

CAJON



Herb Sullivan



PASS REVISITED



I TO VISIT Cajon Pass in the days of steam we would crawl out of bed early and catch a streetcar down to the big Spanish-style Los Angeles Union Passenger Terminal. After a few cups of coffee in the Harvey House, we'd dash down that long tunnel to a coach seat on the *Pacific Limited*. Three hours later the Union Pacific train would drop us off onto the cinders at Cajon station or Summit for a day of hiking and picture-taking.

Or we'd wait until 9:50 a.m. for the *San Bernardino Local*, then settle back into the plush seats while Santa Fe Atlantic 1468 hauled us out through the rural stations and packing sheds of the Orange Empire. In the heat of San Bernardino's summer we'd lie on the grass outside the depot to watch the doubleheaded freight and passenger trains taking off to do battle with the Cajon. At night, sections of the *Fast Mail* and *Grand Canyon Limited* would roll down off the pass, trailing clouds of brakeshoe smoke and scents from distant deserts.

Today, almost 30 years later, the doubleheaded 4-8-2's of our *Pacific Limited* are gone, along with the Union Pacific Challengers and Northerns that once flashed through the groves and deserts of Southern California. Gone as well are the varieties of Santa Fe 2-10-2's, and even the *Local* itself, lost in the early 1950's as smog and heavy urban development impacted the Los Angeles area. Virtually all of the steam power that fought the Cajon grades has gone the way of the shiny new Santa Fe 2-10-10-2 Mallets which in 1911 Herb Sullivan photographed so well outside the San Bernardino roundhouse.

Closer to our minds today, but still fading or gone from the Pass, are the heroes of the first generation of diesels: the bright blue-and-yellow EMD FT, F3, and F7 freighters of the Santa Fe; the long-nosed Alco PA, FA, and RSD15 units of Santa Fe and/or Union Pacific; the Fairbanks-Morse passenger units of both roads; several generations of gas-turbines; and the stubby 2000 h.p. FM road-switchers and EMD cow-and-calf units which once helped UP freight and passenger trains alike over these mountains. The cow-and-calves are grazing in greener and less demanding pastures while the last of the H20-44's exist on the rails of the Southwestern Portland Cement Company at Victorville.

DESPITE the threats of a world with too many atomic weapons and too little gasoline, let's take a trip together today over Cajon Pass, by Toyota Land Cruiser rather than by *Chief* or *City of Los Angeles*. Daily Amtrak trains operate over the pass on Santa Fe rails, but only the westbound former *Super Chief* crosses in anything like daylight hours, shortly after dawn in summer.

We're in luck today. As we drive up to the tall stucco depot in San Bernardino we feel clear dry winds blowing in off the



SAN BERNARDINO: ivy arches, stucco domes . . .

RICHARD STEINHEIMER

photographs/THE AUTHOR



AN SD40 leads eastbound freight up the hill.



ON DISPLAY at San Bernardino: onetime Cajon champ.

EASTBOUND TONNAGE passes westbound container train.

desert, shoving aside the smoky corruption emanating from Kaiser Steel and the urban areas to the west. As we look north we can even see clearly the notch between the mountains which marks the pass.

The depot itself is worthy of study, with domes faintly reminiscent of the Santa Fe's stylish La Grande depot in Los Angeles of many years ago. Inside, a high-ceilinged old waiting room and tile Amtrak ticket counter tell stories of busier days. From the far end of the waiting room we hear the sound of typewriters in the Santa Fe freight traffic office that fills out some of the niches of the old Harvey House. Here in prewar days Harvey Girls in stiffly starched aprons waited on passengers who dashed in from the *California Limited* and other name trains of the era. Upstairs are offices of the Los Angeles Division of the Atchison, Topeka & Santa Fe and the offices of Chief Dispatcher D. F. Hodges and the other green-eyeshade boys who dispatch Santa Fe trains. Their territory reaches from the Pacific at San Diego to the wastes of the Mojave at Needles, including the new double-track TCS system we'll be seeing in action over the pass.

