

southwest corner

by John Hathaway

A lot of developments have been taking place on the three western railroads in the past few months and the main occurrence seems to be more and more big power for the three.

SANTA FE will spend \$170 million in 1970 which includes purchases of 120 freight diesels, 980 freight cars, and 355 track-miles of welded rail. The freight units will include 61 EMD GP-38's (SF 3500-3560), 10 EMD SD-45's (SF 5615-5624) to be added to Santa Fe's growing fleet of these 3600 hp 6-axle locomotives, and 49 GE U223B's (SF 6300-6348). The GP-38's and U23B's probably won't show up in California, but the 8500-class U33C's have been appearing statewide recently.

All the new units will fit into the system-wide locomotive renumbering campaign now underway. The 900 class SD-24's were the first to sport the new numbers, getting the change in September of last year.

Santa Fe has also announced there will be some old faces around for awhile. Twelve of the old 2100-class Also RSD-5's are going to be rebuilt and renumbered into the 9100 series for continued service.

And even stranger yet, a number of the old 200-series EMD F-7's are undergoing a complete metamorphosis in the system's Cleburne shops. Classified a GP-8 by the system (an unknown classification in any EMD catalogue) the former carbody units will now have a short hood not unlike the GE U-boats, a nine foot cab, and a Geep type hood. F-7A unit 262C was the first to undergo the operation, and if successful more of the 200 class will become road switchers. The 262C will become the 2649, placing it right before the 2650 class GP-7's. Although a lot of the 200's have been turned in for new power Santa Fe still has quite a few on the roster available for this plastic surgery.

And speaking of old Santa Fe locomotives, a few of the classic PA-1's are still in existence. 24 of these graceful locomotives are stored at a scrap dealer's yard in Argo, Illinois awaiting higher prices on scrap stainless steel. These most beautiful of all diesels (a little prejudice here) saw many years of service on the San Diegan and the Fast Mail Express (a classic train while it lasted) before retirement last year.

A few F-7 booster units from the 200 series are also getting a reprieve from the torch. Ten of the B-units have been rebuilt into radio-controlled cars for unmanned helper service and have been observed on relatively low tonnage freight service over Cajon.

SOUTHERN PACIFIC is also receiving a number of new units. Heading for the Cotton Belt are four EMD SD-45's (COTTON BELT 9152-9155). Espee is also receiving 29 of EMD's SW-1500 yard switchers (SF 2553-2577, COTTON BELT 2578-2581).

Southern Pacific has donated three old, classic diesel locomotives to the Pacific Coast Chapter of the Railway and Locomotive Historical Society for preservation and display at the now under-development Transportation Museum in Sacramento. The three, to be repainted in original color schemes, include EMD E-9 6051 (which will receive its initial Daylight colors), Baldwin AS-615 5208 (the oldest locomotive of its class on the roster) and EMD F-7 6402. All three locomotives are once common first generation diesels now rapidly disappearing from sight.

UNION PACIFIC's new 5000 class GE U50C's are now in operation, and the 20 5000 hp locomotives are making it into California quite frequently. The 79-foot long units are completely different from the U50D's UP has had since 1963 and are geared for 93 miles/hour.

Also appearing occasionally on special UP passenger trains are the road's new 1400 class SDP-35's. There are only ten of these passenger-equipped units on the system.

And a couple of final notes on the passenger train. On December 30 the ICC turned down Santa Fe's request to reroute the San Francisco Chief into Los Angeles from Barstow instead of the Bay Area and refused to allow the road to discontinue the all-chair Grand Canyon at least until the 5th of May. And an article in the February 26th issue of the Los Angeles Times devoted itself to the suggestion of an auto ferry train to service metropolitan Los Angeles and the proposed inter-continental airport in Palmdale. The plan recommends the tracks bore through the mountains between L.A. and Palmdale and compares quite favorably the costs of such a system and load handling capabilities as opposed to a standard freeway connecting the two areas. How would such a set-up between San Diego and Los Angeles, with roadbed already available, fare? Think about it....

OF INTEREST TO RAILFANS

MARCH

- 13 - Silent Film with organ, Fox Theatre, 8 pm*
- 15 - "Ballad of the Iron Horse" ABC-TV, 7pm
- 18-19 - Farewell excursion California Zephyr*

APRIL

- 5 - Theatre Organ Concert, 9:30 am, Fox Theatre*