

P A C I F I C N O R T H W E S T C H A P T E R
NATIONAL RAILWAY HISTORICAL SOCIETY
T H E T R A I N M A S T E R

Volume 2 - Number 6

Portland, Oregon

October 7, 1957.

Editor - C. J. Keenan 6354 N. E. Cleveland Ave. Portland 11, Oregon

Notice of NEXT REGULAR MEETING

The next regular meeting will be held Thursday, October 17th, 1957, in Room 208, Union Station, Portland, Oregon. Colored slides by George Burton, Al Haij and Sam Merrell provided another dividend of real entertainment for members attending the September meeting. Each meeting during the past year has had pleasant surprises.

UNION PACIFIC'S "APACER"

(Editor's Note: Although the varnish beholds the glamor and sets the stage it can be said that freight trains are attractive too, and some really intriguing, especially Union Pacific Train Numbers 125 and 126. After watching with considerable interest at various times the departure of number 126 from the Union Station at Portland, I asked Press-Radio-Television Relations of the Union Pacific for a story about these unusual freight trains and they were kind enough to come through and here it is for your digest.)

Union Pacific's Merchandise Special, now in its fifth year of service, has become a byword among Northwest shippers.

With the regularity and dependability that is peculiar to railroads, No. 126 has been providing speedy service on less-than-carload freight five days a week since her 714-mile run started July 20th, 1953, from Portland to Pocatello, Idaho.

At 6:55 P.M. Monday through Friday, three low-throated, 750-horsepower diesel units glide out of Portland's Union Station with a string of box cars and trailer-freight cars, and other freight trains must clear the tracks when No. 126 comes booming along. She only goes into sidings for passenger trains.

One of the things that makes the Merchandise special a "Hotshot" freight is the pride the crews take in keeping her on her fast schedule. These men come from the Main Line freight crews, and it takes "whiskers" to hold a job like that.

The story is told that a trainmaster was standing on the platform of The Dalles station one night when a high-balling crew stopped No. 126 to cut off a boxcar. Checking his watch he noted the run had been made a few minutes faster than the schedule - and almost as fast as the Union Pacific's top passenger train. Raising an eyebrow toward the conductor, the trainmaster said: "On-time performance is what we are after, but don't let your enthusiasm for this train make you think you should out run the City of Portland." The conductor acknowledged the reprimand with a friendly grin, knowing the trainmaster was doing his job according to the rules, but he also was sure the official was pleased with the spirit of his men.

"The Merchandise Special was inaugurated," said C. W. Evers, Union Pacific Traffic Manager, "to meet the competition of the trucking industry. And the special has proved to be a real competitor."

UNION PACIFIC'S "APACER" - Contd.

Evers pointed out that the Union Pacific's trailer-freight service, carrying goods in truck trailers transported on flat cars has been a "Natural" for the Merchandise Special. The two services together provide even faster service on the delivery of merchandise.

For example, a semi-trailer loaded by a Portland shipper is hauled by Union Pacific truck to the freight yard and there loaded on a flatcar specially constructed for the transportation of highway truck trailers.

The flat car is added to the Special so that it can be set out at its destination with the fewest moves by the freight crew. This procedure is used in making up the entire train. When the trailer reaches its destination, it is unloaded from the flat car and taken by truck to the receiver and placed at his dock for unloading. Such shipments have been almost entirely free from both loss and damage, said Evers.

No. 126 can boast that it provides first-morning delivery on merchandise to Kennewick, Richland and Walla Walla in Washington (cars are cut off at Hinkle, Oregon) and The Dalles, Pendleton, LaGrande, Baker and Ontario in Oregon and Weiser, Nampa and Boise in Idaho. Second morning delivery is received by merchants in Pocatello, Twin Falls and Idaho Falls in Idaho and the Ogden-Salt Lake City area in Utah.

"The success of the Merchandise Special can be seen in its growth," said Evers. "We started with 12 cars and now haul an average of 35. The number of cars depends on the total tonnage. Shippers and receivers tell us that trucks can't deliver merchandise any faster than this train."

CUR NATIONAL CONVENTION

The National Convention held in Roanoke, Virginia, August 31st, September 1st and 2nd, will go down in history as one of our best and largest to date. Both the Norfolk and Western and The Virginian went all out to show our people true Southern hospitality.

About 600 railroad enthusiasts embarked the morning of September 1st on a special train trip over the Norfolk and Western from Roanoke to Matoaka, West Virginia, via Pocahontas where the group toured the famous demonstration Coal Mine. Steam locomotives powered the train to Matoaka which consisted of twelve coaches and three gondolas fitted with comfortable seats. The return trip over The Virginian from Matoaka to Roanoke was the first time that a passenger train has operated over this railroad using an electric locomotive.

More than 400 railfans boarded the special train on September 2nd for Blacksburg, Va. On one portion of the line, three steam locomotives were used to pull the train. This was one convention where most members appeared in no hurry to leave for home. Hotel Roanoke, convention headquarters, is tops for beauty and comfort and the food is scrumptious.