

\$7.50 to L.A.



That's the price Southern Pacific charges to ride the 470 miles from San Francisco

BY WILLARD V. ANDERSON

I HAVE heard it said, and you have too, that when passenger revenues begin to drop the only thing you can do is to go before the Interstate Commerce Commission and ask for an increase in rates. We have also heard it argued, by people who ought to know, that empty trains, not low fares, is the prime reason for insufficient revenues.

Out on the Pacific Coast there is a railroad that takes the latter view. It is the Southern Pacific, and it is demonstrating that it is quite possible to operate luxury trains at low rates and, by keeping an eye on the expected loadings, to change the consist to that happy point where the train is comfortably crowded rather than only half full. This cuts empty car-miles and allows the railroad to show an operating profit on these passenger operations.

It must be said at the outset that SP has an enviable setup for its coastwise passenger traffic. It must be said, too, that SP loses money on some passenger trains, just as the rest of the railroads do. And it must be said that SP, like others, has petitioned for fare increases in suburban commuter service, the black sheep of the passenger traffic family.

The unique thing about the *Daylights* and the *Starlight* and the *Lark* is that each has long-haul patronage that compensates for terminal ex-

pense. In the passenger business, as in the freight business, it's the long haul that counts.

While SP has the distances needed to ring up an operating profit on a passenger's ticket, it is also beset by competition — swift competition, hard competition — in the form of air lines whose operators sometimes stray from the truth in statements made in advertising aimed at the coastwise traveler. These operators would have you believe, for instance, that they operate the cheapest system of transport between Los Angeles and San Francisco. They fail to mention that what they mean is that they are offering the cheapest air transport between the two cities, conveniently forgetting that Southern Pacific trains are running regularly, fog in, fog out, with comfortable accommodations for as little as \$7.50 — plus tax — for the 470-mile run. Round trips are even cheaper; \$13.50, with an added 15 per cent for Uncle Sam.

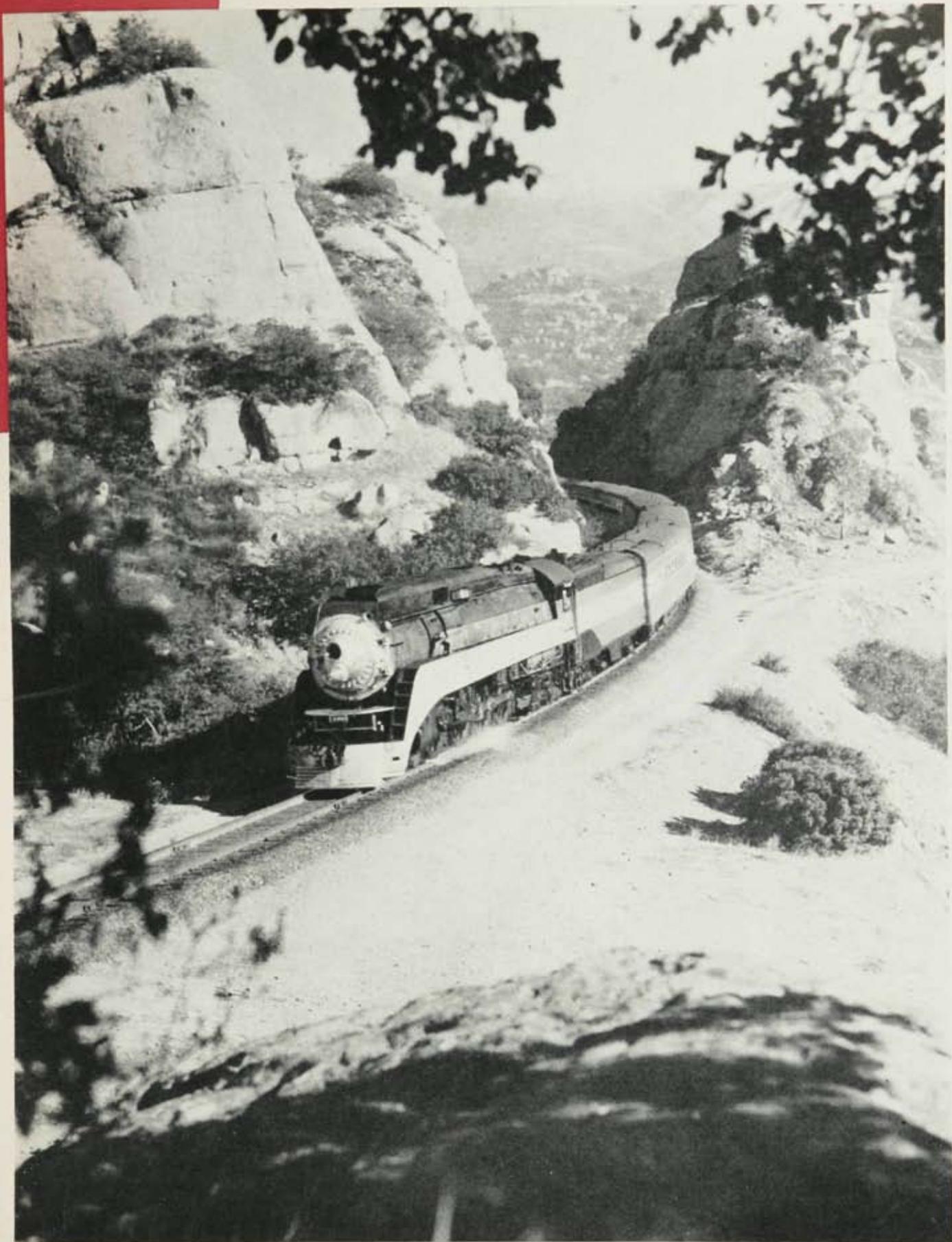
SP's prime selling point is the low fare between Los Angeles and San Francisco on the *Morning Daylight*, the *San Joaquin Daylight* and the *Starlight*, and between San Francisco and Portland, Ore., on the year-old *Shasta Daylight*. But the railroad does not stop with low fares. At no added cost, your seat is reserved — a convenience that permits you to wander throughout the train with the

