

however a great deal of work was needed to clean old paint and grime, to replace wooded cab parts and to fabricate a new boiler jacket.

On April 25, 1987 No. 8 again moved under its own power. Retired WP engineer Jim Boynton was the last person to run No. 8 under steam on May 19, 1962 and was the first person to run the locomotive almost 25 years later. Since April restoration work has continued and the locomotive has run on several occasions during the summer. No. 8 is in our diesel shop building, perhaps the first time she has been under a roof for any length of time. The locomotive will be steamed up and operated on special occasions. With care we can look to many more years of operation for this octogenarian.



**A** FAINT clicking sound, followed by the words, "Dispatcher, Oroville," broke into a train order I had just begun to issue. The scene was a Western Pacific dispatchers' room and the man on the other end of the wire was undoubtedly Jones, our somewhat excitable operator at Oroville, Calif.

Thinking that he wished to sign up a 31 order I had put out for second 78, I replied, "Dispatcher." His next words tumbled out like a waterfall in Feather River Canyon:

"First 78 was by here at 11:37 p.m.!"

I answered calmly: "Yes, that's right."

"But First 78 was by here at 11:37 p.m.!" he repeated, almost screaming.

"Sure, Oroville. The sheet shows that. Has Second 78 shown up yet?"

"No," broke in the op at Oroville yard, who was listening. "He's still here—I'm looking right at his markers."

"Then what was that went by here when the main was here?" said Jones.

"Has an eastbound train passed you since midnight?" I inquired quickly.

"Some train went by here through the siding while the main was here taking ice and water," he stammered. "They asked

me what I had on the board; and I asked them who they were, and they said, 'First 78'; so I gave them a clearance and they left. I didn't notice that First 78 was by here before midnight. I—

"Break!" I stopped the op, reaching for the Berry Creek selector key and twisting it violently.

Something froze up inside me as I realized what had happened. The man at Oroville yard was not sitting there look-

## OLD WP ARTICLES

For your enjoyment I am going to reprint several very old articles on the Western Pacific written in 1944, 45, 46, 47, and 54 in RAILROAD MAGAZINE by WP dispatcher, Peter Josserand.....

### *Putting Western Pacific Traffic Through the Rugged Feather River Canyon Is No Job for the Flatland Delayer*

ing at Second 78's markers, for they were by Oroville—and without the restricting order which changed their meeting point with Extra 252 West from Berry Creek to Bidwell, creating a lap of authority.

There wasn't one chance in a thousand of catching Extra 252 West at Berry Creek, for he was already due by there; and even if he wasn't actually by, the operator would not be in the office, for I had sent him up to the east switch to keep Extra 252 West from heading in. Those two Mallets would hit on the one-percent grade, just about halfway between Berry Creek and Bloomer—there are no block signals on that crooked track. They wouldn't have a chance.

**B**EFORE going further, let me tell you something of the district I work.

Had it been daylight so that I could have seen Feather River Canyon as I came through on my way to Sacramento, where I had a job waiting as dispatcher on the Western Pacific, I would have enjoyed the scenery. It's a beautiful country, wild and bold. But had I glimpsed the landscape beforehand, I might not have screwed up my courage to tackle "The Mountain," or Third Subdivision, which extends 118 miles between Oroville yard and Portola.

This mileage will probably bring a smile to the lips of flatland dispatchers, for it is a relatively short district. However, if my attempt to paint a word-picture of operating conditions on this stretch of railroad is successful, perhaps the smile will fade. Having worked districts hundreds of miles longer, with comparative ease, I have spent much time trying to analyze the reasons for this piece of track being the toughest and most aggravating stretch I have known.

Of course, it is not always so. Some days The Mountain behaves like Santa Claus. But more often it goes on a rampage, when nothing is right—not just in one section, but from end to end. And it switches from one state to the other without warning. The subdivision extends

# Mountain Dispatcher

By PETER JOSSERAND  
*Western Pacific Dispatcher*

*Railroad Magazine*

April 1944

through territory so rugged that only here and there you can reach the right-of-way in any manner except by train or motorcar traveling on the rails. A highway runs through the canyon, but you can't get onto the track from the highway, even afoot, except at scattered points. Men who handle trains in Feather River Canyon are a tough lot—hardy, like pioneers. They have to be if they stay there. Scarcely a veteran in the canyon but can show you the scars of wrecks—pile-ups which they would not have survived except for a "sixth sense" which elevates them above the run-of-the-mill train and engine men. They are a breed that thrives on long hours, hardship and danger.

I had worked this district several months before I ever saw it, and even then I came back with a mild case of jitters. Beginning at Oroville yard, the grade is somewhat less than one percent up to Bloomer. From there it climbs to Portola, never more than one percent compensated for curvature, and rarely so much as a fraction of a degree less. There are no humps. A boxcar turned loose at Portola would roll all the way to Oroville yard if it took the curves—and there is precious little tangent track. Spots where two trains could see each other in time to stop without hitting are practically non-existent—because of the curves and tunnels, of which there are thirty-three, ranging up to more than a mile in length—and with no block signals, the DS knows his work must be right, or they bump.

One interesting feature is "the loop" between Spring Garden and Massack. The engineers, determined to hold the grade to one percent, came to a spot where this was impossible; so they remedied the situation by constructing a circular piece of track which, without exceeding one percent, gains sufficient elevation to do the job, the track crossing over itself.