Outside through the ivy arches, switchers are at work in the Santa Fe A Yard. To the west we see the *Mt. Rubidoux*, a former Soo business car now owned by the California Southern Railroad Museum. In a grassy park near the *Mt. Rubidoux* is the last Santa Fe steamer in San Bernardino, No. 3751, the first

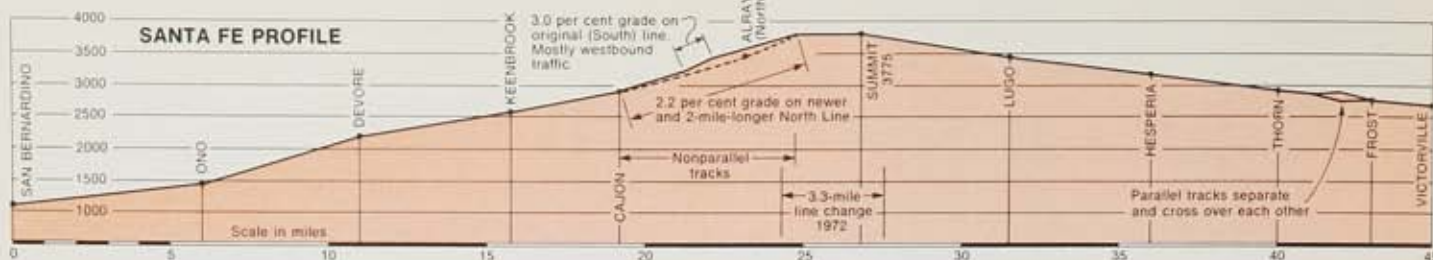
in what were to become several classes of Northerns. She's well maintained but bears little resemblance to those hot noisy beasts which used to whip us through the orange groves at more than 90 mph on the *San Diegans* and *California Limited*.

Stepping up onto the Mt. Vernon overpass at the other end of the park, we get a fine view of railroading in San Bernardino. To the west is the Santa Fe engine terminal and the rails of the Second District, which disappear toward Pasadena and Los Angeles through the bedroom communities of the San Gabriel foothills. Curving in from the left is the Third District freight line from L. A. via Riverside Junction, where UP joins for the Cajon climb. To the southwest we see switchers and local freight power, including second-generation GP30 and GP35 units working the newer B Yard and doubtless mumbling something like, "They can't do this to me!"

East of the overpass is the depot and the rest of the A Yard, as well as the line of dead power waiting to enter the huge San Bernardino shops. Here the lame, the blind, and the feeble of Santa Fe dieseldom wait for a new start in life. The shops now are engaged in a major rebuilding program of SD24 units. Graduates of this program emerge as SD26's, ready for post-graduate work in the mountains of the West.

Adjacent to the shops until recently were two quite different locomotives, both being preserved for posterity, Alligator 9820, now stored by Santa Fe in Albuquerque, is





one of several units set aside by Santa Fe as part of its preservation program; Southern Pacific 5021, a big three-cylindrical 4-10-2, remains in San Bernardino, kept by a railfan group for possible live operation someday. This Southern Pacific type came to Southern California in the 1930's after being bumped from Donner Pass by the new generations of cab-in-fronts. The 4-10-2's finished their careers on the Oregon lines but still are fondly remembered by crewmen and fans alike for their service on Beaumont Hill.

Say! Off to the west heavy Santa Fe power is moving with a manifest freight off the Third District into the A Yard. The train moves steadily toward us, having already picked up its crew in the B Yard. We feel the cement viaduct throb and shake as the blue-and-yellow SD40 and SD45 units move under us toward the pass and meet a westbound container train stopped for a crew change.

There's time for a photograph, but then we're off to follow this baby up the hill. We grab a fast drink of water at the bottom of the stairs, then jump into the Land Cruiser and head up over the viaduct. We're not in a big hurry, but still it's disconcerting to see the head end thundering up the hill in the far distance as we wait for the traffic signal at Ninth Street. We approach the tracks and go straight ahead, avoiding the main roadway of Mount Vernon which swings to the left, and like magic we're onto Cajon Boulevard with nearly 6 miles of side-by-side running ahead of us.

By the time we catch the head end, the EMD's have settled down to a 20 mph gait on the 2.2 per cent. Listen to those 645's

talk! Shoot all the pan shots you wish while I keep the Toyota rolling along.

Cajon means "box" in Spanish, and that's where we're headed — straight up into the box canyon ahead of us. This tangent was one of the favorite haunts of a generation of rail photographers. Lucius Beebe, Charles Clegg, Herb Sullivan, and H. L. Kelso, among others, made classic shots of doubleheaded AT&SF and UP passenger trains coming up this hill.

The locomotives still are pouring noise into the side window as we see the embankment of the SP's Palmdale Cutoff coming in from the left to join us for the climb to Summit.

