

Western Pacific No. 608 A Salute to 50 Years

by Kent Stephens
Part 2

prime mover turned out to be water in the cylinders. WP proceeded to rebuild the two units, upgrading them to 1,200hp. The rebuilding technically upgraded them to a model designation of NW2u (upgraded), but WP referred to them in Mechanical Department drawings as NW2 models. The rebuilding included one noticeable external change. Full length outside hand rails were installed from the front steps to the cab - standard on Alco switchers but not on EMD's. (WP's SW9's also had outside hand rails.) At the end of the rebuilding, they were repainted "pumpkin orange-II" and renumbered WP Nos. 607-608 behind the SW9's. Neither received a cab herald. No. 608 (ex No. 1001) went into service first in February 1969, followed by No. 607 (ex No. 1000) in June. No. 608 was initially sent to San Jose and within a week tangled with an automobile at a crossing. Later both Nos. 607 and 608 worked at the Stockton yard, then No. 607 was leased to Sacramento Northern for service in West Sacramento. In May 1973, No. 607 was transferred to SN ownership, retaining the same number. Both units were repainted green during the 1970's.

After the merger, Nos. 607 and 608 were retired and moved east with other WP units, with an uncertain future as sale for scrap or perhaps service on some other railroad or at an industrial plant if they were lucky. More than likely it would have been for scrap, due to their age and the glut of used diesels on the market at the time. Sales of used diesels were depressed during the early to mid-1980's as the market was flooded with many surplus diesel units; the situation has been much different during last three to four years, with the supply being tight and prices high.

Both Nos. 607 and 608 were preserved, thanks to the generosity of the Union Pacific. Norm Holmes and Kent Stephens both had a part in preserving the two units. Mr. Flannery, at that time president of Union Pacific, came to Portola during Railroad Days in 1983 to officially donate No. 921-D. After the donation ceremony, Kent talked to Mr. Flannery, and during the conversation, told him that the railroad still had a very historic diesel unit, SN No. 607, the NW2 demonstrator and UP's first diesel switcher. The suggestion to Mr. Flannery was that both Nos. 607 and 608 should be preserved in museums. Sometime afterward, Norm learned that the two units were for sale and contacted Mr. Flannery with the request for one of the units be donated to the Portola Railroad Museum. No. 608 was donated to our museum in De-

ember 1984. The unit was green when received and was repainted "pumpkin orange-II" during the next summer.

No. 607 was donated about the same time to the Heeber Creeper Scenic Railroad at Heber City, Utah. It has been repainted to its original Union Pacific paint scheme of black with silver lettering and renumbered No. DS-1000.

Thanks to the Union Pacific's generosity in preserving two historic diesel units - their first two diesel switchers - visitors at two railroad museums can enjoy them. Thousands of visitors at our museum have ridden the passenger train behind No. 608 and a number of neophyte engineers have operated it under supervision in the Locomotive Rental Program. No. 608's image is one of the illustrations of museum locomotives on coffee cups sold in the Gift Shop. And at the September 5th meeting, the Feather River Rail Society Board of Directors approved Norm's proposal to change our Portola post office box number from 8 to 608 in honor of No. 608. (plus the need for a larger box).

In the closing months of 1990, we can say "happy 51st birthday" to Union Pacific No. DS-1000 in Utah and "happy fiftieth birthday" to Western Pacific No. 608 at Portola! Thanks again, Union Pacific! And thanks again, Mr. Flannery! INFORMATION SOURCES: Thanks to Wayne Monger for information; also John Walker for historical information on the demo units. Also, WESTERN PACIFIC DIESEL YEARS, by Joseph Strapac; "All about SW's" by Don Dover, EXTRA 2200 SOUTH, Issue No. 41, July-August 1973; "Union Pacific Railroad, An all-time roster" Part 4, EXTRA 2200 SOUTH, Issue No. 70, Oct-Dec. 1979; and WESTERN PACIFIC LOCOMOTIVE DIAGRAM BOOK (1976).



Are you a reliable person who likes to work with people and oversee mechanical projects, and can you set and follow a schedule? Then consider applying for the position of FRRS Chief Mechanical Officer.

Your responsibilities would include overseeing, scheduling and performing maintenance of locomotives and other rolling stock.

Our preventive maintenance program is a regularly scheduled program for inspections of locomotives, and other rolling stock. It also includes routine maintenance operations such as changing filters, changing oil and making periodic adjustments as required.

The FRRS preventive maintenance department was formed in January of 1990 to help maintain FRRS equipment in running condition. Erv Hartung, Jr. has resigned as Chief Mechanical Officer for personal reasons.

If you think you have the "Right Stuff" for the job, then notify the Board of Directors.

If you get this in time...

Don't forget

The FRRS Southern Regional Meet
Saturday, November 10, 1990

10:30AM to 5:00PM at:

La Habra Senior Citizens Center
165 E. La Habra Blvd.

(Between Harbor & Euclid)

La Habra, CA 90631

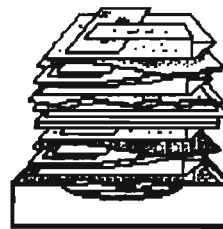
After the meeting, chat with speakers:

Chris Skow, Steve Habeck,

and John Ryczkowski

and bring your own WP slides to show!

THE SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA CALENDAR



COMING EVENTS IN THE LOS ANGELES AREA

November 11, 1990 10:00AM to 4:00PM

Great Pacific Coast Train Mart

Orange County Fairgrounds

Costa Mesa, CA

again on January 6, 1991 10:00AM to
4:00PM

Saturday and Sunday January 19 + 20, 1991

11:00AM - 5:00PM

Great American Train Show

Las Vegas, NV

Convention Center

3150 Paradise Rd.

Las Vegas, NV

Saturday and Sunday February 2 + 3, 1991

11:00AM - 5:00PM

Great American Train Show

LA County Fairplex

Pomona, CA