

# southwest corner

by John Hathaway

A couple of months ago we talked about the trend towards lowered horsepower ratings on many of the new diesel-electrics appearing on American railroads. However an exception to this trend has been introduced by EMD and is making its initial appearance in the Southwest Corner.

SOUTHERN PACIFIC has taken delivery of three EMD SD45X's (SP 9500-9502). These 4200 horsepower locomotives made their first appearance in August of this year. Although externally similar to the very popular SD45 (SP alone has 356 of these 3600 hp models), the SD45X's are mounted on SDF45 frames (the SDF45 is the passenger equivalent of the SD45 and has a slightly longer frame to accommodate a steam generator). The SD45X's can also be distinguished by the presence of four blower fans on the top of the long hood as opposed to three on the SD45.

The higher horsepower rating is a result of improved traction motors, a new turbocharger, and a higher compression ratio and more r.p.m.'s from the diesel engine. The 20-cylinder diesel is basically the same model found in the SD45.

After arriving on the SP system in September the new units were assigned to Roseville to work the hill eastward. If the experimental units prove successful EMD may incorporate the SD45X as a standard model by early 1972 or even sooner.

There are also four SD45X's painted in EMD demo color schemes that will be barnstorming the country to test the new design under a variety of operating conditions. SANTA FE, being a big customer of EMD's, will probably have a crack at the demos, and one of Santa Fe's favorite testing grounds in the Coast Lines First Division between San Bernardino and Barstow through Cajon Pass. Who knows, the demos might even find their way as far south as San Diego some night.

Speaking of SANTA FE, that railroad is once again devising ways of extending the usefulness of older locomotives. If you'll recall, it was Santa Fe who rebuilt old F7A covered-wagon type diesels into "GP8" hood diesels. The Cleburne, Texas, shops have turned out their second GP8, or CF7 if you will, this time utilizing a wrecked GP7 for a portion of the new body.

Well, now Santa Fe has found a use for old ALCO RSD5 road switchers. That road's San Bernardino shops have turned RSD5 #2110 into a "drone" unit numbered 9850. The diesel engine was removed from the unit and replaced with concrete and scrap iron to make up for the loss of weight. The drone was wired to allow it to operate with the 9800 class RSD15's of the system,

and will be utilized with the 9800's in hump yard service. Hopefully the drone will increase the braking power and reduce wheel slip of the parent engine. Apparently the 9850 has been sent east for tests before more similar modifications are made.

The drone has had its cab removed and covered with sheet steel, and has a similar appearance to a booster type locomotive.

A couple of years ago the then new GE U28CGs and U30CGs were used extensively in San Diegan service. Numerous problems plagued the units and they were taken off the run. At last word these passenger-designed locomotives are now working freights in and out of the Chicago area.

And going even further back into San Diegan history, the beautiful ALCO PAs that were the mainstay for that passenger run are now (thirteen of them, at least) stored in a small yard at McCook, Illinois. With a rise in stainless steel prices, these classic locomotives are probably headed for the Piolet Bros. scrapers. Four ex-Santa Fe PAs still remain in active service on the Delaware & Hudson back east and add a hint of class found nowhere else today.

SANTA FE has experimented with the use of mid-train helper units operated by radio controlled units on at least one potash train into San Diego. A combination of four SD40s and SD45s on the nose and four SD40s and SD45s midtrain (with control unit) were seen on September 20th. The grade up out of Sorrento Valley towards Miramar is one of the stiffest on the whole Santa Fe system, and the numerous sharp curves only increase the problem. Before a flat limit of 4500 tons was established for the Fourth District inbound trains often had to double that portion of the run. If the mid-train helpers work out, possibly heavier trains will start appearing in San Diego.

And who knows, maybe the heavier loads will bring some of the travelling SD45X demos down south this way.

## CALENDAR

### DECEMBER

25 - Christmas

### JANUARY

- 1 - New Year's Day
- 5 - Board Meeting, San Diego Trust & Savings 8:30pm
- 17 - PSRMA Annual Installation Dinner, 7:30pm Sir George's Smorgasborg, La Mesa