At Verdemon we get our first good look at the new double-track TCS system in service between San Bernardino and Barstow. All of the familiar black signal bridges have been taken out of service, and new trackside target signals have been placed on each side of the double track. Sidings such as those at Ono, Devore, and Cajon have been abandoned or reduced to spur status. In their place are six TCS-controlled 50 mph double crossovers. These are spaced by running time rather than by distance. In the direction we are going, they are found at Verdemon, Cajon, Summit, Lugo, Frost, and Hodge. All but the last are on Cajon Pass.

You could say that Cajon Pass was formed by earthquakes because this notch which separates the San Gabriel and San Bernardino ranges is the outward expression of the San Andreas Fault. A major quake took place in the pass in 1899, and in 1906 the same fault leveled much of the city of San Francisco. But the main contribution of the fault to local history was



SD45's really roaring en route to the summit.



AS our SD45's near Devore they meet a westbound at Cajon Boulevard.

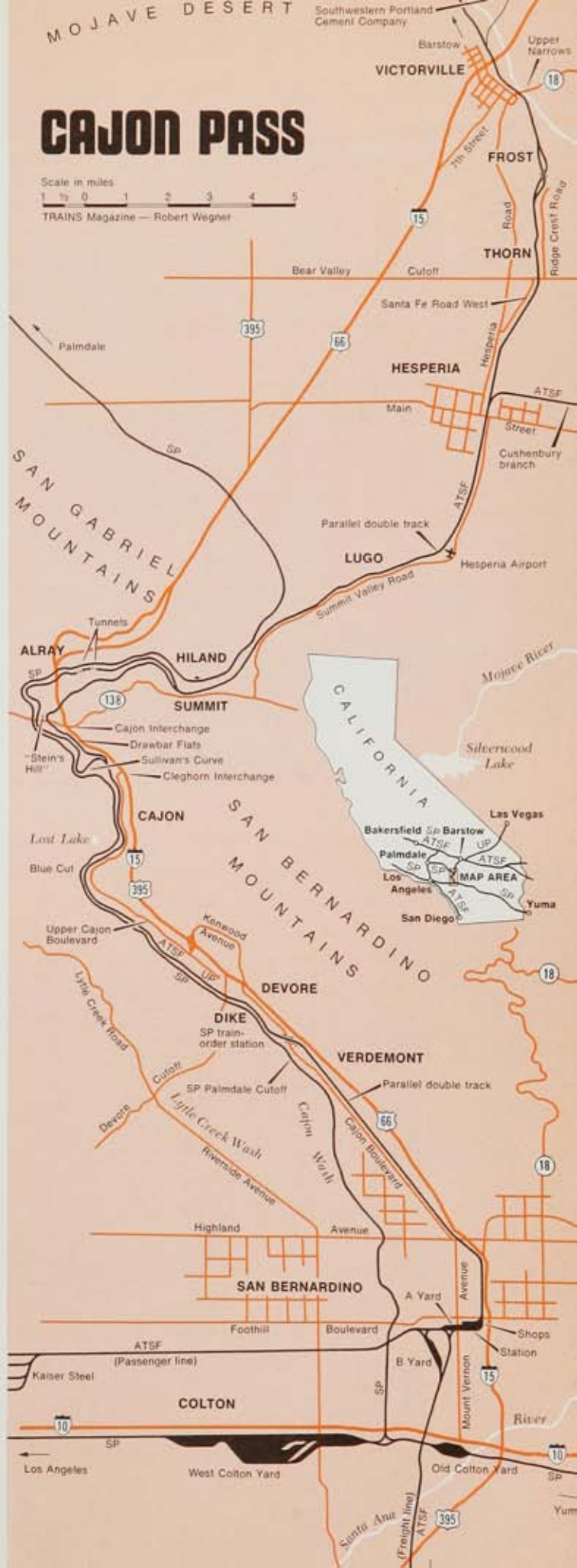


to give wagon trains from Utah and other places a breach in the ring of mountains which surround the Los Angeles basin.

Santa Fe came through the pass in 1885, driving a spike which was the final link between the road's leased Mojave-to-Needles line and its Temecula Canyon route to San Diego. Too much liquid "California sunshine" caused the abandonment of the Temecula line in favor of the Surf Line in 1888, but Santa Fe already had joined the club of transcontinental railroads.