An engine is given what tonnage she can handle on the one percent, eliminating helper districts and greatly simplifying operating procedure. You might think of it as "allee same flatland district," but don't be deceived.

A common practice is to run drags uphill with two small locomotives; then each engine brings down a tonnage train. About all you need in the descent is some means of charging the brake pipe and controlling the brakes. The smallest engine can ease down the car limit in loads. Mallets, when not needed elsewhere, run down light for faster movement to protect symbol trains uphill. Of late, the huge trainloads of Government shipments westward toward the Pacific war theater has upset normal routine and most of the Mallets have to bring down trains, since westbound traffic is heavier than eastbound, the reverse of normal conditions.

Small engines cannot back up here. If they inadvertently make a move downhill in error, or if the dispatcher maneuvers them into certain spots—it's just too bad, as I shall presently show. Even the Mallets frequently cannot back up their trains, for they have more tonnage than the engine will handle uphill, plus the fact that retainers are set up on the train.

If two trains moving downhill go to the same siding for another freight, or passenger train, they must be fixed up. At least, the leading train must go to the next siding against opposing trains; otherwise, the railroad is sewed up. If he can't back up for a "saw" and can't go ahead, then he's simply on the main stem blocking everything.

**T**HE TRACK which hangs to the canyon sides like a great lazy snake stretched out to sun, is at varying heights above Feather River. This man-made ledge is so narrow at most points that a derailment results in cars taking a river bath far below. The remains of some can still be seen in the foaming waters. This mountain stream falls in such a torrent that a continuous roar is set up in the canyon, drowning out other sounds to the point where you cannot hear an approaching train.

There is no place I know of where good operators are needed so badly as in the Feather River Canyon, and few places where they are so hard to get and keep. Sooner or later most of them get what the boys call "cabin fever." There are no towns—just the houses in which they live, most of them batching. Since they are thus isolated from the world, except for their contact with trains and each other, it is not unusual for them to be affected strangely. The rhythms of Mother Nature are magnified in such localities.

One op described his reaction as claustrophobia. He had the feeling that the canyon walls were closing in on him and he simply had to get out for a while. Another told me of two fellows who would not even look at each other, much less

speak, if they could help it. The first-trick man would make a transfer. Then he'd stand in a corner with his back to his relief, glancing surreptitiously over his shoulder to see when the transfer had been signed. One man, because of a minor disagreement, gathered up all his brother op's clothing in the dead of night and hid them in a snowbank. Another mental case shot a brakeman. And a chief dispatcher off the D&RGW told me of having two brass pounders at the same station in the Rockies go stark mad the same day.

Most of these boys will get drunk periodically to break the spell. Some walk off the job in a complete daze. A dispatcher never knows whether an op will do what he is told. The guy might fly off the handle and give him a good "cussing." But if they stay on the job and can take it, the lightning slingers of Feather River Canyon eventually become the best of train-order men.

Since the operators cannot see or hear a train approaching until it is right on them, the dispatcher has to work from his last "OS", hoping the said train has not been delayed. By the time he knows where the train is, it's too late to issue a clearance. This is indeed strange to the flatland DS who has been accustomed to putting out orders after the ops inform him a train is showing.

Here, the DS must call his men and have them keep trains cleared in advance of the time they may show; otherwise, they get stopped. For instance, at Belden, eastbound trains come through a tunnel about thirty car-lengths from the office, while westbound trains pop around a curve about the same distance away. If the op doesn't have his orders ready, he misses them.

**N**OW we get back to the impending head-on collision with which I opened this article. Second 78 had been called to leave Oroville yard and go to Oroville itself, a distance of two miles, for a troop train. The mainliner had to be iced and watered at Oroville, a procedure requiring twenty to thirty minutes.

When I went on duty at midnight, Second 78 had been cleared at Oroville yard with, among other orders, a meet with Extra 252 West at Berry Creek. I kept asking the brass pounder at Oroville if Second 78 was showing there, to which he replied in the negative. And the op at Oroville yard confirmed this fact, saying he could see the markers on Second 78 and would let me know the moment they left there.

When it was perfectly apparent that Second 78, not having moved, could not leave the yard for the "main," I issued a 31 order to Second 78 at Oroville and a 19 order to Extra 252 West at Berry

Creek, changing the meet from Berry Creek to Bidwell.

Now the east switch at Berry Creek is just a few car-lengths east of the office and, as we often do under such circumstances to keep a train from going through the siding, I cleared Extra 252 West. Then I instructed the op, an old-timer by the name of Kemmerer, to take the "fimsy" up to the east switch and deliver it, keeping the extra on the main track.

As the selector slowly worked the Berry Creek combination, I had little hope of even getting in touch with Kemmerer, much less contacting him in time to stop the Extra, which was then overdue. If he had gone to the east switch, the river's roar would drown out the sound of the telephone bell, even if the train had not arrived; and he would wait there until the train came. It seemed that I was doomed to go through the torture most dreaded by dispatchers—sit and wait helplessly for two trains to hit.

No sooner had the bell quit ringing than I twisted the key a second time. If Jones, the operator at Oroville, had only mentioned to me that a train was there, or had OS'd it by; or if the man at Oroville yard hadn't been so sure he saw Second 78's markers, I might have uncovered the truth in time to avert the catastrophe.

Before the bell rang the second time, a gruff voice announced, "Berry Creek."

"Is Extra 252 West by there?" I asked.

It must be by, otherwise Kemmerer would be at the east switch waiting for them, for he had told me he was leaving to go there.

