

ROCKY MOUNTAIN

July, 1965

Newsletter No. 71



P. O. Box 2391
Denver, Colorado 80201

The July meeting of the Rocky Mountain Railroad Club will resume the regular schedule in effect prior to the June annual banquet, and will be held on the usual second Wednesday of the month -- July 14, at 8:00 p.m. in the basement meeting room of the Western Federal Savings Association skyscraper -- 718 - 17th Street in downtown Denver. Program for the evening will be a new presentation by Club member Neal Miller of Longmont, covering operations on the Union Pacific in color movies. The enjoyable qualities of the material presented at Club meetings by this active member are well known, and all members and guests in atten-

dance at the July meeting are assured of another entertaining program.

** ** *

389 members and friends of the Rocky Mountain Railroad Club were aboard the 13-car narrow gauge special passenger excursion train which departed Alamosa on Saturday, May 29, to inaugurate the Club's traditional Memorial Day weekend operation. Twenty-eight states and Canada were represented by the excursionists, with seven having come from Delaware and six from New York for the affair; Californians turned out in the largest number, while New Mexico, Texas, Wyoming and Oklahoma all were represented in equal numbers.

Additional passengers came from such outlying states as Connecticut, Georgia, New Jersey, New Hampshire, Nevada, Ohio, Pennsylvania and Tennessee. With all the glories of a perfect Colorado spring day, a congenial and cosmopolitan atmosphere soon pervaded the entire train, and many exclamations of interest and enjoyment were overheard throughout the entire three days of the journey. The admirable handling of the train, the courtesy accorded our passengers by the Rio Grande's crew members and officials under the direction of Trainmaster Hubert Meek, the excellence of the photo stops, and the congeniality of all those aboard, seemed to lead to general agreement that the 1965 Memorial Day weekend excursion was the best ever.

Included in our consist both ways between Alamosa and Durango were open-side, roofed observation cars 450 and 451, which never lacked for enthusiastic riders. Since only 11 cars can be handles over the Silverton branch by the 470 series "Sports Models," however, one coach and one observation car were left at Durango on the second day, when the train was occupied by 425 passengers on the 1965 season's inaugural run over this famous stretch of trackage. A notable photo stop was made at the location of the new steel deck-girder bridge over the Animas just below Elk Park. Our train was the first string of "varnish" to operate over this substantial new structure, which replaces an old iron span and two ancient 64-foot Howe wood trusses.

Although blue sky was in evidence upon our arrival at Silverton, the locality's well-known "quick-change" weather was in full effect, but the light rain which saluted our departure on the return portion of the trip only seemed to add to the congeniality of our passengers and attention was soon diverted by the beautiful waterfalls and evidences of the winter's snow avalanches in the canon.

At the special program presented for our passengers that evening at the American Legion Hall in Durango, two spontaneous standing ovations occurred. The first was accorded our long-time and faithful friend, Rio Grande Conductor Alva Lyons, whose plans to retire at the end of the 1965 Silverton season, with more than 50 years of service, were made known when he was presented with a specially-bound and inscribed copy of "Colorado Midland" by President Ted McKee on behalf of all members of the Rocky Mountain Railroad Club. The second standing ovation was given to Club member Don Smith at the conclusion of his presentation of "Chalk Creek to the Past," reviewed in the May newsletter. The majority of our passengers, tired though they were, attended this program and spent an absorbing

evening reviewing the activities of the St. Elmo area and its inhabitants - present and past.

** ** ** ** **

It appears that no single news item of interest to railfans has stirred quite such an uproar as the information in last month's newsletter regarding the proposed retirement of Burlington steamer #5632. Copies of letters of protest, written to the "Q" by members of the Rocky Mountain Railroad Club, have been coming in to us in record numbers, and the measure of their effectiveness can be seen in the Burlington's official news release dated May 26, 1965, which proudly, and happily, proclaims that soon-to-retire President Harry Murphy has announced this magnificent giant will again be rebuilt to haul children's and railfan's special trains.

