

The Canadian ALCos at Portola

By Kent Stephens

The History...

FRRS has sold one ALCo diesel unit and added two ALCo units to its collection at Portola. Long Island FA-2 604 has been sold to the Illinois Railway Museum at Mt. Union. IRM's general manager has indicated they plan a future restoration of this unit to either display or operation as Louisville & Nashville 314, its original owner and number. IRM has been as active as FRRS in preservation of historic diesel units, but 604 is their first ALCo FA model unit.

FRRS had originally acquired 604 in 1987, through donation from Norm Holmes, with the intent to paint the unit for either SP&S or Union Pacific, and number it one number higher than the actual units. This hasn't happened, due to the 604 being a low priority unit for restoration and needing a massive amount of restoration, coupled with insufficient restoration help at the museum. Both UP and SP&S both owned ALCo FA-2s. Union Pacific's are long gone with no surviving examples. Former SP&S/BN FA-2s are still on the Long Island as power cars, now rebuilt with Detroit diesel engines. None were up for retirement when the opportunity came up to buy the 604 at very low cost. Having an ALCo that could be painted to represent an SP&S or UP ALCo FA seemed important to the Portola Railroad Museum collection, as SP&S's ALCo FA's occasionally came down the High Line on the Western Pacific as far as Oroville or Stockton, both before and after the BN merger. IRM has asked Portola to store 604 on a temporary basis, so you should still have time to get your pictures during the next few months.

The ALCo cab unit isn't vanishing at Portola with the sale of 604, as 604 has been replaced by the very significant preservation purchase of a Canadian "ALCo type" A and B unit set. FRRS has bought ex Canadian National/VIA 6776 (FPA-4) and 6860 (FPB-4) from Canac International at Montreal. The A unit, 6776, is the same model of ALCo cab unit as Napa Valley Wine Train 70-73, which were also bought from Canac. The B unit is the second preservation purchase of an FPB-4, and 6860 was the first FPB-4 built.

There is a major difference between 604 and the newly acquired Canadian units. This is the prime mover. FA-2 604 has an ALCo 244 prime mover while FPA-4 6776 and FPB-4 6860 have an ALCo 251 prime mover. The fact that the FPA-4/FPB-4 have 251 prime movers instead of 244's is important to the Portola Railroad Museum for operation of these units. The 251 prime mover is a mechanically supportable diesel engine in today's operational environment with parts and entire prime movers available. In contrast it is very difficult to locate and obtain expensive replacement parts for a 244 engine. The 244's are also excessively "smoky" with ALCo exhaust; the 251's are not nearly as bad. (ALCo S-5 and S-6 model switchers, as well as the Century line of road units and several predecessors road unit models such as RS-11 and RS-32 also have 251's. At the museum, our only

251-powered ALCo up to this time has been Southern Pacific 4004, an ALCo RS-32, which was the predecessor model of the Century 420. ALCo's at Portola with 244's include the Kennecott RS-2/RS-3's Nos. 2, 3 and 908; the MRS-1's and the 604.)

The FPA-4 and FPB-4 are a Canadian-only model representing a continuation of the FA line, having been built by Montreal Locomotive Works, ALCo's licensee in Canada. Technically they should be called MLW's and not ALCo's (The model was catalogued in the U.S. to be built by ALCo at Schenectady, but never sold domestically by ALCo.) They also represented a continuation for ALCo in the horsepower race between the builders - the 12 cylinder 244 is rated at 1600 hp with the 12 cylinder 251 being rated at 1800 hp. Both the FPA-4 and FPB-4 units had their length increased; the A unit is 54'0" (FA-1 and FA-2 are 53'6") and the B unit is 53'2" (FB-1 and FB-2 are 52'8"). Our FPA-4 unit still has its steam generator unit; the steam generator units have been removed from the FPB-4 unit.

There are several spotting features to distinguish the FPA-4 model from the FA-2. The FPA-4 has additional radiator space (louvers) below the shutters on both sides near the rear of the car body not found on the FA-2. FPB-4 and FB-2 units can be distinguished in the same way. Another spotting difference is the ladder leading into the engine compartment midway on both sides of the car body. The ladder on the FA-1 and FA-2 extends to the bottom step and is in front of the side of the fuel tank. On the FPA-4, the steps below the frame are notched into the side of the fuel tank. B units can be identified the same way.

The FPA-4 and FPB-4 are specifications DL218 and DL219 respectively. Electrically they have a GT581C main generator, upgraded over what was in the earlier FA's, and four GE752 traction motors. Gearing is 62:21 which gives them a top speed of 92 mph which is probably not attainable on our museum trackage! The nominal weight for the units is 260,000 pounds. They are equivalent to ALCo's RS-11 freight unit.

As noted above, the FPA-4's and FPB-4's are a Canadian-only model. A total of thirty-four A units and twelve B units were built in a production run between October 8, 1958 and May 13, 1959. They were built only for the Canadian National; The A's carry road numbers 6760-6793 (c/n's 82269-82275, 2nd group 83145-83171), the B's had road numbers 6860-6871 with three series of c/n's (82276-82278; 82241-82444; 82854-82858). CN used them primarily in passenger service out of Montreal. All forty-six units survived their years on the CN and were acquired by VIA, trading their CN paint scheme for VIA's blue and yellow.

Continued on page 9



Conclusion: Pacific Limited 1994, By Steve Habeck

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