

SOME EXPERIENCES WITH MADAME QUEEN
by G. H. Holmes

In the Arkansas Railroader for May 1971, Mr. W. M. Adams mentions the Missouri Pacific's 4-6-2 locomotive No. 6000. In my position I was required to ride with the engine crew on the first trip of the 6000 engine over the Omaha Division and make a report on the way the bridges reacted under its weight and length. One or the other of the engine crew operating this locomotive around the curves operated her blind from the time they approached a curve until they again moved onto straight track, depending on the side they worked or sat on.

The Omaha Division line travels through rolling hill country (sometimes called Hogbacks) with a lot of curved track, with short and steep grades over the entire division. I recall making a trip from Kansas City to Falls City in the way car of a freight train of 80 or more cars pulled by the 6000. When the slack between the drawbars ran in and out each time the train started up or down grade, the recoil action would knock you off your feet or seat unless you had a good hand grip on something.

This trip was made at night. I went aboard the way car, told the conductor who I was and showed him my pass. Soon after we got well under way I walked to the rear of the car and lay down on the seat along the wall with my head near the end wall of the car. About the time I stretched out good the conductor yelled at me, "Mister, if you don't want your brains knocked out, you had better turn around and put your feet to the wall." Before the trip was over I knew what he was talking about. That was one rough ride.

After that I made a number of trips on both freight and passenger trains pulled by the 6000 between Kansas City and Omaha from 1937 to the early 1940's. The people along the Omaha Division called her "Madame Queen". The mechanical and maintenance men working on the division hated her guts.

With her length of 88 feet and her weight of 540,000 pounds, I believe the steel and iron used in her construction should have been used to make 120 pound steel rails or build lighter and faster motive power, or to construct sea-going oil tankers. The enginemen and trainmen who operated the heavy locomotives and long trains over the railroads of America have my deepest respect and regard for their courage and efficiency. They earned every dime of their pay.

ELECTION RESULTS: Jim Wilson, President; Charles Ost, Vice-President; George R. Holt, Jr., Secretary; C. R. Byrd, Treasurer; Earl Saunders, Director; Stanley Wozencraft, NRHS Director.

EARL SAUNDERS REPORTS ON THE COLORADO RAILROAD MUSEUM at our February 13 meeting, 2:00 p.m., Room 305, Mo Pac Union Station.

COTTON BELT PROPOSES ABANDONMENT BETWEEN LEACHVILLE AND TRUMANN. This is reported by Bill Pollard who read the notice on the Trumann depot. Deadline for protests was in January. We don't know if abandonment has been approved, but past experience would prompt us to suggest that if you want to see the line, you had better hurry.