The release also states, "Because of the high cost, and difficulty of obtaining parts, it had previously been decided not to undertake repairs," and then continues with information that only eight boilermakers remain in Burlington service, down from several hundred a few decades ago. Lack of machinery used for steam locomotive repairs, and the unavailability of parts are also explained in the release, which states, "Staybolts, thousands of which are used to hold together the several sections of a locomotive firebox, could once be purchased for about 60 cents each. Today, Burlington pays about \$5.40."

Our particular thanks to Club members L. D. Mitchell of Colorado Springs, H. H. Moler of Overland Park, Kansas, and Mrs. George A. Youngdahl of Chicago, who have kept us posted with more than ordinary diligence in this matter. Mrs. Youngdahl's enthusiasm led to a short poem which she composed and sent to President Murphy. It is reproduced here since it assuredly expresses the feelings of many of us as a result of these glad tidings:

"THREE CHEERS FOR YOU, MR. MURPHY"

| | |
|---------------------------------|----------------------------|
| The worst announcement | Last week, the paper |
| The "Q" ever made | Had the finest of news, |
| Caused much steam-fan grief | And just the thing |
| To be promptly displayed | A steam-fan would choose. |
| Hideous thought, | We can look forward |
| No more 5632. | To 1966, |
| Only the scrap heap | To more years of steam, |
| Remained in view. | And more years of pics. |
| End of the line | Of all the stars |
| For 5632 | On the C B & Q |
| That was something | The one we'll remember |
| None could ever undo. | For keeps, is you. |
| All steam-fans grieved, | And every time |
| All were dismayed. | That train whistle blows, |
| Now their prayers are answered, | We'll say -- "Mr. Murphy |
| Their fears are allayed. | Hit it right on the nose." |

Selma Youngdahl -- 5/31/1965

** ** ** ** **

As editorialized in a recent issue of RAILWAY AGE, "1965 is the year of the flood, so far as western railroads are concerned. First there was the Mississippi River record breaker. Then Southern Pacific was hit by flooding in Texas. Now the Denver area is suffering, and Denver's railroads with it. Train delays were common; Missouri Pacific, for example, has one passenger train stranded in Denver and held another at Scott City, Kansas. The eastbound California Zephyr was also held up over one night in the Denver yards and the Denver Zephyr was annulled the same night. Colorado and Southern's yard got four to nine feet of water."

Principal cause of the disaster, from which Denver is still suffering mightily, was rain of cloudburst proportions on the north (Denver) side of the Palmer Lake divide and in the mountains to the west, on the afternoon of Wednesday, June 16. The resulting situation came close to paralleling the disaster at Pueblo on June 3, 1921 - 44 years and 13 days previously.

While the South Platte river, along whose canon the South Park line once wound its way, received and carried an exceptionally heavy amount of water that evening, the principal culprit was normally placid Plum Creek, a Platte tributary, whose course is followed by both the Rio Grande and Santa Fe main lines, as well as four-lane Interstate Highway 25 south of Denver, passing through Castle Rock, Larkspur and Palmer Lake enroute to Colorado Springs and Pueblo.

Don Higby, resident of Monument, south of Palmer Lake, reports that although the wind carried away the funnel to his rain gauge, the gauge still registered 12 inches of water in six hours. Across the divide to the north it was at least as bad, for the flood which developed in Plum Creek proceeded to undermine Rio Grande trackage, carried away the Santa Fe bridge across the stream just east of Sedalia, and, to all intents, wiped out the Rio Grande's spur to the Louviers powder plant just below Sedalia. When the mass of Plum Creek water and debris, after combining with that of the Platte, reached Littleton, Englewood and Denver, nothing could withstand the onslaught.