"No," Berry Creek replied, "but they're coming close and I've got to run."

"Hell, no! Wait a minute!"

I must have shouted, for fear he would snatch off the heat set and run.

"Are you there?" I went on, reaching for the selector key, just in case.

"Sure, I'm here," he said. "What's up?"

"Second 78 got by Oroville without that 31," I explained, with a sigh of relief. "Let Extra 252 West head in and copy one."

I annulled the superseding order, thus removing the hazard. Two factors conspired to ward off death and destruction: One, that Extra 252 West was delayed between Pulga and Berry Creek; the other, a pot of coffee. I've always suspected that no big road could run without Java, but I had not suggested the real power of the beverage.

Just as Kemmerer was leaving the office to go to the east switch, his pot of coffee, brewing on the stove, noisily boiled over; so he went back into the room and poured himself a cup. The phone rang just a second before Extra 252 West

whistled for town. If it hadn't, he might have ignored the phone and made a dash for the switch to keep the train on the main track. That's whittling down your margin too fine.

**T**HERE was no investigation. I never knew exactly how Second 78 got by Oroville without the 31 order, nor what the op at Oroville yard saw which he mistook for Second 78's markers. One thing I do know—I lived a long time that night.

Even then I wasn't yet through with hair-raising experiences for that trick. An extra west, which was being handled by a Mallet, took siding at Belden on a meet order with an eastbound drag. Number 12, a string of varnished cars, was right on time, so the extra west did not have time to go to the next station, Camp Rodgers, for it. But no sooner was the east-bound train cleared than they started rolling.

Operator Holbrook was right on the job. "Does this extra west have anything on Number 12?" he asked.

"No," I replied. "Twelve's on time."

"He's leaving here," Holbrook told me.

I checked Number 12's time to be sure of my calculations. The train was due out of Camp Rodgers in one minute.

"Maybe he's just pulling down to the end of the siding, for some reason."

"No, sir!" Holbrook was emphatic. "He's leaving town."

"Stop him if you can!"

Holbrook grabbed a fusee, lighted it and dashed frantically from the office. But the head end didn't look back. It was only after the caboose had come around the curve that the conductor saw the fusee, pulled the air and stopped the train. The conductor, of course, thought the head end had received time on 12, and was on the step waiting for his orders and clearance when the caboose hove in sight, to find Holbrook giving washouts with a fusee.

The op then rushed back into the office, grabbed the Army phone, which was hooked up there, and rang the soldier who was guarding the tunnel west of Belden, telling him what had happened. The boy in khaki promptly took to his heels down the right-of-way and flagged Number 12. Thus a second catastrophe was averted.

But, as I have said before, our downhill tonnage can't be backed. There was much confusion and delay before the hog-head succeeded, with Twelve's help, in

**BELOW: Number 11, the Feather River Express, takes a drink at Berry Creek**



backing up that portion which he had pulled out on the main track, so as to be able to "saw" Number 12 out. Meanwhile, other minor troubles developed all over the railroad. The Mountain was on a rampage that night.

Operators can roughly be divided into two categories, sheep and goats. The old-timers, like Holbrook, are invariably on the job; but some of the boomers that hit this pike—and there seems to be an endless migration of them—are worth writing about.

It is permissible here, if an operator is able to take up clearance cards previously issued to a train and destroy them, to restrict the said train still further with a 31 order. All restricting orders, regardless of where issued, must be on 31 form, except where a middle order can be issued, in which case it is permissible to restrict a train on form 19. Presently I will show what this leads to, but first we get back to the clearance-card business.

One night at Quincy Junction, Number 62 was unexpectedly delayed in picking up cars for which a lot of switching had to be done. Upon learning that the train was behind schedule, I sent the op for the clearances. Later he told me that he had them. Accordingly, I issued an order giving 62 a meet with a train called out of Portola at Blairsden.

This was only a few nights after the foregoing and I was still a bit on edge. Therefore I kept inquiring of the boomer about 62. The op's reply was sarcastic.

"Hell, yes, I've got him. He's still switching. Hasn't come in to get his orders yet—he can't get out of town."

But I was uneasy. It didn't make sense that the train would be held up so long.

RAILWAY AGE

September 17, 1932



A Western Pacific 2-8-2 Type Locomotive Hauling 72 Loaded Cars up the Feather River Canyon Grade

## NEW WESTERN PACIFIC POWER SAVES TIME AND EARNS MONEY

Eastbound tonnage on the Western Pacific consists largely of fresh fruits and vegetables, which are moved on fast schedules. The hardest pull is from Oroville to Portola, California, in the Feather River Canyon, where there are 118 miles of ascending grade, much of it one per cent.

### FORMERLY—

"Fruit blocks" of 60-70 cars, weighing about 3100 tons, were handled by one 2-6-6-2 type Mallet compound, with either a Mallet, Mikado or Consolidation type helper, according to requirements.

At least three, and often four, stops were made for water, additional time being lost while spotting each locomotive under the spout.

The fuel consumption per 1000 gross ton-

miles averaged 16.28 gallons of oil, and each helper, returning light down hill, burned about 700 gallons additional.

### NOW—

Baldwin single expansion 2-8-2 type locomotives are used, each engine handling from 3400 to 3500 tons.

The run can be made with only two water stops.

The fuel consumption per 1000 gross ton-miles is 14.01 gallons—a saving of about 22 barrels of oil per trip up the grade; and there are no helper engines to burn oil while returning light.

