**Tales from the Rails:**

Battling the Bulls

Weaver Dial of Seattle, Washington's first ride in 1929 took the 12-year-old over the Cascade Mountains. He left Seattle with his friend, Emmy, at 11 o'clock one night; they reached the Auburn yards at 2 a.m. and began the eight-hour haul over the mountains shortly afterwards.

"In San Francisco, we rode the back of a passenger train right into the depot. We'd just stepped off the coal tender, when we heard a voice, 'Stop, or I'll shoot!'

"Two railroad bulls hauled my partner, and I into a sub-station, and went through our wallets. After some lengthy questioning, they fined us $10. We only had three bucks between the two of us. They told us to get the hell out of there!

"We thought the San Francisco bulls were shakedown artists, until we hopped a freight out of Cheyenne, Wyoming. As the train began to crawl out of the yards, we took note that 'bos were scrambling off the boxcars. A railroad bull was walking down the top of the boxcars, checking for passengers hiding between the cars. Another bull was on the right side, and one more covering the left. Nobody rode that one out of Cheyenne.

"A gloom set over the would-be riders, until some jungle professor got the word out that you could catch the next train nine miles up the road. The grade was steep and the train had to slow down at a bridge. All began the trek up the nine-mile hill. Some had large packs on their backs, with sleeping gear and cooking pots. A farmer let us drink our fill of water at his well, and we made the rendezvous at the bridge.

"Several hours went by. I passed the time doing some cartooning in charcoal under the bridge. 'Here she comes!' somebody yelled.

"All hands scrambled for a boarding position along the tracks. Uneasiness set in when we spotted the engine had a helper. Two engines! She roared past us in a cloud of dust, and nobody was fool enough to grab for the iron ladders. A fireman waved from the engine cab, and showed us a mouthful of teeth, giving us the old Wyoming horse laugh.

"Some of the 'bos threw rocks at the jeering comedian. I saved my energy for the nine-mile walk back downgrade to the Cheyenne railroad yards.

"Under cover of darkness, a bunch of determined riders finally got aboard a train. We rode her out for several hours, before we pulled up to a stop in a small town in Nebraska. Once again, the three railroad bulls appeared. One walking down the top, pistol in one hand, a flashlight in the other. Two others covered the right and left of the train.

"They rounded us up at gun point and herded us into a small railway station. Once inside, we were lined up and told to take off all our clothes. As one bull stood guard, the other two meticulously went through our pockets, the brims of our caps, even detailing our shoes and fingering our belts. They made the rules: 'You can't ride the Union Pacific without paying. All of you with money will be allowed to keep one half, the rest will go to pay for your fare.'

"Four bucks was my entire bankroll. I was given a $2.00 ticket on the first passenger train that stopped. A hard-working bindle stiff, who'd been following the harvest had $80 on him, which he planned on taking home to his family. His boxcar fare was $40, which they sacked. It was a heartless thing to do, with no concern for his labors whatsoever. My feelings for railroad bulls were never lower."