

ROCKY MOUNTAIN RAILROAD CLUB
P. O. BOX 2391
DENVER, COLORADO 80201

February, 1964

Newsletter No. 54

The February, 1964, meeting of the Rocky Mountain Railroad Club will be held on Wednesday, February 12th, in the basement meeting room of the Western Federal Savings skyscraper, 718 - 17th Street, Denver, at 8:00 p.m. The program for this meeting will be a colored slide show to be presented by Club member Charles Max, who will acquaint us with old Mexico's newest railroad, the F. C. Chihuahua al Pacifico, or Chihuahua Pacific, opened for business in 1961.

This new standard gauge railroad, using diesel power, extends from Ojinaga, southwest of The Presidio, Texas, to Topolobampo, on the Gulf of California, climbing to an altitude of 7,500 feet in crossing the Continental Divide. Major geographic feature of the spectacularly rugged mountain country through which this long-planned extension of the old Kansas City, Mexico and Orient has been located, is Mexico's "Grand Canyon"--the Barranca del Cobre. The railroad is considered a tremendous engineering feat, requiring many tunnels and high bridges in working its way through northern Mexico's scenic splendor. Mr. Max's program promises to be an interesting and entertaining presentation, and all members and guests are invited to attend.

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Charles Ryland's humorous and highly enjoyable program at our January meeting covered his visits to the backwoods logging railroads of West Virginia, and gave us some unusual side-lights on the casual operations of geared motive power, such as Shay, Heisler and Climax engines, in that area. Charles, through use of another of his hobbies, presented each person there with a beautiful souvenir announcement, printed with ornate old-fashioned type on his home printing press.

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Many of the railroads in recent weeks have released data regarding the expenditures they expect to make for improvements and new equipment in the coming year. For instance, some of the railroads serving Colorado and Utah have announced programs as follows:

Santa Fe -	\$ 100,000,000	50 locomotives; 4,800 freight cars
Burlington -	40,000,000	18 locomotives; 1,575 freight and passenger cars; and continued conversion of the Chicago-Denver line to all-welded 136-pound rail.
Rio Grande -	9,100,000	8 locomotives; 350 freight cars
Missouri Pacific -	55,000,000	Unannounced equipment purchases, improvement of facilities and trackage
Union Pacific -	100,000,000	64 locomotives; 3,115 freight and passenger cars
Western Pacific -	5,200,000	265 freight cars

The amounts for these six railroads alone add up to \$309,300,000, (substantially more than a quarter of a billion dollars). Expenditures by the Rock Island and Southern Pacific would no doubt push the total to the neighborhood of \$400,000,000, accurately exemplifying Burlington President Harry C. Murphy's remark that such programs are "...indicative of the high price of staying in business under today's fast changing competitive conditions."

Many of the cars mentioned above are expensive items. While not much thought is generally given to the announced purchase by a railroad of 100 box cars for \$3,000,000, the price, in fact, is \$30,000 per car, or considerably in excess of the cost of a new home in many fine areas of cities throughout our country!

And some of the freight cars are behemoths. Autoparts box cars now come 86 feet long, with 10,000 cubic feet of capacity. This is equivalent, for example, to an elevator shaft 10 feet square and 10 stories high!

Rio Grande's announcement included a brief note about the forthcoming construction in company shops of six additional all-steel narrow gauge coaches for Durango-Silverton service.

Interestingly enough, this relatively small project is receiving considerable notice in the local press. Seating capacity of the trains -- one with 10 cars, the other with 11 -- will be 862 passengers! The new cars, expected to be ready for the start of daily service on Tuesday, June 3rd, will be joined by a new snack and recreation baggage car converted from our old friend, combination baggage-coach #212.

Engine 476, out of service the past two years, will have heavy repairs completed soon, and no doubt will see regular service, with either the 473 or 478 serving as stand-by and relief power at Durango.

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Continuing progress is reported on Morris Cafky's forthcoming book, "Colorado Midland," to be published in the latter part of 1964 by the Rocky Mountain Railroad Club. Club members will receive a copy of the brochure announcing this book well in advance of the publication date of "Colorado Midland." to enable all who wish to do so to take advantage of the reduced pre-publication price. This price has not yet been established, pending a careful analysis of the costs involved, but it will be announced in the forthcoming brochure. For the benefit of some of our newer members, perhaps the Club's policy of paying authors for time and labor involved in researching and compiling book manuscripts should be mentioned. After the books have been sold, any surplus money will be divided evenly between the Club and the author.

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Club member Dr. Del Bender of Sundstrand Aviation (Denver) recently arranged for an informative illustrated two-page article on Cobrad railroading to be published in Sundstrand's Denver News issue of December, 1963. Coverage included a discussion of railroad modeling activities in the Denver area, photos of equipment on display at the Colorado Railroad Museum and information concerning the annual Memorial Day narrowgauge excursions sponsored by the Rocky Mountain Railroad Club.