knowledge that your seat will be waiting for you when you return.* Cars are modern and easy-riding and restful. Crews are well trained and courteous. Even the matter of loading and unloading baggage has been taken care of in a manner not found elsewhere; when the train stops, there is no waiting for baggage to be unloaded from the vestibules before the passengers can detrain. Passengers get primary consideration on SP's modern trains.

Southern Pacific has gone to great expense to work out a reservation system which is designed not only to give the greatest possible service to the patron but also the greatest possible revenue to the railroad. Your call to Southern Pacific for information can result not only in your getting the information but in your finding yourself the holder of a reservation as well. Calls go through the switchboard 1-2-3, and even in rush periods there is little waiting.

The reservation system is expensive, yes — but it not only results in more sales but also allows the operating department to determine just how many cars the *Starlight* should carry tonight. If traffic dwindles, cars can be taken off right up to an hour before

*Some travelers will dispute the use of the word "convenience." On short hauls, especially, it is somewhat of a nuisance to make advance arrangements for a coach trip. Some eastern roads which charge for reservations have lost patronage because of it.



J. L. Bradley.

The northbound Morning Daylight swings through Santa Susana Pass as it leaves the San Fernando Valley about 30 miles north of Los Angeles. The General Service 4-8-4 is No. 4458, one of 10 in the Daylight pool. No. 4458 and sister 4459 are equipped with roller bearings and are regularly assigned to the Morning Daylight. For a time, the Alco-GE diesels which now haul the Shasta Daylight were used in this Morning Daylight service.



←Northbound San Joaquin Daylight approaches a tunnel near Long. The Valley Route is 12 miles longer than the Coast Line; schedule is slower.

the train starts. If fog sets in and an air line calls for a block of seats to take care of its passengers, cars can be added to take care of them. Only very rarely does SP tote an empty car from one terminal to another; when it does, it's because an unequal traffic flow demands the cars be dead-headed in order that the next train in the opposing direction will have sufficient seating capacity.

Just how well does SP's formula of good traffic potential, long haul, low fares and excellent service add up? Is the resulting revenue really worth shooting for, or is it only a nominal figure which you might just as well let go by the boards? In other words, does it pay to go out after passenger business, or would you be just as well off if you twiddled your thumbs and said, "Let the competitors have it"?

