

REQUIEM FOR THE WEST SIDE LUMBER COMPANY

By Hart Corbett, August 2009

Part Two, Section 2A

This section, and the three sections after it, describe what my then girlfriend and now wife Mary Jo (for 49 years) and I found when we returned to Tuolumne a month after our first discovery of the West Side (May 10, 1959) [Set forth in Sections 1A and 1B]. Our return was on June 10, 1959, to see what the West Side looked like in logging operation. This time, we went to the office of the company on the main street of Tuolumne. I entered the office through the door on the "side" street that led directly to the main entrance to the property. At a counter inside, I spoke with a woman who apparently was Arthur Ronten's secretary. As I recall, I signed in on one line of a form on a clipboard. She handed me a pass which was printed on an ordinary piece of paper about 2"x 3" and which I had to return when I left. The Pass was for both Mary Jo and me. The secretary's only admonishment to me was to "Stay out of the way of the straddle carriers". I parked and locked our car on the side street and we walked into the West Side mill property and down towards the white Dispatcher's shack.

On the way down, I photographed this. Allegedly, it was the only photo of this equipment servicing truck and showed the rear of the dispatcher's shack on the right and the woods warehouse behind it.



We walked onto the deck in front of the Dispatcher's shack. I had with me my Dad's old clockwork driven Regular 8mm movie camera in addition to the little pocket Mamiya 16 mm still camera that I'd used the month before. The movie camera was on a tripod, so I stuck my head in the door of the Dispatcher's shack and asked Dispatcher Earl Green if it was OK to set up the movie camera on the deck and to take still pictures from there, too. He said "Sure, it's fine" and that I wouldn't be in his way, so I did. It wasn't long before Shay #9, with Bert Bergstrom as the engineer and a loaded log train behind it, entered the yard. I started shooting.



As the train first appeared, many details of the area could be seen. Gas switcher no. 1 is at the right; the platform and high pressure water nozzle for washing empty log cars was at its left. Behind that was the blacksmith's charcoal storage shed.



Here, even the fire in the Shay could be seen.

[These new digital scans from my new Epson scanner are the sharpest and most detailed images I've ever seen from the 16 mm slides which I exposed 50 years ago !].



Here, the train had just stopped and the Shay was being uncoupled from the train (out of sight at the left). The engine then pulled forward and stopped past the switch for the grade (foreground) that went up past the woods warehouse and the Dispatcher's shack.



Shay #9 began to back up the grade past the two warehouses to reach the wye. Leaning against the wall was the wooden walkway used to walk supplies from the warehouse door through a reefer's door, all without touching the dock.

The empty log cars at the right are ready to go out on the next train to the woods, which in 1959 would have been the next day.



No. 9 continued past the Dispatcher's shack and took the right leg of the wye (the second track up).

The first track on the right, with the Derail sign, is a siding that was called the "Tie Siding". Ties made by the mill for the West side were loaded onto flat cars on the siding, which ended very close to the mill. I did not see any signs of it being used for that purpose in 1959.

The bag with coffee pot strapped on it belonged to a man who was somehow getting a ride out into the woods. He was inside, talking with Earl Green, when this photo was taken.



After turning Shay #9 on the wye, Engineer Bert Bergstrom looked at me intently as he backed down the grade to pick up his loaded train and pull it backwards down to the log dump.



We then left the deck in front of the Dispatcher's shack and went around behind the woods warehouse to watch the train head for the log dump. The train was nearing the brow log. The RIP (repair in place, usually) track was at the left. I also heard it called the "dead line". The mill, with the engine house in front, the speeder and straddle carrier repair shed, and the slash burner were in the distance. At right

foreground is the hook (with its lifting cable quadrupled) of the crane which once was used to load drums of wire rope on narrow gauge cars for shipment to the woods. Rather than using stiff wooden legs, this electric powered crane used cable guys. One comes down from the top of the photo to an anchor on the left. When not in use, the hook was anchored to what may be an old switch frog.



We got this close to the to the dump area before turning around to see if another train was coming. Shay no. 9 is about to be uncoupled from the log cars which are lined up along the brow log. Shay no. 15 is in the RIP or dead line at the left.

Please proceed to Part Two, Section 2B, for more photos & story.