The joint C&S-Santa Fe yard, situated on the east bank of the Platte in lower downtown Denver, was the most affected of the city's rail facilities; cars were floated off their trucks, tipped, turned and carried away; the C&S wrecking derrick, on the first track next to the river, stood sturdy and upright all through the height of the flood, but as the water receded the supporting track gave way and she just decided to lay down on her side. It appeared after the flood that every caboose in the yard had emulated a boat; the caboose track was a mess!

Of course, rail transportation between Denver and Pueblo ceased, with all passenger trains being annulled. In an effort to reopen at least a single track, Rio Grande and Santa Fe forces combined and worked 'round the clock to install a new bridge over Plum Creek at Sedalia, driving piling for a 14-panel (16' per panel) trestle across the stream. The new bridge finally was ready for service on Friday evening, June 25 -- nine days after the flood, and regular service between Denver, Colorado Springs and Pueblo was reinstated via the single track Santa Fe line on Sunday, June 27th.

Freight traffic between the two cities, meanwhile, undertook an extraordinary detour. Not unlike Club member Lucius Beebe's apt description of the Rio Grande Southern as a gigantic shoofly 162 miles long, so were Denver and Pueblo joined by another gigantic shoofly 387 miles long! All C&S, Santa Fe and Rio Grande freight business during the period of outage was handled by way of the Moffat Tunnel, Bond, Dotsero, Minturn, Tennessee Pass, Salida and the Royal Gorge, with volume requiring operation of four to five heavy trains each way per day, each using the services of four engine and train crews, sometimes Santa Fe or C&S power, and approximately 18 hours for the journey.

To the north and east of Denver, along the Platte and its tributaries, service via the Union Pacific over the old Kansas Pacific line to Kansas City was knocked out, affecting also Rock Island service which uses this trackage east of Denver to Limon. As a result, Rock Island power and trains have been seen on the D&RGW mainline for the first time since the roads' joint trackage agreement was cancelled in 1938! Both Burlington and Union Pacific main lines down the Platte River valley also were flooded out, forcing the detour of all Denver business through Cheyenne, Wyoming, over the UP during the first day or two after the flood. Club member Arl M. Cuthbert was in Cheyenne on the Saturday following the high water, and reports having seen the badly delayed Denver and California Zephyrs, consolidated into one train of 37 stainless steel cars, passing through Cheyenne, with a detoured Rock Island freight later using the same UP trackage.

After a short period of such detouring over the UP, the Burlington rerouted their trains to and from Cheyenne over the Colorado & Southern via Boulder, Longmont and Fort Collins. Club member Howard Fogg of Boulder recalls with pleasure the sights and sounds of twenty trains a day passing the depot in his city, where normal traffic usually comprises only four trains daily.

Included in the detour business on the C&S, of course, were the California and Denver Zephyrs, as well as freight trains of 125 to 150 cars -- an unheard-of type of operation and volume for the Burlington subsidiary. Rio Grande tracks in the Denver area, in addition to that road's traffic, have been carrying trains of the C&S, Burlington, Missouri Pacific and Rock Island!

To the relief of all, Plum Creek and the Platte have returned to almost normal flow, and the work of clearing debris, pumping low spots, rerailling cars, repairing flood-damaged equipment, and rebuilding water ravaged main lines is beginning to show some progress. Damage is so severe, however, that many weeks will be consumed before the rehabilitation can be considered complete.

** ** * * *

A chartered special 7-car excursion train, which included in its consist two domes and five other modern lightweight, stainless-steel cars, was operated by the Rocky Mountain Railroad Club over the Rio Grande from Denver to Winter Park, at the West Portal of the Moffat Tunnel, on Saturday afternoon, June 26. Accommodating 267 members and friends of our organization

enroute to a banquet celebrating the 27 years of our organization's existence, this was the 72nd special operation to be sponsored by the Club. After a hearty meal, which included an enormous serving of excellent prime rib of beef at the well-known Hochlandhof, those in attendance were treated to an inspiring program covering "Historic Alpine Tunnel," presented by Club member Dow Helmers of Pueblo.

