

Trains, Trains, and More Trains...

1993 Pacific Limited Excursions

By Steve Habeck

...we were a team, not a group of individuals...

In 1992, Four railfan-oriented groups operated various segments of the UP 3985 trip from Cheyenne, Wyoming to San Jose, California for the 1992 NRHS convention in San Jose. This trip was known as "The Pacific Limited." These same four groups, The Union Pacific Historical Society, the Central Coast Chapter of the NRHS, The Promontory Chapter of the NRHS, and the Feather River Rail Society, have now combined their resources and formed an organization known as "The Pacific Limited Group," which has been selected by the Union Pacific to be the favored group to run UP passenger excursions west of Cheyenne, Wyoming.

The first Pacific Limited Group excursion was run in late May and early June of 1993; it ran from Salt Lake City, Utah to Portland, Oregon and returned. It was known as "The Oregon Trail Special," and it was part of the activities held to commemorate the 150th anniversary of the Oregon Trail. The train consisted of UP 3985, 2 water tenders and 16 cars, of which 11 were staffed and used by Pacific Limited. Although the train was not sold to capacity on any segment except Salt Lake City to Ogden, a round trip from Portland to Bend known as "The Deschutes River Special," helped assure a profit for the Pacific Limited Group. Highlights of the westbound trip included a "meet" with an authentic wagon train near Glenns Ferry, Idaho, and a 1-day layover in Baker, Oregon, which gave passengers and crew a chance to mingle at a barbecue held in the museum across from the park which has the Oregon Trail monument. The barbecue was supposed to be in the park, but unseasonably cool weather, severe thunderstorms, and marble-sized hail forced us indoors. We also had time to visit the Oregon Trail Interpretive Center at Flagstaff Hill, and were treated to a special run of the Sumpter Valley's Narrow-gauge train, powered by their Heisler #5.

The extremely scenic trip to Bend was highlighted by a meet between Extra 3985 east and Extra 6936 west, deep in the Columbia River Gorge; and when the Oregon Trail Special left Portland eastbound on June 12, 1993, DDA40X 6936 was cut in behind the water cars as the helper, and went with us to Pocatello, Idaho.

An advantage of the Pacific Limited Group running these excursions is that manpower needs are split among the 4 groups; as a result only about a dozen FRRS members were needed to staff the train. Although FRRS president Norm Holmes wasn't on board the train, he was never more than a phone call away for logistics and support. I was on board as the FRRS representative, and capable help was provided on the westbound trip by Dave and Julie Anderson, Joe Hill, Mike Howard, Gary and Pat Cousin, Lovell Randall and Jack Hathaway. Mike Romiez, Ed LaMentia, Harold Mulder, Steve Stepanek assisted eastbound. Errol Spangler, Les Paal, Roger Aten, Gary and Pat Cousin and myself helped out on the Bend trip. Gary provided a full set of radios, too.

Despite the fact that the car host crew was made up of people from all 4 groups, virtually everyone went out of their way to help out and to assist each other, usually without having to say anything to anybody. The feeling was that we were a team, not a group of individuals.

1994 Pacific Limited Tentative Schedule

So that you may plan your calendar for next year, we are listing the following **tentative** schedule of trips that are in the planning stage by the Pacific Limited Group for 1994:

- **Omaha to Ogden leaving May 4 in conjunction with the 125th anniversary of the completion of the Transcontinental Railroad at Promontory.**
- **A round trip between Salt Lake City and Los Angeles May 13-25.**
- **A round trip between Fremont and Portola July 1-10 with Portola-Keddie trips to help celebrate the FRRS' tenth anniversary.**

Please keep in mind that this schedule is subject to change. Details of the above trips will appear in subsequent issues of the Train Sheet as they become finalized.

Circle The Wagons

Plans are going forward toward our Tenth Anniversary celebration to be held July 2-3-4, 1994. Union Pacific has agreed to provide a passenger train pulled by their three rebuilt "E" units and will run a series of trips starting with a Fremont to Portola trip on July 1, 1994. Upon its arrival in Portola, passengers will be bused to Reno for overnight accommodations. There will be shuttle buses between Reno and Portola on July 2 and 3, also on July 2 and 3, there will be two round trips each day between Portola and Keddie with the train. On July 4, passengers will be bused from Reno to Portola and the train will go from Portola back to Fremont. On July 8, the train will run from Fremont to Oroville and on July 9, from Oroville to Westwood and return. On July 10, the train will return from Oroville to Fremont.

At Portola on July 2-3-4, 1994, we will have a number of visiting "covered wagons" (hopefully) from other railroads and museum groups. There will be a pageant on all three days in addition to model railroad layouts like we have on Railroad Days. Please mark your 1994 calendar for these dates to come to Portola to help us celebrate.

The Pacific Limited Group, of which we are a partner, will be in charge of the above train trips, and in addition will be sponsoring a trip to celebrate the 125th anniversary of the driving of a gold spike marking the completion of the first transcontinental railroad. The train will run between Omaha and Ogden in early May. The train then will go from Salt Lake City to Las Vegas, then Las Vegas to the Los Angeles area for two one day trips in that area. Full details on this service will be announced at a later date.