

Train: ATSF's Trains 33, 43, and 53.

Direction: Westbound only. (There was an eastbound Train 34/ MX-34.)

Description: Red Ball trains to Los Angeles. It appears that Train 33 was replaced by Train 53 in 1948. Train 53 was a very busy symbol running between Kansas City and Los Angeles carrying general freight.

Origin: Train 33: Chicago (Corwith Yard) and re-blocked in Kansas City (Argentine Yard). Train 43 and Train 53 usually ran out of Kansas City.

Terminals west of Kansas City would also originate sections of these trains if they had more than 10 loads for redball movement that couldn't be handled on the regular trains for reasons of time or tonnage.

Destination: Los Angeles, CA.

Railroads Represented: ATSF, Erie, NYC, Wabash, PRR, C&NW, B&O, GTW, PM, DT&I, and AC&Y.

Many of the cars in these trains were foreign-road cars from the Northeastern and Midwestern industrial belt, especially PRR, NYC, and B&O (which had much larger fleets than most other RRs). Some smaller RRs contributed cars to this service out of all proportion to the size of their freight car fleets because of the nature of the traffic -- GTW, PM, and DT&I, for example, which handled a lot of auto parts, and AC&Y, which shipped tires from Ohio, NH, which served the Pratt & Whitney aircraft engine plants in New England.

Wabash XAPs were included in the mix of auto traffic equipment. Apparently the Santa Fe paid for the parts racks installed in Wabash cars it handled to and from LA.

Products: Automobiles, auto parts, auto frames, light trucks, aircraft parts, manufactured goods, high class merchandise, LCL merchandise, and meat from Midwest packers. However, every other kind of redball freight could be on these trains, and on sections built by terminals west of Argentine (KC).

Train Length and Weight: Typical trains had around 70-90 cars and weighed around 3000-4000 tons (they were longer and heavier in the 1950s than in the 1940s).

Car Types: Boxcars, auto cars, meat reefers, gondolas, and sometimes tank cars.

The boxcars and auto cars were mostly newer (often steel sheathed) XMs and XAPs, as well as XARs loaded with makes and models of new autos and light trucks that weren't assembled in the LA area.

Gondolas loaded with auto frames. The Santa Fe contributed many cars (including frame gons) to the various auto parts pools, and these special-equipped cars were much in evidence.

GY-33 had lots of tank cars from Gallup.

You could spot Train 53 by all the extended-height auto parts boxcars in it.

Typical Schedule:

circa 1943-1944:

5:00 a.m. -- Train 33-43 (from Chicago) arrives from Barstow

- Train 33 apparently merged and split with Train 43 (from Chicago) in Barstow

- it left Barstow at 11:00 p.m. the night before
- it will stay in S.B until 6:00 a.m.
- 6:00 a.m. -- Train 33-43 (from Chicago) leaves for L.A. via 3rd District
- it has been in S.B. since 5:00 a.m.
- it will arrive in L.A. at 7:00 p.m. [why does it take so long?]

1944:

Train 33 -- Corwith (Chicago) to LA.
 "California, Texas, Oklahoma Fast Freight"
 Connections at Barstow to W234, W325
 (Spent 15 hours in Barstow being rebuilt)
 Arrived in LA at 7:00 pm
 Handled freight forwarder traffic, wartime military equipment, parts for West Coast assembly plants, autos and auto parts.

Train 43 -- Corwith (Chicago) to LA, split at Barstow.
 Connections at Barstow to W234, W325
 At Barstow combines with 43 Northern California Section
 (Spent 12 hours in Barstow)
 Connections at SB to SDX, M505, W501-502, W131, W503-504
 Arrived in LA at 7:00 pm
 Handled freight forwarder traffic, wartime military equipment, parts for West Coast assembly plants, manufactured products.

May 4, 1945 - Train 33 arrived at SB at 8:15 am.

1947 samples (on 3rd District):

July 19 -- 2nd 33 - engine 3892 left San Bernardino at 4:35am and arrived 1st St. yard 9:50am.
 July 28 -- Train 33 - engine 3885 left San Bernardino 9:55am, set out 9 empties at S F Springs and arrived at 1st St. yard with 46 loads and 13 empties.