Maintenance costs have been materially reduced.

All of which is added proof that—

*It takes Modern Locomotives to make money these days!*

**THE BALDWIN LOCOMOTIVE WORKS**  
PHILADELPHIA

On the other hand, there is nothing at Quincy Junction except the station; and the op certainly should know whether or not the train was still there, as there are only a few tracks. I calmed my fears and went to work at something else, deciding to put the finishing touches to Number 62 when its conductor came in to sign up. He didn't come. The next thing I knew, the operator at Spring Garden broke in.

"Coming east, Spring Garden."

I rang Quincy Junction, asking about 62.

"They're still switching," he responded. "He can't get out of here—I have his orders."

"You must be hearing things."

"I am not. His headlight just flashed around the corner."

"Well, it's not 62." Quincy Junction broke in. "I tell you he's here."

Since an eastward train, just after passing Spring Garden station, enters a tunnel more than a mile in length, through which it has to work steam all the way, we try never to stop a tonnage train uphill at that point. The engine crew almost suffocate before they can get through the tunnel from a standing start. Firing valves must be kept open, and the gas from a Mallet climbing the grade is terrific when confined to a tunnel. But this was something different.

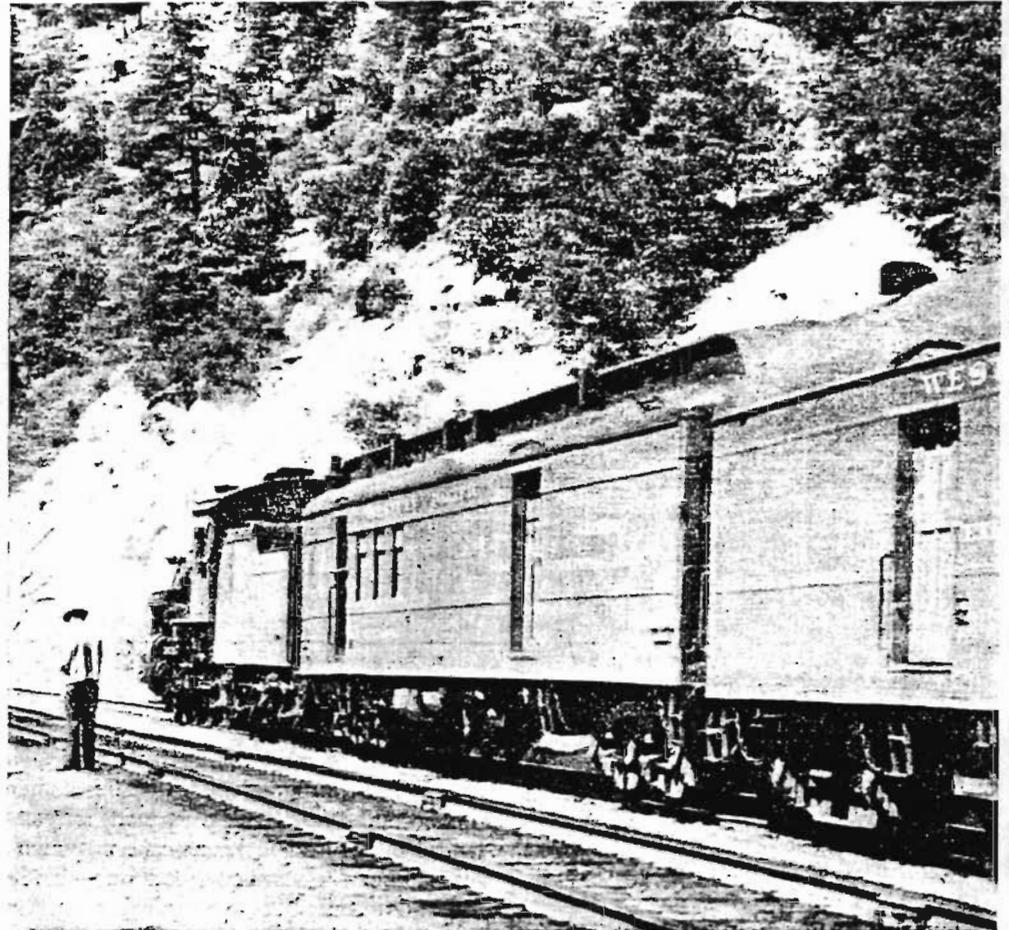
"Must be a ghost train," I kidded Spring Garden. "Hold your board on them and let's find out what a ghost train looks like."

It wasn't a ghost train. It was Number 62. The op at Quincy Junction, probably out of stupidity or laziness, had not complied with my instructions to take up the clearance cards. So I re-issued the orders to the train at Spring Garden, thankful that I had a telegraph office between Quincy Junction and the meeting point with the extra west.

As for the boomer at the Junction—well, he is gone, just like scores of other floaters who drift in, make a pay-day or two and are off, usually after messing up the works.

**T**HE MANAGEMENT admits its inability, to get good operators these days, and tells us to do the best we can with what we have to work with. They hire applicants with little regard to age,

etc., sometimes not even requiring a physical exam. Since a dispatcher's work can be—and often is—hampered by inefficient operators, maybe you think we don't rejoice when a good man bids in,



IT'S NOT UNUSUAL to find a conductor calling the DS from a blind siding, for things happen so fast in the canyon that the smartest maneuvering won't always keep the varnished cars rolling

And now about 31 orders. I didn't know the system was still in use anywhere until I came to the WP. Every restricting order, except where a train is to be restricted at an open telegraph office and a middle order can be placed there, must be on a form 31, although there are a few loopholes in this rule.

