

NEWS OF THE FEATHER RIVER ROUTE by Wayne Monger

As the Spring of 1988 melts into the summer of 1988, there is much that can be considered news along the former Western Pacific, and elsewhere on the Union Pacific. In one of the largest announcements of the year, the UP announced on June 30th that the 123 year old Omaha Shops will close permanently within 90 days, with the resulting loss of 810 jobs to the Omaha/Council Bluffs area. Up until the UP/MP/WP merger in 1982, the Omaha Shops were the major locomotive repair facility, freight and passenger car repair facility and freight car building and modification facility for the UP. Now, the heavy locomotive repairs will be done exclusively at the 4 year old Jenks Shop in North Little Rock, Arkansas, while some light to moderate locomotive repairs will continue to be done at Salt Lake City. Freight car - and passenger car - repair and modification will be consolidated at the existing shops at Pocatello, Idaho; Desoto, Missouri and Palestine, Texas. Of the 810 workers at the Omaha Shops on June 30th, 40 of them in the car repair facility will not have to leave within the next few months, as they will stay at Omaha to complete a boxcar modification program now underway. The UP's reasons for closing the Omaha Shop complex included the fact that the overall facilities were only operating at a 25% capacity, while the modern Jenks Shop was operating at a 35% capacity. Meanwhile on the Feather River Route, the UP has been busy moving new business in and out of Northern California, and has even included a few new trains. Kennecott Copper in Utah, which has been undergoing a modernization program since restarting operations early this year, is now shipping partial and whole trainloads of concentrated copper ore from its concentrator at Magna,

Utah to the Port of Stockton. At Stockton, this ore is loaded onto ships and sent overseas (Korea and Germany so far) for final refining. The ore is being moved in UP or Rio Grande 3-bay hopper cars. These new unit trains are symbol OSCST (Ore Salt Lake to Stockton) and OSTSC (Ore Stockton to Salt Lake). These trains run about once per week so far, and can normally be seen passing through the Portola area both ways on the weekends.

Movement of coal has reappeared over the former WP after a few years of not seeing any. There are two new cogeneration plants in the Stockton area that use Utah or Wyoming coal that comes by way of the Feather River Canyon. One of the plants is at Corn Products just south of the Stockton Yard, while the other is at the Port of Stockton. So far, most of the coal comes in partial train loads, although the first coal for the Corn Products facility in February did come by unit train. Due to the very poor coal export market, there has been no coal exported through any of the Northern California ports served by the UP. June 10th saw the future of international shipping arrive at the Port of Oakland in the form of American President Lines newest container ship, the President Truman. APL's President Truman is the first of five such C-10 "super-size" container ships that will run between California ports and the Far East on expedited schedules. This new class of container ship literally dwarfs all other container ships in use, and is the first container ship built that will NOT fit through the Panama Canal. Each trip, they carry almost double the number of containers any other ship in use can carry, with the capacity of 3,600 TEU (twenty-foot equivalent container units). APL hopes to double its sea-going capacity between the West Coast and the Far East by the end of 1988. To avoid the already congested ports of Long Beach and

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Los Angeles, APL plans to use the Port of Oakland and UP even more than what it is now. June 1988 is already seeing an increase of one APL double-stack train per week each way between Oakland and Chicago. The usual double-stack service for APL finds eastbound OAAP3 on Wednesday afternoon, OAAP5 on Friday afternoon, and the OAAP6 on Saturday afternoon. An extra eastbound double-stack train is being seen on Sundays (usually). Westbound double-stack trains over the UP now number 4 per week scheduled, and a fifth as an extra. These trains are the APOA2X through Portola on Thursday night, the APOA4X on Saturday night, the APOA5X on Sunday afternoon, and the APOA7X early Wednesday morning. The extra double-stack train, usually symbol XAPOAD (Extra American President to Oakland Double-stack) has been showing up through Portola early Tuesday morning. It should be noted that any "overflow" double-stack traffic over the Feather River Route is handled USUALLY by the expedited TOFC, such as the westbound SLOAZ (St. Louis to Oakland Expedited) and NPMIZ (North Platte to Milpitas Expedited) or eastbound by the OANPZ (Oakland to North Platte Expedited) and MINPZ. One last note about current APL double-stack operations is that earlier this year, APL took over the container facility at Stockton formerly owned by Stockton, Terminal and Eastern subsidiary Terminal Transportation.

