

A REPORT ON STEAM IN THE WEST
by William Wootton

On a summer trip through Arizona, Colorado, New Mexico and Wyoming, Bill Wootton and Vic Koenigsberg visted various steam railroads now still using steam locomotives. The following story is the story of what they observed and learned..Editor.

We missed seeing the Magma Arizona operate as they have changed their schedule as long as the copper strike is on. Formerly they operated a train to Magma (from Superior, Arizona) on Tuesday, Thursday, and Saturday. On Monday, Wednesday, and Friday they switched the mine and Pearlite plants. At present they operate only Tuesday through Friday, going to Magma usually on Tuesday and Friday. On the other two days they do whatever switching has to be done and no more. It is harder now to get to the engine shed and to see the MA #6 which is on display by the smelter as a new fence has been erected around the area.

Any steam fan who wants to see this line should do so soon. Frank Sarver, the pro-steam president of the line, passed away about two months ago. On top of this, a new man from the Canadian operation now at work in the General Manager's office would like to see the entire railroad ripped up, or at least dieselized. The diesel will probably be the answer, and speculation has it that one will appear on the property sometime shortly after the first of the year. At that time engine 7 will be retired and the 5 kept for standby.

The White Mountain Scenic is doing better as far as passenger totals go. The equipment looks nice, but the outfit could do a lot more to improve the area in which train passengers eat their picnic lunch. The facilities at the picnic grove at the end of the line are of the most primitive nature. Usually at the end of every run the engine (usually ex-Santa Maria Valley 100) goes down and switches cars of the Apache Railway off the wye. This operation adds variety to what is otherwise another "tourist run." The track over which this line operates is owned by the Southwest Forest Industries which, until the first few days of August, used it as a logging line. The log trains are now gone forever and the rails between Maverick, Arizona, and a point approximately twenty miles from McNary where the White Mountain trains terminate will be torn up shortly. This is the last logging line in Arizona. The other SWFI line, the one out of Flagstaff, was given up more than a year ago and their last engine, 2-8-0 #2, is now on display at the company office there.

Several amusement-type tourist roads are operating in Colorado at the present time. One is located at Cripple Creek, a famous mining town. Known as the Cripple Creek and Victor, the line is two-foot gauge and at present uses an ex-Cia Metalurgica Mexicana Penoles 0-4-OST. The other operation is located in the "Rimrock" amusement park just outside Estes Park, Colorado. The scenery on the way up is worth more than what you will see when you get there. The train runs about every hour and is not well patronized.

If a person is really deserate for steam action, then they might drive all the way to Laramie, Wyoming--we did. The Monolith Mid-west Portland Cement plant there still uses a railroad to bring limestone from the quarry to the mill alongside Highway 287. Power for the seven mile line, known as the Laramie Valley Railway, is supplied by ex-Union Pacific 4453, working for the present company with the same number. Another engine, 4455, is stored unserviceable at the plant. Operations normally begin about 7:00am, Monday through Friday, when the train leaves for the quarry. A dirt road follows the line for about four miles from the plant west, but no other roads come close. A road into the quarry leads off from Wyoming Highway 230 a few miles out of town. Loading the limestone takes about four hours. The train is due back by about 2:30pm. The crew then changes and the second crew spots the cars for unloading. All switching of cars within the plant other than the ore cars is performed by the Union Pacific, whose main line forms the eastern boundary of the plant property.

Other steam can occasionally be found at the Colorado Railroad Museum where engine 346 provides the power. On most weekends when operation is scheduled, however, a small 3-foot gauge gasoline engine pulls the train around the grounds. Please turn to page 4.