In 1905, UP predecessor Los Angeles, San Pedro & Salt Lake Railway arrived with money in hand to convince Santa Fe to share its Cajon trackage. This plus generally increasing traffic made a bottleneck out of the 3 per cent grade from Cajon to Summit. The answer was to doubletrack the line in 1913. Today the original 3 per cent line is the South track from Cajon to Summit. The new line between the points, now called the North track, takes a more devious route, resulting in a 2.2 per cent grade and 2 miles extra in distance. With TCS, either track can be used as readily as the other, but the larger percentage of eastbound trains use the gentler grades of the North line. Only heavily powered light eastbound trains can tackle the 3 per cent of the South line and avail themselves of that line's fewer curves and shorter distance. A regular visitor to this track each morning is the *Super C* hotshot which whips up the grade behind three, four, or five big units.

Our Santa Fe freight now is approaching Devore, and the



roadway swings us beneath the main lines in an underpass just as a westbound Santa Fe manifest meets our train on the bridge. Wow! A minute or so later we see the lonely little caboose on our left which marks the SP's train-order office at Dike, one of only two on the cutoff.

A mile or so farther we see a familiar sign for Interstate 15. We take the Victorville on-ramp, joining any big-time spenders headed for the gaming tables of Las Vegas. But we're smaller spenders by nature, so we turn off at the Kenwood Avenue interchange and take a left at the stop sign.

The road beneath the freeway ends at our old friend Cajon Boulevard, now bisected by Lytle Creek Wash road alias the Devore Cutoff. So we'll call this Upper Cajon Boulevard and take it for another 6 miles up the pass. At Blue Cut we see heavy Union Pacific DD power dropping down the 2.2 per cent grade with a trace of brakeshoe smoke showing from the long train.

Just after we round the bluffs at Blue Cut, the rift valley of the San Andreas Fault lies above the SP tracks (best seen from Interstate 15) and Lost Lake sag pond is in the same valley not far above the rails. Lost Lake is another of those traditionally "bottomless" lakes.

We're close to the rails again as we pass the site of the former station at Cajon. Just before the Cleghorn interchange with I-15 we do a left, which brings us to the end of Upper Cajon Boulevard.

Since we have the Land Cruiser today, we'll just bull ahead; but this is where many fans would want to leave their nice shiny cars to avoid that sweaty-palms feeling.

Dropping into low gear, we swing down the dirt road across both Santa Fe tracks and then loop back in the direction of San Berdoo. We take the first good right turn into the sandy wash of Cajon Creek and make a hell of a splash as we ford the 5-foot-wide stream. Water is running off the windshield and the roof as we climb the opposite bank.

Right here I have a few words for novice desert drivers who want to survive to become pros.

First, anytime you think you're all alone on one of these dirt or paved roads, remember that the guy just around the next bend is thinking the same. Second, if you choose to go through deep sand, follow my variation of that old Texas Rangers motto, *Be Right and Keep Coming*. The variation is *Stay in the Ruts and Keep Coming, Briskly*. Always park off the roadway, don't litter, and observe private property, and you'll be respected by people whose lives are spent in the desert.

As we come up out of the wash we take a left at the first wye, a right at the next, then another left. Now we're headed up toward the big rock formations, upon which sometimes on sunny summer mornings can be seen the "Phantom of the

Cajon"—shadows in the rocks above the SP tracks which resemble a flute player with beret. Our road crosses the Santa Fe North line, but we keep on going in the same direction. At the next wye intersection we go up the left leg, and after a few bumps we pull into a large cleared area beside the SP and AT&SF main lines. We're at Sullivan's Curve, named for the late rail photographer Herb Sullivan, who in the days before and after the war made a name for himself by scouring these hills with his Graflex and shooting the endless processions of Santa Fe and Union Pacific trains.

Tremendous changes have come to the curve. Many short fast trains go up what was the "down" track of Sullivan's day, bypassing this North line. And often now heavy westbound trains moving down the hill take advantage of this 2.2 per cent grade to ease their descent from Summit.

Sounds rising from the valley tell us that our Santa Fe freight is catching up with us and will come up this line. We hear those sounds of the heavy power echo off the rocks as the train rounds the bend and continues up the hill. A moment later we hear distantly the dynamic braking and see a trio of Santa Fe U36C's dropping down into Cajon off the 3 per cent grade of the South track.

Most Santa Fe power today here is six-motored, and like classes of engines tend to be in the same lashups. F45, SD45, SD40, SD24/26, U33C, U36C, and GP35 units are common. In general Santa Fe runs the most short fast trains, but occasionally the longest and heaviest. The every-four-days York Canyon Coal typically runs 12,000 tons utilizing radio-controlled helpers.