Naturally, no dispatcher wants to stop a train he is trying to highball over the road, and when certain practices permit him to get around the 31 he is tempted to use them. Thus he may issue single orders, as well as follow certain other practices which I believe are hazardous.

We will assume that a train is called at Portola, Extra 258 West, which we wish to meet Number 54 at Clio. A 31 order stopping 54 is in order—perhaps. Let's see. If we make the meet at Blairsdén, an open telegraph office, it can be done on 19 orders, so we will issue the following:

*Order No. 1*

19 BA Opr  
19 RT No. 54  
19 KI Extra 258 West  
No. 54 Eng 902 meet Extra 258 West at Blairsdén

*Order No. 2*

31 KI Extra 258 West  
19 BA No. 54  
Extra 258 West meet No. 54 Eng 902 at Clio instead of Blairsdén.

Thus we have restricted Number 54 at a blind siding without giving him a 31, the latter having been issued to Extra 258 West at a terminal where no delay will be caused by his signing. After the first order has been issued, Extra 258 West is superior to Number 54 at Clio by "right," so everything is in good form and comparatively safe.

But, suppose conditions were a bit changed. Suppose 54 left Oroville yard holding an order to meet Extra 258 West at Merlin, and later it looked as if the meet should be Cresta. Not wishing to delay a tonnage uphill train with a 31 order, let's juggle a bit more and see what can be done.

*Order No. 3*

19 BG Opr  
19 BK No. 54  
No. 54 Eng 902 meet Extra 258 West at Pulga instead of Merlin.

## Mountain Dispatcher

This order is not given to Extra 258 West. The two trains are now kept a couple of stations apart, one holding a Merlin meet, the other a Pulga meet. Let's hope the wires do not suddenly go out before we can correct this matter.

## Order No. 4

19 BG No. 54  
19 BN Extra 258 West  
No. 54 Eng 902 meet Extra 258 West at Cresta  
(BG add) instead of Pulga  
(BN add) instead of Merlin

Again we have dodged the delaying order. Now, inasmuch as Number 54 cannot leave Pulga without the fourth order, if we have another 31 out down the line which we do not wish train 54 to sign, we simply transfer it into Order 4 and annul the original order to train Number 54.

Such juggling is safe only so long as the DS is thinking straight. The moment he becomes forgetful, a hazard arises. I could tell you of a recent case in which a dispatcher—a damned good one—hailed off and annulled the wrong order, and two extras smacked together. This man was about the worst order juggler I ever saw, but he really moved trains—until the unlucky day when he was sick, and slipped.

**T**AKE one more example. Number 40, the *Exposition Flyer*, is delayed unexpectedly at Oroville and, of course, every freight train on the road will get the same amount of delay, unless we do give them a "run late" order. Forty's schedule is so tight that if they are stopped, they will simply go in that much later. Still, twenty minutes delay to each of twelve or fourteen freight trains is too much; so let's see what can be done.

## Order No. 5

19 BG Opr  
19 BK No. 40  
No. 40 Eng 326 meet Extra 22 West at Pulga

Now we have the *Exposition Flyer* hooked up so that they cannot pass Pulga without meeting a train (which for safety, should not even be on the road) or getting the order annulled. Again, let's hope the wires do not fail.

## Order No. 6

19 BG No. 40  
19 (Various) (All inferior trains)  
No. 40 Eng 326 run Twenty 20 Mins late Pulga to Portola  
(BG add) Order No. 5 is annulled.

And so the famous train has been duly put on a "run late" without being stopped. But, in fact, we have defeated the safety features of the 31 order system. We are restricting trains on form 19 without the added precautions of the out-and-out 19 system,

which forbids transferring part of one order to another and which demands that each train shall have exact copies of all "flimsies" instead of acting on orders under different numbers, the contents of which are not the same. In my opinion, Mother Nature provides enough hazard on The Mountain without exposing a crew to unnecessary danger such as depending too much on the whim of a train dispatcher for their safety.

And speaking of natural hazards, when the winter rains soften the canyon, down rush the rocks, slides, decomposed granite and what have you. Despite rock fences which hoist stop signals to all trains in the event of a slide, and track walkers who patrol the tracks, The Mountain gets in its dirty work. If, in addition to heavy rainfall, there is a high wind, Heaven only knows what may be brought down by uprooted trees. On such a night, when an op reports a train out of his station, the DS mentally kisses it good-bye. The said train may, or may not, show up at the next office; and not even a crystal ball could reveal how much time the crew may need to roll rocks off the track or chop up trees and remove them.

