



ARRIVES SAFELY — Bob Parker, bureau of reclamation project property manager, tells Mary Tapper, bureau secretary, about his transcontinental trip escorting the 16-foot turbine runner for one of the dam generators from Wheeling, West Virginia, to Boulder City. Steel stay rods supporting the big wheel in the well car broke three times from vibration on the trip. Photo by Bill Russell, bureau of reclamation photographer.

Escorting Huge Turbine Wheel Across Nation Proves Exciting

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BOULDER CITY, April 3 — Bob Parker, bureau of reclamation project property manager, is back home, and glad of it, after a very strange transcontinental railroad trip as nursemaid to a huge new turbine runner—or waterwheel — for generator A-6 in the Arizona powerhouse.

Because the big wheel—16 feet in diameter—was needed in a hurry to effect a change in the generator from 50 to 60 cycle power generation, Parker was sent to the Continental Foundry and Machinery company at Wheeling, West Virginia, to accompany it and see that it didn't become stalled on a sidetrack somewhere.

It was probably a good thing, too—the steel stay-rods supporting the big wheel in the well car broke from vibration three times on the trip and in Laramie, Wyoming, the car was pulled out of the train and shunted to a siding in the snow. Bob experienced his only delay when he failed to get any satisfaction out of the trainmaster. He pushed past the lower brass collars right up to the division superintendent who called out a crew of men on overtime and repaired the supports so the car could join the next train through.

"It was snowing when I got to Wheeling. The next day it rained. It snowed all the way across until I got to Caliente," he said. "Every time we stopped I had to crawl out of a hot caboose and

wade through snow to see if the wheel was riding all right. Why does anybody want to live in country like that?"

Bob found that the Pennsylvania railroad had compiled a special routing, to avoid overhead crossings, bridges and tunnels which would not clear, all the way through, and had obtained a special clearance authority for the car.

The car was shunted across the Ohio river on a local to Martins Ferry, then routed on a branch line to Mingo Junction, Ohio, thence to Fort Wayne, Valparaiso, and Hobart, Indiana, east of Gary. Here it went around Chicago to Joliet on the Elgin, Joliet and Eastern—one of the busiest roads in the country which never gets more than 40 miles from Chicago—and there put on the Rock Island to Council Bluffs where it was switched to the Union Pacific for the rest of the run.

Because of the height of the load trains were restricted to 35 miles an hour to Council Bluffs and then cut to 30 on straight-aways and 25 on curves the rest of the way.

The first questionable bridge was encountered at La Salle, Illinois, but the load cleared by six inches. At Green River original plans called for routing through Pocatello, but it was discovered that there was five inches clearance through Aspen tunnel, 1½ miles long, and it was

taken through, slowly.

Only one other debatable situation occurred. That was when it was found that 10 miles of track was under water near Rock Island, Illinois. The train crawled through at 10 miles an hour.

Parker and his waterwheel ran into a delay at Fort Wayne where railroad officials refused to move the car at night and held him over until daylight.

Near Lima, Ohio, a motorist driving beside the train flagged it down and said the car carrying the turbine wheel was swaying badly. After a check the train proceeded, going slower.

Bob was shocked by seeing a terrible accident near Larwill, Indiana. A young girl riding a bicycle waited for the freight to pass slowly and then rode out behind it, not realizing a speeding passenger was coming from the opposite direction. She was struck by the passenger locomotive and her body hurled 125 feet, Parker said.

Shortly before his arrival in the Canton, Ohio, yards a trainman had been killed and Bob contributed to a fund his co-workers were collecting for the family.

Outside of the snow, and stubborn brass hats, Parker had a good time and found the various train crews pleasant and accommodating companions.

"I hope if I have to do it again, it's in summer and there's no snow," Bob mused as he recounted the trip.