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Club member George Beater of Mesa, Arizona, has sent us the following item, good for a chuckle: At a meeting of the Morse Telegraph Club, a retired railroad telegrapher claimed he once handled the following exchange of messages:

- From Superintendent: Where is engine 123 for Extra West?
- From Master Mechanic: Tender of engine 123 in turntable pit. Attempting to pull it out with engine 123.
- From Superintendent: Advise progress every fifteen minutes.
- From Master Mechanic (at fifteen minute intervals): Engine 123 now in pit. Attempting to pull it out with engine 456.
Tender of engine 456 in pit. Attempting to pull it out with engine 456.
Engine 456 in pit. Attempting to remove it with crane.
Crane in pit.
- From Superintendent: Shall I send big hook?
- From Master Mechanic: No. Pit now filled up.

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On Thursday, January 16th, 1964, railroad commuting service on the San Francisco Peninsula, between San Francisco and San Jose was a century old.

The run to San Jose in 1864 took three hours and cost \$3.00. Today it takes 1'20" and costs \$1.45 -- or 66 cents if you are a regular commuter. This centennial, the first of a long string now coming into view, was commemorated on January 16th by Bay Area historians and railroaders with a trip to San Jose on the "Centennial Express" -- a special train sponsored by the Pacific Coast Chapter, R.& L.H.S., using lounge cars and the open platform observation car, "El Dorado." Capping the sentimental journey was a banquet at the Sainte Claire Hotel in San Jose.

One of the passengers on the special, and a guest at the banquet, was the oldest known commuter on the Peninsula run -- a Palo Alto businessman who has been commuting since 1899, almost 65 years! That's a long time to ride trains every day, even for a railfan.

When the first of the Missouri Pacific's new 2,500-HP diesel locomotives entered service early this month, it carried a large stylized eagle on its side. Painted a light gray against the solid blue of the MoPac's locomotive, the aggressive look of the eagle in flight symbolizes the improved service of the railroad's freight train fleet. Initially, 25 new freight locomotives are carrying this distinctive eagle insignia. This is believed to be the first painted design of its kind, other than railroad trademarks, to be carried on an engine.

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Last August a Los Angeles man sent the Louisville & Nashville Railroad a check for \$60.93 to pay for a ride he had bummed on a freight train from New Orleans to Mobile some 50 years previously. The railroad didn't identify this customer, but said it returned the check to him because:

- The fare in those days was only \$4.20.
- If the man shoveled coal to help the fireman, as he claimed, he more than paid for his ride. Moreover, the railroad couldn't figure how he arrived at the \$60.93 figure. Even at 5½% compound interest, its auditors said, the total would be only \$60.08.

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The prompt response of many of our members to the reminder in last month's Newsletter concerning dues for 1964 has been interesting and encouraging. Nearly two out of every three arriving envelopes, according to Treasurer Ane Clint, contain not only checks for current dues, but some brief notes commenting on Club activities, or inquiring about forthcoming excursions or Club publications, or otherwise indicating the continuing interest and enthusiasm of the member regarding Club affairs. Ane says she wishes she could take enough time off from her daily work to reply to each of these communications, but 50 to 75 letters per week is just too much to handle! These letters, though, do not go unheeded, and certainly, they are deeply appreciated. Many thanks to each of you who has taken the time to write us.

Work on preparing membership cards for 1964 already has started. Printing is being done, as in previous years, in member Charles Ryland's home, the hand-fed "Smoking Stack Press." Upon completion of press work, members' names are carefully typed in by Richard Kindig, each card is checked against receipt of dues, and then signed by the Treasurer and President. All this work, for more than 900 names requires considerable time, of course, but we are glad to report that this annual task is under way.

For those who might have overlooked last month's notice, membership dues in the Rocky Mountain Railroad Club for Colorado residents are \$3.00 per year; for out-of-state members they remain at \$2.00.

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Scheduling of TV programs is unpredictable and generally on somewhat short notice. We have just learned (January 28th), for instance, that Charles Ryland is presenting some material from his fabulous collection on Otto Mears, "Pathfinder of the San Juan" and builder of the Rio Grande Southern, on the "SCOPE" program, Denver's Channel 4, at 10:00 p.m. Sunday, February 2nd. RGS business car RICO, exhibited by the Club at the Colorado Railroad Museum, will be shown during the taped presentation, according to the information given us. Regrettably, this is not in time for all Club members to be notified, but it is hoped that this program will not have escaped the notice of many of our local members.

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Middle age is when the narrow waist and the broad mind begin to change places.

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Ted S. McKee, President

Fay L. McKee, Secretary

Herbert O'Hanlon, Vice President

Ane O. Clint, Treasurer