Aug. 2, 1947 (sample times):

BA-43 arrived SB at 8:30 AM
 BA-43-A arrived SB at 10:30 AM

There were westbound 53 trains in 1948. Train 33 is no longer listed after this.

1949 National Schedules:

43 (KC to So Cal) - arrives Barstow at 4:45 pm, LA at 11:00 am
 53 (KC to So Cal) - arrives Barstow at 9:30 pm, LA at 2:00 pm

circa 1950: GY-33 passed Summit in the late afternoon.

1953 sample times:

Train 43 Lv. Bar. 12:30 a.m. Ar. San Bdno. 5:00 a.m.
 Train 43 Lv. Bar. 8:40 p.m. Ar. San Bdno. 4:30 a.m.
 Train 43 Ar. San Bdno. 5:00 p.m.

Westbound trains arriving SB (samples):

43 (1955) -- 4:00 am

1/53 (1955) -- 5:00 am, 4:00 am
 1/53 (1956) - 5:50 am, 1:05 pm
 median time: 5:00 am to 5:50 am (varies a lot)

2/53 (1955) -- 5:00 am, 12:01 pm [noon]
2/53 (1956) - 10:05 am, 11:30 pm
median time: 5:00 am to 10:05 am (varies a lot)

BA-53 (1955) -- 7:15 pm, 9:00 am, 11:00 am, 7:45 am
BA-53 (1956) - 3:25 pm, 4:10 pm
median time: 11:00 am to 3:25 pm (varies a lot)

4/53 (1955) -- 3:00 pm

53 (1955) -- 4:00 pm
53 (1956) - 12:40 pm
median time: 12:40 pm to 4:00 pm (varies a lot)

More samples:

1955:

53 Ar. San Bdn. 4:40 p.m.
53 Ar. San Bdn. 6:20 a.m.
2/53 Ar. San Bdn. 6:10 a.m.
2/53 Lv. Bar. 6:00 a.m. Ar. San Bdn. 11:00 a.m.
4/53 Lv. Bar. 10:30 a.m. Ar. San Bdn. 2:30 p.m.
BA53 Lv. Bar. 7:15 p.m. Ar. San Bdn. 11:00 p.m.
BA53 Lv. Bar. 3:25 a.m. Ar. San Bdn. 9:00 a.m.
BA53 Lv. Bar. 2:30 a.m. Ar. San Bdn. 10:30 a.m.
BA53 Lv. Bar. 3:00 a.m. Ar. San Bdn. 7:00 a.m.

1956:

1/53 Ar. San Bdn. 2:05 p.m.
2/53 Lv. Bar. 2:00 p.m. Ar. San Bdn. 6:30 p.m.
2/53 Ar. San Bdn. 5:30 a.m.
2/53 Lv. Bar. 7:05 a.m. Ar. San Bdn. 11:00 a.m.
2/53 Ar. San Bdn. 11:05 a.m.
WZ53 Lv. Bar. 4:15 p.m. Ar. San Bdn. 8:30 p.m.
BA53 Lv. Bar. 9:30 p.m. Ar. San Bdn. 3:30 a.m.
BA53 Lv. Bar. 12:01 p.m. Ar. San Bdn. 3:30 p.m.

1964:

53 Lv. Bar. 10:45 a.m. Ar. San Bdn. 1:00 p.m.
53 Lv. Bar. 5:50 a.m. Ar. San Bdn. 8:30 p.m.
S53 Lv. Bar. 10:00 a.m. Ar. San Bdn. 1:00 p.m.
533 Lv. Bar. 10:20 p.m. Ar. San Bdn. 1:00 a.m.
533 Lv. Bar. 9:40 p.m. Ar. San Bdn. 12:40 a.m.
533 Lv. Bar. 7:45 p.m. Ar. San Bdn. 11:55 p.m.

Times for Train 53 were all over the clock, with so many versions coming from so far.

Road Power: 4-unit freight FT sets, until 4-unit freight F3/F7 sets arrived in 1948-53. 2-10-2s during the June Spud Rush in the 1940s.