To help get the former WP better prepared to handle the increased double-stack traffic brought about by APL's new ships, tunnel crews from Morrison-Knudsen have returned. Two years ago, M-K crews worked on several tunnels in the Feather River Canyon to increase clearances for safe passage of double-stack trains. This year, with the help of a \$5 million grant from the Port of Oakland,

the UP has brought the M-K crews back to once again increase clearances within certain tunnels. This work is necessary so that the containers that are 9' 6" can be stacked one on top of the other and still make it in one piece between Oakland and Chicago. At the moment, crews loading trains must make sure that these types of containers are not stacked on top of each other. This is the reason for the height detector east of Portola on the UP. At the end of June there were three work trains each weekday, with work windows in the morning hours to allow the tunnel crews to work uninterrupted. The work train at Reno Junction is for the crew working on the Chilcoot Tunnel. The second work train is at Spring Garden for the Spring Garden Tunnel. The third work train is at Keddie for the tunnels in that area.

Speaking of work trains, another new train on the WP is an SP ballast train. Almost daily, this SP work train consisting of two or three big six-axle units is handed over to a UP crew at Marysville (Binney Junction) in the afternoon. The UP crew takes the train (up to 50 cars) to the Green Mountain Quarry (otherwise known as "Green's Pit") at Elsey for loading. Before their 12 hours are up, the UP crew has the now loaded train back to the SP at Binney Junction.

Spring 1988 has found the UP west of Salt Lake City being dominated by both new and old General Electric locomotives on all but the lowest of trains. The all too familiar SD40-2 has been displaced off of many of the "hot" trains by the 9000-class C36-7s, the new Dash 8-40C 9100-class, and the SD60s of the 6000-class. UP's next new order of locomotives will start to arrive in November, with 75 more of the GE Dash 8-40Cs and 25 of the General Motors of Canada SD60s. Some of these locomotives in these orders, plus all orders for locomotives that follow, will have a new look to them.

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They will be equipped with a re-designed "Canadian Comfort" cab, and new type of control stands. As part of the order for the new GE's, the UP sent in on trade the former WP U23B's that have been rotting away in North Little Rock, Arkansas for the past few years. We have learned that instead of scrapping these locomotives, GE MAY rebuild them and either lease them out or resell them.

What was left of the WP U30B's in Omaha have finally been disposed of. The last one, the 3069, was sold for scrap to Southwest Car Parts in Longview, Texas. The remaining WP GP20's that have been awaiting the scrapper in Salt Lake City have also been sold. They are the #2002 to Relco Locomotive in Minooka, Illinois and the #2004-#2007, #20010 to Precision National in Mount Vernon, Illinois. The track consolidation project between the SP and the UP (WP) in the Livermore Valley has finally been completed almost 12 years after it began. In May and June, UP crews laid new track to make the connection between the UP mainline at Lox and the SP mainline at East Trevarno. UP trains now use the SP mainline from the west end of Livermore to where Trevarno used to be, and then use a new track to get back over to the UP mainline near Lox on Vasco Road. The new Livermore siding extends almost 15,000 feet, and consists of the old UP mainline through Livermore, and the old SP Trevarno siding east of Livermore. The big incentive to get this project completed and get the new Livermore siding into use was due to the SP finally exercising their trackage rights between Lathrop and Niles Junction over the former WP 1st Subdivision. In a 24 hour period now, there are 4 to 6 SP trains running over Altamont Pass on UP trackage. Thanks to this increased traffic, and the extra-long double-stack

trains APL uses in and out of Oakland over the UP, the line over Altamont Pass suddenly became a major bottleneck. Up until now, there were only 2 sidings between Oakland and Stockton that could clear these trains.

FEATHER RIVER RAILROAD DAYS

The biggest event of the year for Portola and our museum is Feather River Railroad Days. This year to be held on August 20-21. We operated three sets of locomotives and two passenger trains last year and would like to do it again. This will require six enginemen and at least five trainmen, a ticket agent, crossing guard, four people in the food service department and three in the gift shop. WE WILL NEED YOUR HELP! Two HO gauge model railroad layouts will be displayed and operated at either end of the diesel shop. Music groups will perform on the flat car stage as they did last year.

June 25-26 and July 2-3-4
Operating Weekends

Regular passenger operations were run June 25-26 and July 2-3-4. Crew members were: Engineers Jim Ley and Dave McClain assisted by Rod McClure, Norm Holmes, Andy McCarron, Bruce Cooper, Vickie Krois, Eugene Vicknair, Steve Milward, Shannon Smith, Steve Habeck and Gordon Wolleson. Trainmen were: Steve Habeck, Gordon Wolleson, Andy McCarron, Dave Waters, Steve Milward, Matt Parker, and Norm Holmes. Pam Hodson and Larry Hanlon sold tickets.