Union Pacific lives up to its Unlimited Power nickname with frequent concentrations of more than 20,000 horsepower. Seeing four big Centennial DDA40X's racing over the top of the hill at dawn is train-watching in a league with seeing the doubleheaded Big Boys once found on Sherman Hill. "Smaller" UP power is U50C, DD35A, DD35, SD45, SD40, SD24, U30C, and GP9 units. Also seen are SD24, GP30, and GP9 cableless boosters. Generally UP trains are loaded with power, although they may be short or long. The UP westbound every-fourth-day coal trains typically utilize Santa Fe helpers, making a sort of "Santa Pacific" combination.

SP trains are consistently long, usually with just enough power to let them make the summit at Hiland. Sometimes head-end or rear-end helpers are used on the 2.2 per cent westbound climb from West Colton yard; they cut out at Hiland to return light or to use their dynamic braking to "help" something coming east down the hill. SP trains coming down the hill toward West Colton are eastbound by timetable, while Santa Fe trains moving down the same hill are westbound by

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Santa Fe.

1941...1973

SULLIVAN'S CURVE, the rock-strewn turn made famous in the photographs by the late Herb Sullivan, was the site of a widely published publicity shot (above) of Santa Fe 100, the system's first FT, on its first eastbound trip on February 16, 1941. Steinheimer repeated the view in 1973 with today's EMD freight units.





WESTBOUND Santa Fe tonnage, mostly auto-racks, storms up the east slope of the pass on 1.5 per cent in 1973. In the distance are the rocks of the Upper Narrows of the Mojave River and an eastbound Santa Fe freight. Adjacent to the trees near the rear of the oncoming train is Frost, site of double crossovers controlled by the dispatcher down in San Bernardino.