At one point decomposed granite washes down so fast that a ditcher has to be kept in continuous operation to prevent the main track, as well as the siding, from being buried. At another point an enormous, slow-working slide covered a sid-

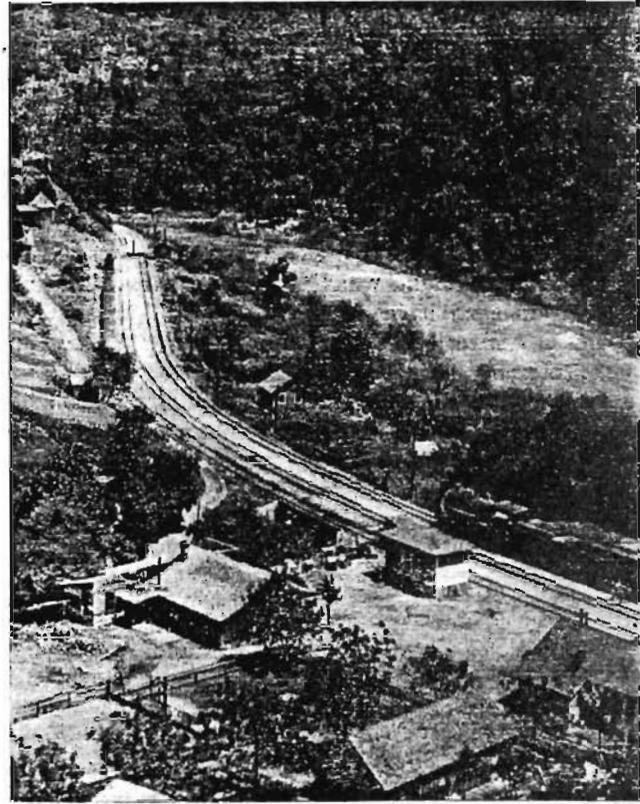


Photo from D. O. McKallups

**THIS LITTLE COMMUNITY**, built at a point where the valley widens at a bar, bears the Spanish name Pulga, meaning "flea"

ing for weeks, moving in inch by inch—but even that was faster than it could be removed.

On such occasions we all use extreme caution, and serious accidents seldom occur. Good-weather slides are the ones that wreak havoc. They sometimes come where there hasn't been a slide for years, or maybe never was one since the road was built.

These are the real hazards, for they possess the element of surprise.

I had not been long on my present job when a 200-ton rock fell on the track in front of a Mallet. Twenty-some-odd cars sailed down into Feather River as the train buckled in the middle, but nobody was injured.

**T**WICE within a week last spring, Engineer Stapp, a fast runner on whom the boys had tacked the name "Seabiscuit," hit small slides while pulling Number 12, the engine turning partially over each time; yet there were no casualties.

On the first occasion the old girl plowed clear through the rubble, was ditched and headed toward the river. Men were afraid to uncouple the cars from the engine until she had been snubbed down, lest she topple into the drink. The following day, after the situation had been cleared up, Number 12's cars were taken by another engine and continued their trip. But the delayed train had run less than fifteen miles when she again met trouble—a boul-

der bounded down the mountain, hitting the locomotive and tender and putting them out of commission. The hogger had seen the rock coming but was unable to stop in time to keep from getting hit. A work train engine was taken to complete the run.

Only a few weeks ago an immense slide fell in McLean Cut and a Mallet bumped into it. This was one of those good-weather slides at an unexpected point. "Val" Dycus was pulling the train. He had been making a swell run. In fact, I commented on it to Bill Wheeler, second-trick chief dispatcher. From that our conversation turned to The Mountain in general. Bill remarked that, everything considered, we'd had very little trouble of recent date. The words were scarcely uttered when something hit the wires.

"I hope," I told him jokingly, "that wasn't Dycus going into the ditch."

But it was. And the road was tied up for more than a week before the slide could be removed, the obstruction being

some eighty feet high and hundreds of feet in length. One bank of the cut had to be gouged out to permit the bulldozers and other machines to get at the debris. Huge rocks had to be blown to bits before any machine could budge them.

The Mallet climbed the slide until her front end was seven or eight feet off the rails and pulling her down. This, in itself, was a considerable task. Two cars of hogs parked themselves on top of the articulated engine, but only two cars went into the river.

Dycus, his fireman and his head brakeman all got down in front of the boilerhead and rode the Mallet right into the slide; and no one was injured, except for minor scratches. The shack simply climbed out of the mess and right on up over the slide, heading down the main track to flag Number 12. Then he called me on the disabled phone, which was working feebly as far as the accident, and broke the news to me.

No, there is nothing monotonous about The Mountain. I'm amazed, though, at how those fellows can take it.

Freights coming down hill with retainers set up—which keep a constant pressure of brake-shoes—have wheels so hot that they glow at night, and sometimes break.

A conductor recently discovered a broken wheel in his train east of Virgilia. However, knowing what might occur if he pulled the air, he decided to take a chance on the car not derailing before it roared through a tunnel they were approaching. Can you imagine what went on in that fellow's mind as he waited before applying the air, wondering whether or not he'd live