Coverdale & Colpitts, a New York firm of consulting engineers, has the answer. According to a survey C. & C. made, streamlined lightweight high-speed passenger trains throughout the country were, on the whole, profitable enterprises in 1947 and 1948. Topping the list of profitable trains was SP's *Morning Daylight*, which showed gross revenues of \$8.48 and \$8.64 per mile in 1947 and 1948 respectively, and net operating revenues (before allocation of fixed costs) of \$5.09 and \$4.65 per mile. In 1949, the *Morning Daylight* showed a gross revenue of



Left, Donald Sims; above, Richard Steinheimer.



Richard Steinheimer.

↑ The conductor has just handed orders to engine crew; a train inspector removes the blue flag, and the *Starlight* is ready for its run.

The *Cascade* is SP's popular night train between San Francisco and Portland, Ore. Here No. 11, southbound, rolls into Oakland Pier. Operations-wise, San Francisco is SP's westernmost point, so all trains carry odd numbers into the city and even numbers out, regardless of actual direction.

about \$8.50 per mile. Although figures are not available, it may be assumed that the net operating revenue was somewhat less than in 1948, due to increasing costs. Still, the train undoubtedly made a substantial operating profit.

Also in 1949, SP's *Lark* (an all-sleeper night train which naturally pulled substantially higher fares than the coach-and-parlor *Morning Daylight*) showed a gross revenue of about \$6.50 per mile. The new *Shasta Daylight*, which went into operation on July 10 last year, earned a similar amount. The *Starlight*, an overnight coach train between S. F. and L. A., averaged \$5.75 per mile from October 2, when it first went into service, until December 31, 1949. The *San Joaquin Daylight*, coach-parlor between San Francisco and Los Angeles via the Valley Route, grossed about \$4.25 per mile.

If you were a cashier operating a cash register on the *Morning Daylight*, ringing up \$8.50 every time you passed one of the 470 mileposts separating California's two largest cities, you would find a total of \$3995 on the tape at the end of the run. If you worked seven days a week and 365 days a year, as the *Daylight* does, \$1,458,175 would pass through your hands—not counting the federal transportation tax and the change which you undoubtedly would have to return to the customers.

And while you were engaged in this

delightful occupation of collecting the cash, another person just like you, working the opposing train, would be doing likewise, in like amounts.

At that rate, Uncle Sam's 15 per cent travel tax amounted to some \$437,450 from the *Morning Daylights* alone in 1949.

I SPENT a delightful two days and a night (with an added day in San Francisco looking over the reservation bureau and talking with officials) riding the *Shasta Daylight* from Portland to San Francisco, the *Starlight* from Frisco to Los Angeles, and the *Morning Daylight* back to San Francisco. It was a pleasurable combination of trips, and it enabled me to see many of the things that appeal to West Coast travelers—things the SP has schemed up to make their journeys a little more pleasant, a little more comfortable, a little less expensive. It enabled me, too, to see the fire-department efficiency with which servicing crews get to their posts and give the train a quick going-over while the locomotive takes on fuel.

It was a dreary morning when I left Portland, and a wisp of steam curled from the end of the train line and fogged out the neoprene *Shasta Daylight* tailsign as the train stood in the station. It was a raw day in January, and Portland had just experienced a snowfall the night before, so the warmth of the parlor observation car

was welcome. I left my bags in charge of the porter, who loaded them into the baggage compartment from *outside* the car. Later, I was to see just how this baggage compartment saves time and tempers when it comes to unloading, when a whole carful of passengers want to detrain at once.

Car S-99 had modern reclining, swiveling armchairs, matching the comfort of the modern seats up forward in the coaches and providing a degree of privacy, if you wanted it. My neighbor and I didn't particularly care to be lonely, however, and we soon struck up a conversation. He was a traveling representative of a movie distributing firm, and he told me at the outset that he much preferred to travel on night trains such as the *Cascade*. The *Cascade* had been sold out the night before, however, and he considered himself lucky to have been able to purchase seat 13 in the *Shasta Daylight's* car S-99.

"You can usually get seat 13," he told me. "Lots of people won't take it because of the number."

My neighbor made a good guinea pig for me to watch. This was his first trip on the *Shasta Daylight*; it had been more or less forced on him by lack of space on the *Cascade*. It was interesting to watch him react to the scenery which the *Daylight* offered; to hear him comment that this was the most restful day he had had in months of traveling throughout the West and Midwest. Before the trip was over,



J. L. Bradley.

The southbound Lark enters San Fernando Valley from Santa Susana Pass at a point not far from that in the picture on page 37. The Lark is an all-sleeper train running via the Coast Line.

he was thoroughly convinced that the next time he made the trip between Portland and San Francisco it would also be on the *Daylight* rather than on a night train.

