

Meeting M-190 FACE-TO-FACE at last

A 1963 stop in Clovis, N.Mex., also netted a Santa Fe bonus

By Richard J. Anderson • Photos by the author

RECENTLY when I was searching through my Atchison, Topeka & Santa Fe memorabilia for a particular timetable, I came across a 1963 pamphlet entitled “Welcome aboard the San Francisco Chief.” When had I obtained this? I could not remember, but I was hooked. I sat down and began to read . . . “We are happy you have selected Santa Fe for your trip. We will do our best to make your journey an enjoyable travel experience . . .”

Then the following notation stopped me. “Stop for leg-stretching at Clovis, New Mexico, while train is serviced. At other stops the schedule does not permit you to leave the train.” I flipped to the Chicago-California schedule for the *San Francisco Chief* in the leaflet. West-bound, No. 1 was due into Clovis at 11:10 a.m. and out at 11:40, and there was this notation: “Houston-Richmond Pullman and Chair Car, also Dallas-Los Angeles Pullman and Chair Car join Train 1 at Clovis.”

Clovis! Suddenly the memories of a day in July 1963 washed over me, memories not so much of the *San Francisco Chief* but of motor car M-190.

Santa Fe fans, and others, know that M-190 was possibly the most unusual gas-electric car ever manufactured. Measuring 90 feet long, it consisted of two articulated sections riding on three trucks. An Electro-Motive power plant and the operating cab were in the front section, and the rear portion was for baggage. When delivered in June 1932, M-190 had a Winton distillate engine; this was replaced by a 900 h.p. diesel in 1949. A key step in the evolution from doodlebug to locomotive, M-190 could pull five heavyweight coaches at passenger-train speeds on level track.



At Clovis, single-level cars from Dallas and Houston were melded into the *San Francisco Chief*'s mixed consist of conventional and high-level cars. The F units were fueled, the train fully serviced.

In 1961 I had been doing research in the Association of American Railroads library in Washington, D.C., and came across a December 1932 photo of M-190. She was in front of Santa Fe's old La Grande Station in Los Angeles, having just arrived from San Diego as train 71 with a baggage car, two coaches, and a cafe-parlor in tow.

Two years later, that photo was fresh in my mind as I drove into New Mexico, en route to California on vacation. Clovis was just ahead. I'd heard that M-





It wouldn't delay me too much to hang around Clovis to see M-190, perhaps the most unusual gas-electric car ever built. It made a Carlsbad-Clovis turn as trains 26-25, with obs coach 3197.

190 was in service between Clovis and Carlsbad. It was mid-morning; could I possibly see her?

I checked the 1963 Spring-Summer Santa Fe timetable I had with me. (Didn't we always take timetables with us on long trips in those days?) In Table 22, I learned that train 26 was due into Clovis from Carlsbad at 1 p.m. It would not delay me much to spend some time in Clovis, where I could have lunch and be able to see for myself the one-of-a-kind car that had become such a fascination.

I happened to be at the Clovis station before lunchtime when I received an unexpected bonus—the westbound *San Francisco Chief*, which rolled to a stop a few minutes after 11 a.m. I had not even thought to check the timetable for any other Clovis listings!

What a show I saw. The *Chief* was blue-flagged for servicing. The F-unit locomotives were refueled and watered, and the windshield and headlight of lead F3 No. 32L got a good scrubbing. The food-service cars were iced; water tanks in the coaches and sleepers were topped off; and the whole train received a thorough inspection.

The main act was the melding of the cars from Dallas and Houston, which had arrived on train 75 at 9:30 that



morning, into the *Chief's* consist. The Baldwin switcher on duty had to do a lot of pushing and pulling to get the coaches, and then the sleepers, from the two Texas cities properly placed in the *Chief's* consist. The connecting cars were all of conventional type, but the *Chief's* inbound consist was a combination of low- and high-level equipment, including a Big Dome lounge car that my pamphlet reminds us "was at the center of the train, a friendly meeting place for all passengers." A separate lounge car for Pullman customers was next to the dining car.

No. 1 left Clovis on time at 11:40, leaving me more than an hour before M-190 was due. I enjoyed a Mexican lunch and still had plenty of time before a burbling sound from the west announced the arrival of the reason for my hanging around.

I busied myself taking photos as a surprisingly large amount of mail and express was unloaded from M-190's baggage section. M-190 was pulling coach observation car 3197, a Pullman-Standard product delivered just after World War II. The car had brought about a dozen passengers into Clovis.

After passengers and head-end business was unloaded, the Baldwin goat that had switched the *Chief* dragged M-190 and the 3197 west from the station, back to the wye where the Carlsbad branch joined the main line. In due time the switcher spotted the consist, reversed in direction, in front of the station. New mail and express was hefted into the baggage compartment, a few people boarded 3197, and at 1:45 the big motor car accelerated out of town as train 25. It was due back into Carlsbad, 184 miles south, at 6 that evening. **■**