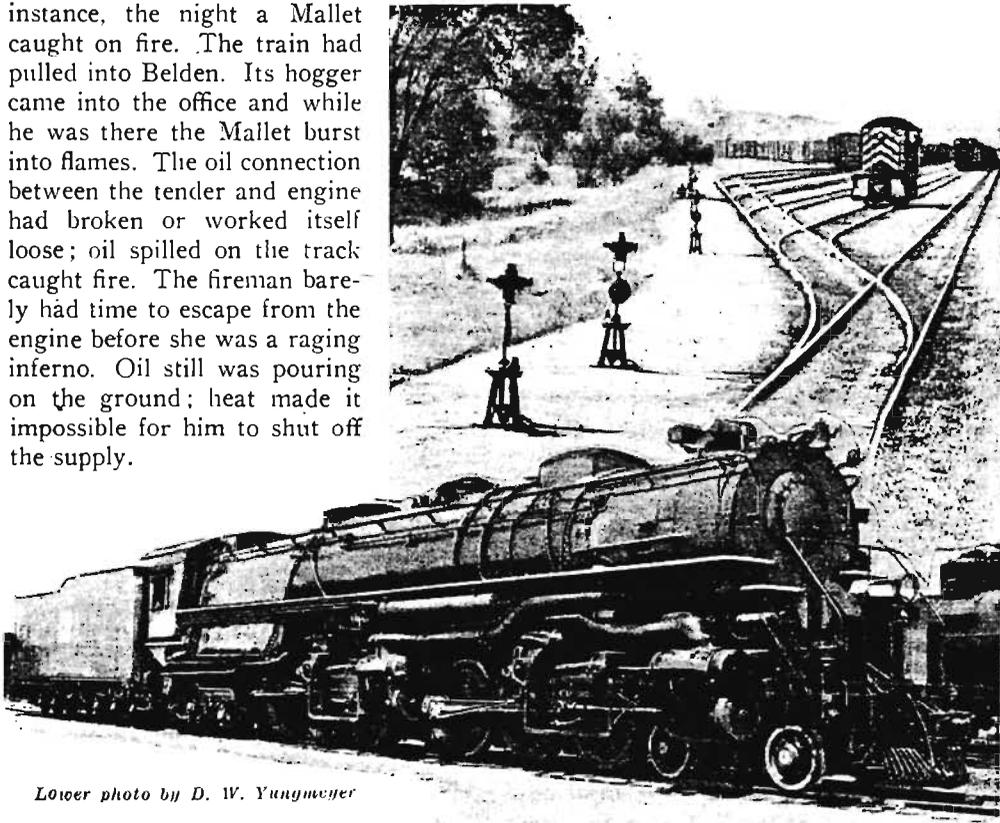
to see the light of day at the end of the tunnel?

Well, he did. Not only that, but he stopped the train between siding switches at Virgilia where, although derailed, it could be left until the wrecker arrived without causing more delay than was occasioned by trains having to use the siding at Virgilia as a main track.

There are many freak occurrences—for instance, the night a Mallet caught on fire. The train had pulled into Belden. Its hogger came into the office and while he was there the Mallet burst into flames. The oil connection between the tender and engine had broken or worked itself loose; oil spilled on the track caught fire. The fireman barely had time to escape from the engine before she was a raging inferno. Oil still was pouring on the ground; heat made it impossible for him to shut off the supply.

## Mountain Dispatcher

Railroad Magazine



OROVILLE YARD, where giant 2-8-8-2s and newer 4-6-6-4s begin their steady climb across the Sierra Nevadas

That night, being dubious of this particular train making scheduled time, I had hooped up a note to the conductor of an extra west that had a meet with it at Rich Bar, asking him to call me on the phone so I could advance him to Belden in the event the eastbound train did not appear. He called just about the time the op informed me of the fire, and it was feasible to have him leave his train in the siding at Rich Bar and dash over to Belden with his engine, putting out the fire with steam—but not before everything burnable was gone from the Mallet and much damage done.

He then put the uphill train in the siding and left the Mallet on a spur track pending such time as she could be examined by mechanical experts and arrangements made to take her to the shops. In the meantime, all trains had to be held back until the situation cleared; so the rest of the night was spent trying to untangle them and get traffic moving normally again.

ONE of the headaches a DS has on this district is that of keeping freights from heading passenger trains through sidings. It is customary for the eastbound, or uphill, trains to hold the main stem, regardless of their relative importance. If a dispatcher inadvertently orders a meet between two freights and the uphill train can't make siding for a passenger train, they will hold the main track, regardless of whether the train to be met is there or not.

Sidings, like the main track, are so crooked that there is not only the possibility, but a great probability, of a head-end collision if a train tries to take siding without authority to do so. This is diffi-

cult to imagine unless you have actually seen the railroad. Just the same, there are many places where two trains could get within fifty feet before seeing each other.

**Mountain Dispatcher**

I recall one night, after a derailment, when trains were held up at each end of the district and turned loose when the track was clear. A new dispatcher, unfamiliar with the district, moved his trains in too close. By the time I came on at midnight and the passenger trains started from each end, I had a train in every siding from Bloomer to Belden, inclusive—except Camp Rodgers, which I managed to hold open to meet Numbers 39 and 40—and there were three trains between those points which had no siding to get into!

Well, it was necessary to move out the two westbound freights by giving them meets with the passenger trains, the east-bound running out of the jam unassisted. The other trains, some headed east, some west, were so interlocked that I couldn't get a single train rolling until the passenger trains ran—and it looked as if they were going to be a long time running.

Every siding being full, there was no place where I could put Number 12 for a meet with Number 39. "No room here,"

was all I heard from every siding in the vicinity of where they should meet. At length a conductor discovered and reported there was enough space on the house track at Pulga for 12 to get in—and that's where it went, to the tune of about fifty minutes delay.

Since I first tackled this job, a year or so ago, I have had ten times the dispatching experience as was my lot on flatland districts during the years I worked them. Maybe it sounds silly to Easterners, but here on The Mountain you sometimes sense Nature's moods prior to the time anything happens—a sort of premonition. Whenever this uneasiness overtakes me, no matter how closely I watch and try to forestall disruption, I never succeed. It goes completely to the bow-wows all at once, as if a deliberate attack had been planned by a master mind and executed in perfect co-ordination by his forces.