His reaction was typical. Back in August of last year, when the *Shasta Daylight* had been in service only a little more than a month, the traveling passenger agent passed out questionnaires to passengers in a week-long survey to find out how the train was appealing. The results of the survey showed that more than half the passengers were *new* train riders: 37.1 per cent would have used some other form of transportation (plane, bus, or private auto) if the *Shasta* had not been in operation, and 13.5 per cent said they would not have made the trip at all if the new train had not been running.

Of all the riders, new and old alike, 97.3 per cent said they would use the *Shasta* on future trips. The daytime schedule appealed to 27.6 per cent. The route's magnificent scenery was the prime reason why 24.3 per cent chose the *Shasta*. Nearly a fifth—18.9 per cent—wanted to ride a new train. The low fare (\$12, coach) for the 718 miles attracted 17.9 per cent. SP's other *Daylights* had convinced 11.3 per cent of the travelers that the

Shasta Daylight would be the train to ride.

Even the inveterate *Daylight* rider, however, must have been more than pleased when first he rode this newest *Daylight*. Let's look at some of the features (some of which are on other *Daylights*, some of which are not) of the *Shasta*, whose normal consist is a railway post office car, nine coaches, a parlor-observation, a tavern car, and a three-unit articulated diner-kitchen-coffee shop, all built by Pullman-Standard and pulled by three Alco-GE 2000-horsepower diesel units.

Cars for the *Shasta* were designed with *Shasta* scenery in mind. Although they do not carry vista domes (more's the pity), the windows are one third larger in area than the ordinary wide window, offering an extended upward view as well as a broad angle horizontally. SP fittingly dubbed them "picture windows."

As the *Shasta* is a long-distance train, all coaches are of the 48-seat variety, allowing ample leg room between the "Dreamliner" seats. High-speed air conditioning permits smoking in any seat without offense to other riders. Each seat has its own ash tray.

Doors between cars are electro-

pneumatically controlled. A slight touch on the door plate on the outside or a slight pull of the handle on the inside causes the door to open automatically. Passengers do not have to struggle against vestibule vacuums when opening doors.

There are, of course, other features which can be found on almost any other modern train, including a radio and announcement system which the traveling passenger agent puts to good use in explaining how the reclining seats work, in asking the passengers to identify their baggage during the trip so that the porter can rearrange it in the baggage compartment for quick unloading, and so on.

The baggage compartment, which is unique to SP trains because it was invented by A. D. McDonald, a former SP president, consists of two movable shelves suspended on four elevator worm gear screws operated by an electric motor. As the train is loaded at the start of the trip, the porter places the luggage inside the compartment through a door in the outside of the car. As the first shelf becomes filled, he presses a button which raises the shelf and brings the second shelf into use. When the second shelf is filled, it is also raised, and any remaining luggage is stored on the floor of the compartment.

After the train is under way, the train passenger agent asks passengers who will detrain at the first stop to identify their luggage. The porter, now working through the inside door, sorts the bags and places them in the lower position in the compartment. If a lot of bags are to be removed at the next stop, more than enough to fit the lower compartment, he places the overflow on the next shelf above. Thus the baggage is all sorted and ready to take off the train upon arrival at the station, and passengers pass through the vestibules unrestricted.

On my *Shasta Daylight* trip I witnessed the unloading of 125 passengers, complete with their luggage, in three minutes at Martinez, where many people bound for Los Angeles change from the *Daylight* to train No. 58, the *Owl*. Later, an SP official told me that the *Morning Daylight's* 19 cars have been emptied of 650 passengers in from five to ten minutes. The use of the elevator baggage compartments was a big factor in setting up *Morning Daylight* schedules; with ordinary baggage handling the trip would take 15 to 20 minutes longer.