Helper Power: 2-10-2s, 4-8-2s, 2-8-2s, also FT sets (full or partial), until GP7s arrived in 1950-53, and GP9s in 1956-57. Number of helpers west from Victorville depended on train weight, normally one helper.

Operations Details:

Under the Santa Fe's rules for redball movement, any terminal with ten or more redball loads to move that couldn't be handled on a given day's symbol train could dispatch its own section of that symbol with its station symbol indicating the point of origin. Ideally such sections would be filled to tonnage with other traffic moving the same way.

Thus AG-33 would be a section of the 33 train originating in Argentine. The WZ-53 was a 53 train that originated at whatever station had the telegraphic symbol "WZ." The GY-33 symbol would indicate a section of 33 originating at the yard or terminal using the symbol "GY." The 1950 Santa Fe list of stations shows "GY" as standing for Gallup Yard. The GY-33 would not run every day.

The 33, 43, and 53 trains often ran in more than one daily section.

The system circulars on blocking instructions say that if a 33 train is late at Barstow (not an unusual occurrence) it could be combined with the 43 train of the same date. Since the 43 would also be carrying Northern California tonnage to be split off at Barstow, the 33 train plus the LA Division cars from the 43 might have made one good-sized train. Barstow often dispatched trains to Los Angeles using the "43" symbol which were actually the consist of a 33 train.

Most of the through symbol freights ran daily, with the caveat that any of them could be annulled or combined with different symbols depending on traffic and schedules. The 33 trains arriving in San Bernardino under the 43 symbol were the most common examples of that.

There were definitely days when there was a 43 train and no 33 train over the First District. Sometimes there could even have been a GY-33 but no "regular" 33 train.

The 33 trains could include cars from anywhere, but carried many cars from Northeastern and Midwestern roads, any roads connecting at Chicago or Kansas City. The Erie was a major connection at Chicago for traffic from New York, and the Wabash was a major connection for the Santa Fe bringing autos and auto parts from Michigan. Pennsylvania and New York Central cars were also common, just because those roads had such large fleets.

Train 53 ran in many sections. There was even an LA-53 running between Chicago and Los Angeles. There was a F0-53 running between KC and LA that connected with the N&W and carried auto parts. There was an S-53 between KC and LA that came from the Penn Central connection at Streator. A hot version of the 53 was called the 533. A 53 train that was assembled at Barstow from other trains was called a BA-53.

And if that wasn't enough 53 trains, they would run plain 53 trains in multiple sections, known as 2/53, 3/53, and indeed 4/53 (that must have been a record!), and they all displayed white signals and ran extra.

Regarding arriving WB freights in SB in general, most trains had a cut of coal taken off, usually from the rear. Empty SFRD reefers (for extra braking power) were taken out, usually from the front. But you never saw a cut of coal on an auto parts or 53 train.

Hotshot trains, including auto parts trains, such as Train 53, didn't have much switching done to them in SB.

ATSF raised-roof boxcars cars hauled Chrysler and Studebaker auto bodies and/or parts, and Chrysler had a large plant on the LA Junction Ry. Train 53, a hot train, brought these parts west. When passing through the San Bernardino A yard, these cars had to be routed under the tallest part of the Mt. Vernon Viaduct, which was at tracks 14 and 15. These tall cars could not be within five cars of the engine or the caboose.

Standard operating procedure was for hot manifest trains carrying symbols 43, 53, 533, TLA, and QLA to make setouts in Fullerton and Pico Rivera before arriving at Hobart (when they still terminated at First Street yard, they also made a set out at Hobart). Road switchers assigned at Fullerton and Pico Rivera would then switch cars destined for their territory out of the setouts from the east and spot them where needed.

Modeling the Train: Use lots of boxcars and auto cars, with some meat reefers and gondolas loaded with auto frames. Before 1948, run a Train 33-43 (combined). In 1948 and later, run a Train 43 and a Train 53 (with some raised-roof auto cars), sometimes in several sections, and with sections from various points of origin. Sometimes run Train GY-33, with lots of tank cars. Use cars from ATSF, Erie, NYC, Wabash, PRR, C&NW, B&O, GTW, PM, DT&I, and AC&Y.

Comments and corrections are welcome.

Thanks,
John Thompson