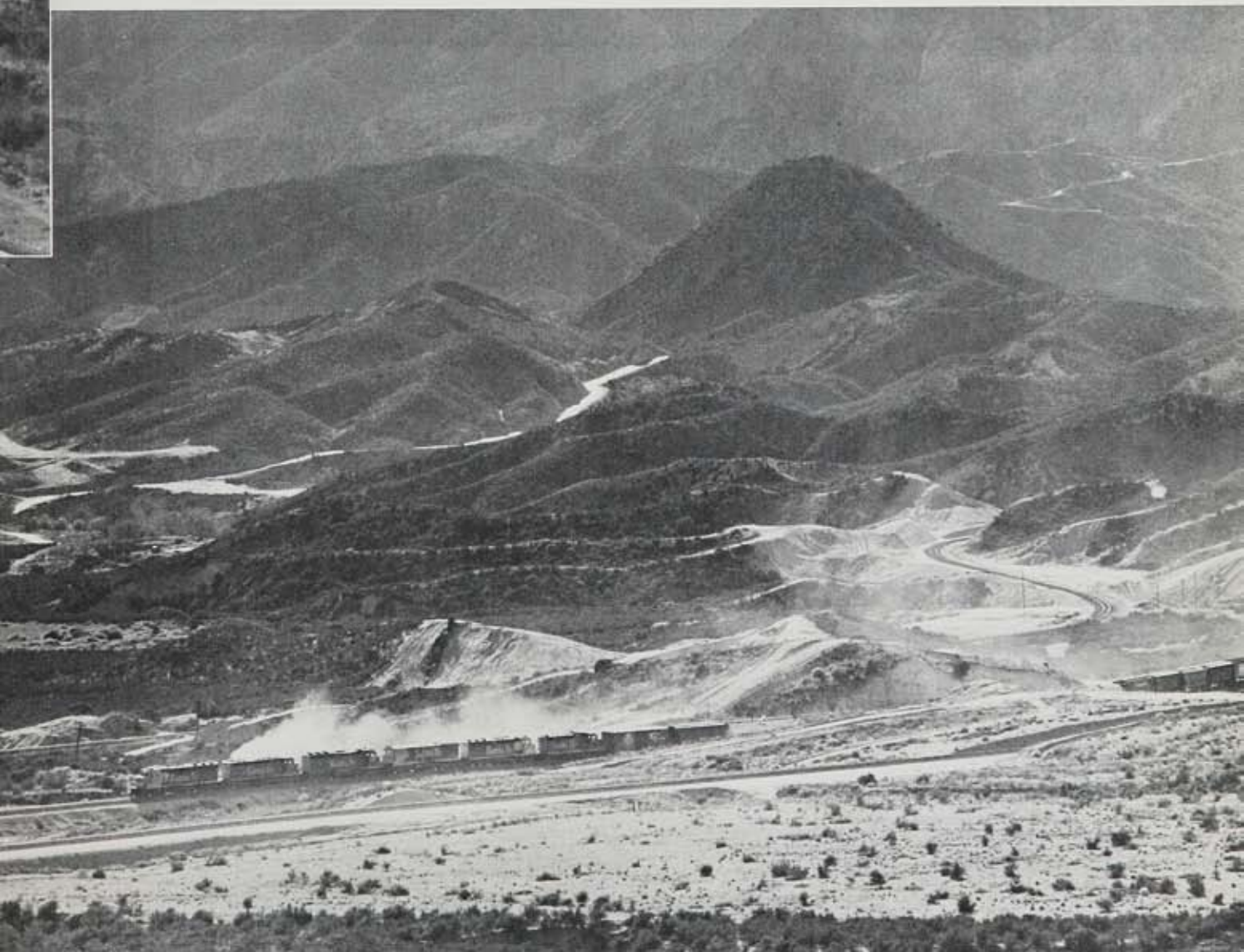


"RACES" occur frequently on Cajon grades. Above Cajon and below Alray, a westbound Southern Pacific freight overtakes a long, heavy Santa Fe eastbound train on the North line in 1973.

HIGHWAY 138 glistens in the afternoon sun in the background as an eastbound Santa Fe freight climbs the North line above the tunnels near Alray, headed for Summit on 2.2 per cent. Behind the train: the 3 per cent South line.



MOMENTS before dawn the headlight of Amtrak's westbound Super Chief appears between the double searchlight signals at Summit.







"STEIN'S HILL"

A 360-DEGREE VIEW from the ridge of "Stein's Hill" in the heart of the pass just north of Highway 138 above Cajon gives visitors a panoramic grasp of Cajon Pass railroading. To the north (above), five EMD 3600 h.p. six-motor hood units lift a weekend Santa Fe piggyback train up the 2.2 per cent of the serpentine rails of the North line toward the tunnels and Summit. To the east (left), a heavy Union Pacific train led by a U50C descends the 3 per cent of the South line en route to Drawbar Flats and Cajon. And to the south (right), Super C behind SD45-2's utilizes reverse-signal'd double track to zoom up the South line and save a few minutes in its race to Chicago.







SMOG creates a haze over the pass below Blue Cut as an eastbound Santa Fe symbol freight overtakes a hard-working westbound Southern Pacific drag whose high cars are being lifted up 2.2 per cent by an SD9E and three U30C's.

A SHORT Union Pacific train with abundant power (SD45, two DD35's, SD40, and GP9B) takes the 3 per cent of the South line in stride going upgrade on the west slope above Cajon en route to Summit.



TWO PHOTOS taken moments apart by the same camera produced this arresting view of competitors against a backdrop of the San Gabriel Mountains. At left a Santa Fe train eastbound up 2.2 per cent for Barstow on a line built in 1913 emerges from one of only two tunnels on the pass. At right a Southern Pacific freight westbound for Palmdale and Bakersfield, also tackling a maximum grade of 2.2 per cent, climbs on a line built in 1967 — Espee's Colton-Palmdale cutoff around Los Angeles.

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timetable. Most SP power consists of SD45T-2, SD45, SD40, SD35, SD39, SD9, U30C, U33C, GP35, or GP9 units. Although SP trains have operated in the pass only since 1967, the crews already have coined names for some unofficial new "stations" on the line, such as Dump Yard, Cookie Farm, and Skin Ranch. The last apparently is spoiled by slightly too high a hedge.

Okay, let's get on to Summit. There are more bumps as we head back to the first wye and take the other leg toward High-

way 138. This fire road crosses the Santa Fe and SP tracks and deadends into road 4N05. We take 4N05 right and cross the Espee again before hitting 138. Let's take a 1-mile detour to the left on 138, to where in a clump of trees an old self-service gas pump stands near a sign that says WEST CAJON COUNTRY STORE. Specialties are hay, ice, and snowcones. They aren't what you'd call overly talkative here, but we load up on milk and munchies and get a bag for trash. If we had continued up 138 to the 4000-foot elevation marker, we could have looked



off to the right, high on the hill, and perhaps seen some of the excavations for the old Los Angeles & Independence Railroad. In 1875 its promoters started to construct a summit tunnel here, but the mines went bust as usual, and SP acquired the property to head off any wise guys planning a railroad in the pass. But when Santa Fe got to Cajon, it went into East Cajon instead of West Cajon and that was that.