SP trains run with a reasonable degree of regularity, although of course they are sometimes delayed by weather. The *Shasta Daylight* I rode arrived at Oakland Pier right on the minute, but on the preceding day and again on

the day afterward it was several hours late. Heavy snows were the reason in both cases. My southbound train had arrived late in Portland on its preceding northbound trip, and the dining car crew had had little sleep as a consequence. Meanwhile, however, snowplow crews had been busily at work, and the southbound *Shasta* slid easily through heavy cuts in the snowbanks. Section houses were completely buried, and the only way you could tell they were there was by letting your eye follow occasional trenches in the snow — trenches which led to doors in the houses.

After the passage of my *Shasta*, it snowed again. A snowplow derailment held up traffic for several hours.

ESPEE is a firm believer in advertising its passenger services, and well it might be, for from the the *Shasta Daylight* poll made last August it was learned that 59.9 per cent of the passengers had learned about the train from advertising. The railroad is a consistent rather than sporadic advertiser; its on-line newspapers carry the SP message at regular intervals.

The railroad's messages are invariably good reading, and the ones aimed at unfair advertising by the air lines are exceptionally good. SP's ad men take the stand that a little good-natured kidding never did anybody any harm, and instead of blatant demands for retractions from the offending air lines the ad writers turn out copy like this:

"Western Airlines has been advertising 'Lowest Fares on the Coast' but they tell us they mean just air fares. That's all right with us as long as you understand rail fares are lower. . . . We're proud of our *Daylight* streamliners and we think their fares are a bargain. And you don't have to take a long bus ride at each end of the trip at \$1.25 per copy. So we hope you'll pardon our mild squawk at the air lines' unintentional inaccuracies."

Most advertisements, of course, are more prosaic, and merely offer SP's services — always carrying the slogan "The friendly Southern Pacific."

And the SP is friendly. Trainmen cooperate with camera fans in pointing out scenic spots, or places where the shutter bugs can snap a passing train. On both the *Shasta Daylight* and the *Morning Daylight* I saw the train passenger agent accompany photographers to a car vestibule and open the top half of the door for them so they could snap a picture unhampered by travel-stained glass. Friendliness is not confined to passenger agents, however; it extends right through the entire train crew. As an instance, I found, as I was nearing Oakland Pier



Richard Steinheimer.

Half an hour before departure time, the northbound *Shasta Daylight* stands under the station shed at Oakland Pier. The ferry from San Francisco is just now leaving en route to Oakland.

at the end of my *Shasta* ride, that I had made note of Passenger Agent Patterson's name but had neglected to write down his initials. I sought out the flagman and asked him if he knew Mr. Patterson's first name.

"No, sir, I don't," he replied. "But I will before we reach the station!"

He disappeared in a welter of passengers donning topcoats in the aisle. Five minutes passed. As the *Daylight* slid into her berth at Oakland Pier and as I was saying good-by to the neighbor I had used as a guinea pig, the flagman tugged at my arm.

"It's C. E. Patterson, sir," he said.

I hardly had time to thank him before I was on the station platform. My bags, I observed, were already loaded on the baggage truck which was to make the ferry crossing to San Francisco. On the other side of the bay I was guided to Position 1 at the cab stand, and there my bags were waiting for me.

AND friendliness is not confined to the train crews; it extends through the passengers as well. It's easy to engage a *Starlight* or *Daylight* passenger in conversation, and the talk is not only interesting but also revealing and, usually, amusing. Take the soldier from Tokyo:

"It's darn nice to be back in the States," he said, "but I'll be glad to get back to Tokyo, too, when my leave is up. Things come too high over here. Why, in Tokyo, a good meal costs only 7 cents in U. S. money.

"Over here, you have to keep scratching to keep up with the Joneses. Over there, you are the Joneses!"

On these West Coast trains, you'll find people of all social levels and of many races, local travelers and tourists from distant places. Even in peacetime, you'll see soldiers and sailors and Waes and Waves. The day I rode the *Shasta Daylight*, there was a whole coachload of Hawaiian seamen who were going to San Francisco to catch a boat back to the islands. They belonged to the Army Transport Service and had just taken a ship to Seattle for scrapping. A few of them made their way to the tavern car, and there, with bottles of beer before them, they strummed a guitar and sang in their native tongue.

"Now we have a floor show and everything," said the bartender.

SP's tavern cars, incidentally, do not follow the usual railroad practice of serving liquor from miniature bottles. Instead, the bartender uses "fifths," measuring the individual drinks with jiggers. There are some exceptions to



Richard Steinheimer.