1937 Steel box cars.....ISSUE #10  
 WP Steel cabooses 428.....ISSUE #11  
 Museum's covered hoppers...ISSUE #11  
 Transco 50' box car.....ISSUE #14  
 WP feather box cars.....ISSUE #14  
 Burro crane E-14.....ISSUE #15  
 WP PFE wooden reefers, ICE.ISSUE #15  
 Santa Fe SS diner.....ISSUE #16  
 WP air dump car 11012.....ISSUE #16  
 WP Pullman 40' box cars...ISSUE #16  
 WP Pullman 40' box cars II.ISSUE #17  
 WP exGN steam generator car.ISSUE #17  
 WP HW Passenger Equipment existing.....ISSUE #18  
 UP cabooses #25049.....ISSUE #19  
 UP business car #105.....ISSUE #19  
 WP steel cabooses "where are they now?".....ISSUE #19  
 Freight cars markings.....ISSUE #19  
 WP Pullman 40' box cars III.ISSUE #19  
 Painting & Lettering of WP cabooses.....ISSUE #20  
 California Zephyr Roster of cars 1986.....ISSUE #21  
 MAY-JUNE 1985 FRRS Roster of Equipment.....ISSUE #13  
**ENGINES**  
 UP re# of WP engines.....ISSUE #6  
 WP F-7A 921-D.....ISSUE #6  
 WP NW-2 608.....ISSUE #11  
 UP Centennial 6946.....ISSUE #13  
 WP GP-7 708.....ISSUE #13  
 WP GP-20 2001.....ISSUE #14  
 Also's in Portola.....ISSUE #16  
 UP GP-30 849.....ISSUE #20  
**WP HISTORY**  
 WP "Feather River Route" Medallion History.....ISSUE #10  
 Grand Opening.....ISSUE #13  
 Winnemucca Depot.....ISSUE #14  
 The Cherry Specials.....ISSUE #17  
 Alumni of the Feather River Route  
 WP Loco's in 1986.....ISSUE #17  
 WP Depots.....ISSUE #18  
 "Rattlers" have names, too.ISSUE #18  
 WP "MILEPOSTS" Storm 1956..ISSUE #18

Feb floods knock-out main..ISSUE #18  
 WP Keddie to Bieber.....ISSUE #19  
 WP in March 42 "TRAINS"....ISSUE #19  
 Bicentennial.....ISSUE #20  
 Jeffery Shops down.....ISSUE #20  
 New Diesel Switchers.....ISSUE #21  
 WP Rail Welding Plant.....ISSUE #21  
 WP Navy "HEADLIGHT" 1947...ISSUE #21  
 WP Inventory of equip.....ISSUE #21  
 WP Highway Crossing Sign...ISSUE #21

**ISSUE #22 & 1987 INDEX**

**ENGINES**

WP First Diesel #501.....ISSUE #27  
 Milwaukee U25B #5057.....ISSUE #27  
 Silver Lady Returns "805-A".ISSUE #26  
 Long Island FA-2.....ISSUE #26  
 Crane WPMW 90.....ISSUE #24  
 USS 12 an 80 Ton GE.....ISSUE #22

**CARS**

WP Ballast Cars.....ISSUE #27  
 481 Class Tender.....ISSUE #25  
 Logging Flats.....ISSUE #23 & 25  
 WP Box Car Series 3421-3422.ISSUE #24  
 Jumbo Cars.....ISSUE #22  
 WP 4180 cuft Airslide Covered Hoppers.....ISSUE #22

**HISTORY**

Oroville Dam Relocation....ISSUE #27  
 "Las Plumas".....ISSUE #26  
 Hutchinson Lumber Co...ISSUE #23 & 25  
 WP-FGE and Cars.....ISSUE #25  
 Surrounded by Steam Locomotives During the Grand Age of Steam ISSUES # 22....#23....#24.....  
 Santa Fe Cab 999197....ISSUE #25 & 26  
 New WP Logo.....ISSUE #24  
 Alaska in Portola.....ISSUE #23  
 Sacramento Northern Marine Division & Ferry "RAMON".....ISSUE #23  
 WP'S Marine Organization...ISSUE #22  
 Roster of Equipment Feb 87..ISSUE #23  
 WP Standard, Non-Agency Sign.ISSUE #26  
 Info on GP-7, WP 707.....ISSUE #24

**MILEPOSTS**

**How We're Doing**

WP's first piggy-back load from the East arrived in San Francisco October 10, routed DL&W, NKP, CB&Q, D&RGW and WP from New Jersey.

• • •

The *California Zephyr* average load for 12 months ending August, 1957, averaged 73.02 per cent of capacity, compared with a 74.55 per cent of capacity for the same period the year before. For the month of September, 1957, the load capacity averaged 77.7 per cent of capacity compared with 88.1 per cent of capacity for September, 1956.

• • •

Sacramento Northern, on September 20, asked the Interstate Commerce Commission for permission to reroute its train service in Sutter and Yuba counties because of proposal to abandon 10 miles of track between Pearson and East Nicolaus. Also requested about 23 miles of trackage rights over WP between Sankey and Cleveland since bridges over Bear River and Plumas Lake on its own lines require rebuilding and the expense is not warranted.

• • •

Following recent discontinuance by Pennsylvania of handling *California Zephyr* through-Pullman-car service between Chicago and New York, similar service by New York Central now discontinued since traffic would not justify purchase of additional sleeper required.

**TRAIN SHEET INDEX ALL BACK ISSUES.....**

**CARS**

WP tank car 1583.....ISSUE #7  
 WP box car 3032.....ISSUE #9  
 SN cabooses 1632.....ISSUE #9