

REQUIEM FOR THE WEST SIDE LUMBER COMPANY

By Hart Corbett, July 25, 2009

Section 1A

On May 10, 1959, my wife to be (Mary Jo) and I first discovered the West Side Lumber Co. in Tuolumne, California. We were following a Sierra Railroad excursion to Tuolumne when we crossed



the West side's narrow gauge tracks. I did not know about the existence of the West Side until that moment. It has been over 50 years since that day and the West Side is still a part of my life. And so is Mary Jo -- we just celebrated our 49th wedding anniversary July 17, 2009. I was 22 years old when I took these photos and knew almost nothing about logging and logging railroads. After being very surprised, I photographed the entrance to the West side's yard and then set out to see what this was all about, forgetting about the Sierra excursion.



We found the mill and standard gauged Heisler No. 3's tie up track.



I then found a back entrance road and drove to remote place where I could photograph more of the narrow gauge equipment through a gate.

I learned later that this was Hay Siding and that the two Heisler trucks came from otherwise scrapped Heisler no 4. They just as easily could have been from no 3, which had been converted to standard gauge in 1947 for switching the mill tracks. The caboose had no visible number on it; the car behind the trucks was a round roof camp car (no visible numbers); a flat car with old wire rope coiled on it was next; and the farthest car was what the West Side called a "reefer"

The tail of the Sierra Railroad wye was behind the cars. Curiosity overcame me. I saw nobody around and Mary Jo agreed to remain with our car, so I climbed the fence and began walking rapidly

through the yards of the West Side Lumber Company. I only had with me a new but very small 16mm still camera that would fit in my pocket. It was loaded with Kodachrome (film speed of 10) so 16mm slides resulted. All photos in this Requiem were taken with this camera in about an hour's time.



This is a close up of the two Heisler trucks. The tires had been removed and were piled elsewhere.



I moved on, taking photos where possible but trying to be inconspicuous because I thought there might be guards on the grounds. Somewhere near the cars on Hay Siding were these two yarders in storage.



I came upon the narrow gauge wye and shot this photo from the beginning of the tail of the wye. The switch in the foreground is for the block car siding behind my left shoulder, although I didn't know that then. The standard gauge only track went left and joined the tail of the Sierra Railroad wye. The dual gauge track turned right down past the Dispatcher's Shack. Note the narrow gauge only track in the right distance turns left off the dual gauge. That is the upper leg of the narrow gauge only wye. At its far end can be seen the switch for the third leg of the narrow gauge only wye. The wye was not dual gauge; only the right leg was (on the right) .



This is looking down from the wye. First track on the left is the third leg of the narrow gauge wye. Second track on left is a siding. White building on left is Dispatcher's Shack. A reefer is beside the woods warehouse for loading. A work train with 4 tractors on 4 equipment flats is on the main line and two flat cars are on the siding next to it.

I walked down the grade -- a 5% grade, I learned many years later -- beyond the warehouse and went left around the corner on the main line. A whole new sight presented itself. One I would see many times in the future.



This is the lower yard. All this equipment is 3 foot narrow gauge. Three Shays are on the left (from the front: #8, #9, and #12). Five cabooses are visible but I didn't record the numbers. Through the middle is a mixed string of cars. From the right: a logging flat car (with part of a bunk on it perhaps), two Swayne type

connected log cars, and at least two more equipment flat cars. Behind it all is the engine house with the mill behind it. The log dump is just out of sight on the right.

[CONTINUES IN SECTION 1B]