The train board in San Francisco's Ferry Building lists arrivals and departures as trains, but actually no trains use the building; the times shown are for ferries connecting with trains.

this statement; odd brands are served from individual bottles.

ESPEE's passenger operations are under the jurisdiction of a department called the Train Service Bureau. It works in close collaboration with the operating department and has jurisdiction over passenger trains to the extent that it recommends schedules, keeps an eye on reservations so that consists can be altered, etc. Its recommendations cannot always be followed out, due to operating difficulties; but insofar as possible the operating department gives the train service bureau just what it wants.

In other words, SP makes every effort to tailor its passenger service to the needs and desires of the traveling public, rather than just to operate trains at its own convenience and then tell the people, "This is what you can have; take it or leave it." Its policy is simply stated in a paper handed to me by a public relations representative in San Francisco:

"Continued popularity of the trains depends upon the trains themselves, and the railroad has made a special point of never relaxing the quality of service. It believes satisfied travelers are its best advertisements."

This policy has been carried out ever since (and even before) the inauguration of the *Morning Daylight* service between Los Angeles and San

Francisco on March 21, 1937. The trains (one each way) were immediately popular and very profitable, and three years later the *Noon Daylight* was added. This train was taken off last October and its equipment was used to inaugurate the *Starlight*, as investigation had shown more people would be served by a night coach train than by one leaving at noon.

One feature of the *Starlight* that finds favor with a lot of passengers is the fact that its snack lounge car remains open for business all night. It's a little like being able to raid the ice box to be able to get a cup of coffee and a doughnut or sandwich before stretching out in your reclining seat and seeking the arms of Morpheus. You have a comfortable sense of well-being as you walk slowly back through the darkened cars to your own seat, and sleep comes easily even though you're not used to sleeping completely dressed.

The return to consciousness touches you, ever so lightly, as the sky begins to gray in the east. One by one, passengers awake, yawn, stretch, and look at their companion in the adjacent seat. A common first remark is "Did I snore?" The answer in some cases could be "no"; in others, "yes."

In the washrooms, a line forms before the wash basins. Most passengers merely dab a little water in their eyes and comb their hair. Others do a

bang-up job on themselves, topping it off with a shave and a tussle with the tooth brush.

Throughout the night, the train passenger agent sees to the wants of the passengers. On rare occasions he finds the train has been oversold (it happened the night I rode the *Starlight*), but he manages to find seats for everyone. He might, for instance, notice that the occupant of a certain seat is having refreshment in the tavern car, and, knowing that this particular seat will be vacated a short distance down the line anyway, gives it to the seatless person "temporarily; I may have to move you later." Chances are, the other passenger stays in the tavern until the train reaches his station, and then it's only a matter of removing his luggage from the rack. The "temporary" assignment is now permanent.

Oversellings, I was told, are the exception rather than the rule. They occur when more than the usual run of last-minute ticket purchasers line up before the ticket windows in that last hour when it's too late to change the train consist. Some allowance is always made for last-minute sales, but sometimes a sudden change in weather or some other reason causes a large crowd to storm the ticket windows.

AFTER a ride on the *Shasta Daylight* and the *Starlight*, a ride on the *Morning Daylight* is more or less routine. You're used to the courtesy of the crews and you're used to eating good meals in the diners, so about all that's left for you to marvel over is the scenery. At least, that's the way I found it. And I found, too, that Coast Line scenery is truly magnificent, although in a different way from the magnificence of Shasta Route scenery. On the Shasta line, it's the mountains that intrigue you; on the Coast Line, it's the broad Pacific.

You'll receive an added thrill as the *Daylight* passes tiny Fernald Point at Santa Barbara and you see the house pictured in the May issue of TRAINS ["Call This a Fantasy," page 47]. Somehow you can't help but "dream of the crisp silence of a moonlit night being sliced cleanly as a GS-4 class 4-8-4 takes the *Starlight* up the coast, its Mars light throwing wierd and dancing shadows across the venetian blinds."

And up ahead, GS-4 No. 4458 rolls you on toward San Francisco. Its exhaust is muffled back here in the coaches; the smell of its oil fire is lost in the air-conditioned interior. The engineer minds his signals and the fireman tends his fire, but of this you are unaware. You are a passenger on the *Daylight*; you're comfortable, and drowsy, and happy.