Heading back down 138, we go under the SP overpass and over the North line of the Santa Fe. Just $\frac{1}{4}$ mile past the North line we swing left onto a dirt road marked by a few mailboxes. We go only to the top of the first hill because the Davis Ranch ahead is private property. There is room to park at the top near the electrical towers. This is my favorite hill in the pass (Stein's Hill?). To the south are the SP and Santa Fe lines

which go on to pass through the great rock formations to the west. To the north, the Santa Fe North line swings in great arcs as it climbs toward Alray and the two tunnels. To the east, the 3 per cent South line wiggles down the hill under the freeway in the general vicinity of that spot the old-timers over the pass called Drawbar Flats. It's a great place for watching trains.

But let's hightail it for Summit. Back onto 138, we head left, cross I-15, and go up into the desert hills for some 5 miles. When we see a large cleared area on the left we pull over to look. Below us 100 feet are the two Santa Fe main lines. To the right is Summit — but the depot is gone, along with Chard Walker and the *Descanso* [see page 38]. Today Chard works in Barstow, and the old Los Angeles Railway funeral car rests



SHE was still the Super when Amtrak's finest, running westbound, threaded the Summit of Cajon Pass in this 1973 predawn scene.

in the Orange Empire Trolley Museum at Perris, Calif. Now Summit is marked only by double crossovers, a few small buildings, and a couple of setout tracks. Such is the way of progress.

On the hill above Summit is the SP train-order office of Hiland. Operator Leah Rosenfeld now is the upholder of the nearly 100-year-old tradition of train orders at Summit. "Rosie" is the only resident of Hiland and was the only operator on the cutoff until midyear when cabooses were installed at Dike and at Hiland to provide offices for round-the-clock train-order operations.

While we stand above the big cut, the roar we heard in the valley materializes into an eastbound Union Pacific freight led by a big DD35.

I have a rule of thumb for Cajon train-watching: For every Union Pacific train there will be at least two Santa Fe trains and — at the present time — one-half of an SP train. Union Pacific runs about 14 trains a day and Santa Fe runs more than 30.

Now let's go down the east slope of the pass toward Victorville, and I promise I'll take you on only one more detour. We swing left off 138 a mile or so below Summit as we approach a green sign for California 138. This is Summit Valley Road, and it will take us to Hesperia along the 1½ per cent descent of the

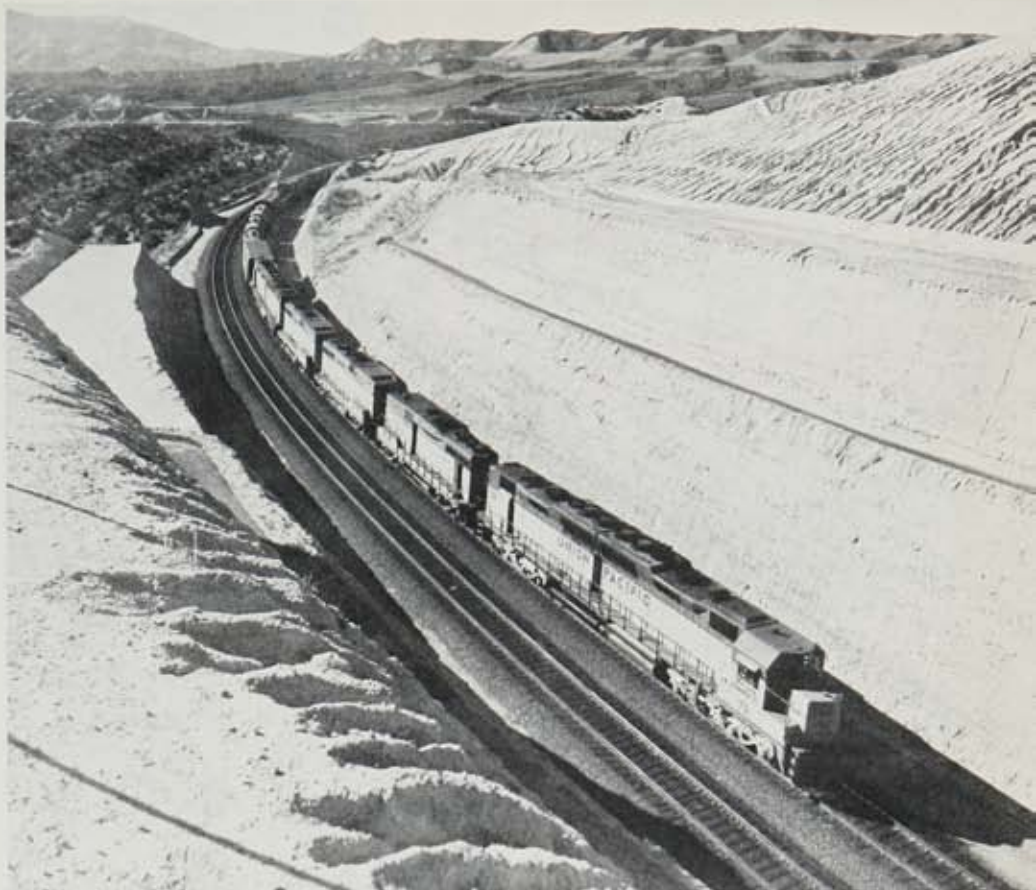
Santa Fe line. The SP, high above us on the hill, swings away to keep its appointments with Palmdale and the San Joaquin Valley Route. The pavement converts to dirt shortly, but then converts back to pavement as we approach the crossovers at Lugo, named for a prominent family of the Spanish period of California. We're playing peekaboo with the tracks through the Joshua trees as we pass Hesperia's compact version of an international airport.

