a noise like only an Alco can do. We found a plastic insulating sheet in the reverser and once this was removed, the Alco moved under it's own power. A small amount of switching was done to test it out, and then it was used as an air supply to charge the UP business car 105 to drain it's water system. As mentioned elsewhere, as time permits, 7372 will be painted black with white zebra stripes and relettered and numbered WP 512. Any future reference to the unit will be as WP 512.