Author of the detailed volume of the same title published by Sage Books of Denver in 1963, Mr. Helmers has acquired an intimate knowledge of his subject. His slides range from scenes of the days of construction of the historic shrine through its periods of operation, and end with fascinating views of the interior of the tunnel made with flash by Pueblo photographer Charles Webb in recent years before the west portal was blocked entirely by Nature's relentless forces, the entire show being accompanied by a beautifully prepared text narrated in just the proper and appropriate style.

Although the hour was late when our special reached Denver Union Terminal at the end of the return journey, there is no doubt the event will be long remembered by all who participated.

** ** *

The Alamosa-Durango-Silverton narrow gauge continues in the forefront of attractions for railfan trips. Four special excursions have already been arranged for the area this fall, these being:

August 19-20-21 -- Three days on the Rio Grande (August 20th on the Silverton) as part of a 20-day safari across the continent from San Francisco and return. Sponsored by Pacific Coast Chapter, Railway and Locomotive Historical Society; details available from Arthur Lloyd, 974 Pleasant Hill Road, Redwood City, Calif.

September 20-24 inclusive -- Pueblo to Silverton and return by rail, thence to Denver by way of the Royal Gorge, Salida, Tennessee Pass, Dotsero, Bond and Moffat Tunnel, originating in the Bay area September 18. Details from Central Coast Railway Club, P. O. Box 1714, San Jose 6, California.

October 1-2-3 -- The Eighth Annual KOLOR KARAVAN, sponsored by the Kiwanis Club of Alamosa, Colorado. Three days Alamosa-Durango-Silverton and return, at the height of the colorful fall aspen season in Colorado. \$23 round trip, \$11.50 for children 6 to 12. Details and ticket order forms from Alamosa Kiwanis Club, c/o Dr. R. E. Wick, Adams State College, Alamosa, Colorado.

October 10 - Sunday. The Third annual one-day picnic turn, Alamosa to Cumbres Summit and return, sponsored by Gamma Gamma Chapter of Epsilon Sigma Alpha sorority. The 16 ladies of this group do a tremendous job -- last year being responsible for the largest single-engine passenger train ever to be handled on the narrow gauge (Newsletter 63, November, 1964). Departure Alamosa 7 a.m.; fare \$6.00, \$3.00 for children under 12. Details from Mrs. Larry Petrini, 101 Pike, Alamosa, or from Epsilon Sigma Alpha Sorority at P.O. Box 237, Alamosa.

Additional variety also is available for the fall season. Trip Committee Chairman Ed Haley is working with the Union Pacific for another steam-powered excursion into Wyoming, probably in September, using once again sleek, fast and powerful U.P. 4-8-4 No. 8444. Upon completion of arrangements, details will be sent to all members of the Rocky Mountain Railroad Club for what may be one of the last operating uses of this famous engine.

** ** *

We hope you have taken note of the fact that your Club newsletter is now being sent via first class mail. The change from third class, and its many delays en route, became effective with last month's mailing so that our out-of-town members might receive Club news a little faster and thus be able to schedule their participation in various Club activities with a little more ease. Your officers felt that the added cost of first class postage would be well worth the expense if it would help members, particularly those living some distance from Denver, in any way. Response thus far from those who noticed the change last month has been heartening, and we think you'll agree that the move was beneficial.

** ** *

Humor of the 1920's:

Drug store customer: "I want some consecrated lye."

Druggist: "You mean concentrated lye."

"It does nutmeg any difference. That's what I camphor. What does it sulphur?"

"Fifteen cents. I never cinnamon with so much wit."

"Well, I should murrh-murrh." Yet I ammonia novice at it."

-- D&RGW Employees Magazine, July, 1926

Ted S. McKee, President
Herbert O'Hanlon, Vice President

Richard H. Kindig, Secretary
Ane O. Clint, Treasurer