

the gorge, and after leaving there could see a bad storm coming up from Mexico. By the time we reached Seeley, which is 9 miles from El Centro, I knew we were washed out on the mountain. Upon arrival at El Centro I received the report that not only were we washed out, but that the S. P. was also washed out between Niland and Indio. Also it was reported that the highway was washed out between Jacumba and El Centro.

After placing Mr. Sproule's private car on our passenger train for Yuma, I left El Centro by motor car to inspect the washout. We could only get to Coyote Wells. From there we could see the rails and ties suspended in the air sometimes for a distance of 300 feet. In other places the track was covered with earth for like distances. The bridge at Coyote Wells was washed out, so I returned to El Centro and started to make up the gangs so as to get started the next day. I found a man at El Centro by the name of Mr. Petzer. He had just finished a big construction job there. He had about 30 mules and Fresnos and I was able to hire about 200 men. We loaded the boxcars that night and were on the job the next day. It was necessary to get piling and a pile driver which happened to be at Yuma. The second day we closed the bridge at Coyote Wells. The bad part of the washout was west of Coyote Wells. On the ninth day we were able to operate our passenger train from El Centro to San Diego at limited speed. After 30 days we were once again back to normal operation. This washout cost \$260,000 to repair. It was necessary for me to work with two crews, both day and night for 9 days.

But it seemed our railroad was not through with washouts. Again in February, 1927, we washed out between San Diego and Garcia in Mexico. This storm also took the railroad between San Diego and Lakeside and North Island. This of course stopped our whole operation as it affected our main line and branch lines.

We opened again in April after about a 60 day tie up. Now we were open again and in good shape, but we had lost most of our passenger business. It was necessary to discontinue our eastern connection with the Sunset Limited at Niland. It was not uncommon to see this train arrive in San Diego without a single passenger. We held on to our freight business to a certain extent, but later that year the plant at Potash was shut down.

In 1928, we were able to get some new business from the movie companies. While it was very good paying business, it was very dangerous to handle. We had three or four trains on this work for 30 days at a time working in Carriso Gorge.

In July, we had a change in our official family. Mr. A. T. Mercier was transferred and later became president of the S. P. in 1940.

We just barely made expenses in the years 1929, 1930 and 1931. Taxes alone to the State of California averaged \$70,000 per month. From 1931 to and including 1935 we were not able to pay the interest on our bonds, and in 1932, when we lost 3 tunnels, one by slide and 2 by fire, it became a question if the line would be reopened. The cost was going to be \$700,000, and it was considered only to operate the lines between San Diego and San Ysidro and El Centro and Coyote Wells.

At about 1:00AM on January 25, 1932, I was called at my home and advised that Tunnel No. 3 was on fire. This tunnel was 1297 feet long. As is usually the practice in such fires, I instructed the crews to barricade one end of this tunnel. Usually in such cases the fire will die for lack of oxygen. We usually have ties available along the line. I immediately left for the scene of the fire. I arrived about 3:00AM, and the barricade was complete. It so happened that there were plenty of ties near the entrance to the tunnel. As the fire did not die down as