In 1905 on this tangent into Hesperia, hogger John Finlay took Santa Fe Ten-Wheeler 442 down the hill at a little less than 100 mph with Death Valley Scotty's *Coyote Special* after cutting off the helper at Summit on the fly. Scotty made it to Chicago in less than 45 hours.

Because of the volatile weather conditions on the pass, not all traffic goes this well. The crew of the first eastbound *Chicago Limited* found this out in 1895. As their locomotive headed into the evening mists near Devore, the engineer looked out and saw an impending cornfield meet. He and the fireman jumped without taking time to set the air. They were pained a moment later when they looked up from the ballast to see that the foggy illusion was only the cart of a Mexican wood gatherer, perhaps one of the earliest users of the Devore Cutoff. The train kept going for a while before stopping, and the dispatcher thought he had lost a train. But eventually everything got



OPERATOR Leah "Rosie" Rosenfeld.



SOUND in the valley materializes into an eastbound UP freight in new cut at Summit.

straightened out, even the broken leg of the engineer. Weather almost fouled things up in the pass as recently as January 1974 when a brisk Arctic storm dumped 1½ to 2½ feet of snow across the hill from near San Bernardino to Victorville. SP and Santa Fe ran "plow" trains to bring sectionmen to dig out snow-covered switches.

After pausing at the stop sign at Main Street in Hesperia, we turn left across the tracks and take the first right, Hesperia Road. As we cross the tracks we see the tail end of Santa Fe's Cushenbury Turn disappearing into the Joshua tree forest. The turn usually leaves Victorville in the afternoon and heads out over the 29-mile branch line to a cement plant and other industries on the other side of the San Bernardino Mountains near Big Bear.

We continue down Hesperia Road, then make a right turn onto Santa Fe Road West just past the point where the rails start to veer away from Hesperia Road. We take Santa Fe Road West to the stop at Bear Valley Cutoff; there we go right, then take the first left onto Ridge Crest Road.

Two miles down this road we again see the Santa Fe main lines at the point where the South track coming down the hill crosses over the North track on a bridge. But apparently with an eye to removing the bridge someday, the descending South track becomes the North track after crossing the bridge, and

the North line becomes the South line after passing beneath the bridge. So trains westbound from Victorville usually start out on the North line, which becomes the South line at the bridge. And when they meet an SP train coming the other way in the pass, they are both westbounds. And never the twain shall meet.

This is a great place for taking pictures. In the distance we can see the crossovers at Frost, the Mojave River, and the Upper Mojave Narrows, the rocky cleft by which the rails break through to Victorville and the deserts beyond.

After shooting a couple of westbounds it's time to head on to Victorville. Back on the Bear Valley Cutoff, we continue to Hesperia Road, then follow Hesperia to the right to its end at D Street in Victorville. A couple of blocks to the right are the Upper Narrows, a fine place for pictures in the morning. But heck with it—let's go left and sit a while in the little park in front of the Santa Fe station.

The water and a bit of rest feel good. We started this morning at the other end of the pass and came something like 60 miles over hill and dale to Victorville. We saw a lot of trains, and the day was a good one.

Now let's get off our duffs, go up Seventh Street to the Chevron Station, and see what our friends at Lee's Restaurant have on the special. **I**