

THE SIDE TRACK

NEWS

from the Toy Train Operating Society
Sacramento Valley Division

Summer 1994

It's MOD—It's Marvelous

The 'MOD Squad' will unveil the Division's initial MODular layout at our September 3rd meet. The units on display will give other members the opportunity to see the enthusiastic creativity of the MOD Squad.

Since the group's first get-together in June, they have held a number of evening meetings. These ranged from 'Let's try this and let's try that ...' brainstorming forums to the 'Let's put this here and that there' hands-on approach. Along with the carpentry talents (and hospitality) of Phil Fravesi, a lot of credit for 'hands-on' work goes to Jim Groth, Ken Knott and Tony Rohrs. Of course, equally important kudos go to Don Rosa and the other club officers for having the foresight and commitment to encourage the venture.

Here's hoping the September 'Wow! look what they did!' debut will spur on a lot of members to respond with 'We want to do it, too!'

... and no ants

The June picnic—for those who missed it—was a great meet with so much Elk Grove-style fried chicken that we sold take-home bags at a bargain price. There were some nice train buys, too. Gene Knoefel, bedecked in his brighter-than-orange Lionel cap, sold off the last of the convention cars.

A Toy Train Meet

By now, all members should have received the flyer and table application for the October 1 meet. If you failed to get yours, please contact the Lochers or pick up a copy at the September meeting.

Copies of the vendor rules will be available at that meeting, or you can pick them up with your badge the day of the meet. Briefly—at 8:00 a.m., parts dealers and those with operating layouts may set up. At 8:30 (no earlier) other sellers will be allowed to set up. Table assignments and vendor badges will be available at the registration table. There will be free coffee and donuts in the lobby. As usual, boxes are to be covered and we ask that you bring your own covers. Trading begins when the doors open to TTOS & TCA members at 10:00, not before! The doors open to the public at 11:00.

We'll be awarding \$50 and \$25 prizes to the first and second place winners in the layout contest. And, sellers, you must stay set up until 4 p.m. to be eligible for the \$50 drawing.

New Members

Our Division keeps growing as we welcome our latest members: Robert Burnside, Richard Datin, James and Delores Henson, Richard Hogg, Ed McKown, Tony & Barbara Rohrs, Mark Ruby and Richard Tucker.

A Toy Train Parade

A great weekend is planned for October 1 and 2 as TTOS celebrates the 10th anniversary of the Toy Train Parade exhibit at the California State Railroad Museum. The September issue of *Classic Toy Trains* has an excellent article by Dave Otth featuring the exhibit and its history.

Tom Gibson, who is in charge of the event for the Toy Train Historical Foundation, has lined up all kinds of activities and special exhibits. He plans 20 layouts, including all those that participated in Railfair '91, the Canfield Circus, the Pikemaster layout, and everything from Z scale to garden railways. Kids of all ages will be able to operate trains in the switching yard contest, a demolition derby, drag races and through an obstacle course.

Saturday, TTOS members are invited to a private celebration party at the Museum. This event begins with American River steam excursions at 4 and 5 p.m. The party in the Museum begins at 6, and will feature the new video theater. There will be an auction, door prizes, and a Lionel souvenir car. TTOS members may obtain tickets all day Saturday by showing their current national membership card at our meet at the Scottish Rite Temple or at the Museum entrance. For more information, Tom's number is 916 421-2452.



TALES of the 15 FOOT MAN

by Jack Ahearn



As a kid, I was ruler deep into scale modeling.

One technique I employed to maintain total realism on my perfectly proportioned, ad nauseam, scale empire was to "reduce" myself to 1:87th size and walk the rails, trails and streams of my creation.

It was extremely effective on my scale pike.

Now that I've grown up to be a boy again, I sometimes scale myself down to "O" gauge size and wander through my tin-plate world.

It is extremely dangerous on an tin-plate pike!

First of all, there "ain't no" scale on a tin-plate layout — especially mine. What there is, is a wild mixture of blatantly colored, mismatched, randomly sized buildings and stations and—most amazing—lead lipped people.

Still, isn't it the most beautiful sight in the whole darned world? You can bet a GG-1 it is!

Let me tell you of my last adventure during my excursion into my Land of Lionel.

As I strolled down the yellow sawdust road (it wasn't named "Sawdust Road" — it was sawdust!) I spotted a grade crossing in the distance. As I contemplated how I might climb over the "high iron," I noticed a rather tall cross-bucks warning of on-coming locomotives. "Rather tall," meaning about thirty-some feet tall. That kind of "rather tall." However, my eyes must compensate a bit while focusing in on "Joshua's world," and compared to some of the surrounding trees and

telephone poles it might have been maybe only five feet tall.

My mind finally accepted the normalcy of the three-story-tall post, bedecked with 15' brass cross-bucks. My "O" scale eyes again winced at the size of the man standing at Prussian Parade Ground attention on the huge metal platform which supported the humongous warning sign.

He apparently was on my Lionel Lines payroll, as he was in full uniform and was holding a large red flag. As I neared the apparition, I guessed the flag to be about three feet square.

"If he's using a red table cloth for a hand flag" ... I murmured ... "how long are his arms? ... his legs?" My questions took on an ominous tone as the answers loomed directly in front of me and, more frighteningly, above me.

I looked up and up and up and up!

There stood the biggest, tallest, highest, largest man I ever saw. I was standing "eye-to-wrist" with him—my eye, his wrist!

Suddenly I heard the two-toned tune of air twirling through a tin-plate tender! Two longs and two shorts ... it was coming our way!

Moments later, I stood stunned. I wasn't sure which hurt more — my ear drums from the roar of the 259-E rumbling by or the throb in my swelling jaw.

"Never, never stand directly in front of me when there's a train approaching!" a voice a few notes above the tender's whistle intoned from high above.

"You—you speak," I squeaked.

"Of course I speak," he roared.

"How—where did you learn?" I gulped the question.

"Back East, where I came from." His voice lowered to a mild explosion.

"East?"

"New Jersey."

"New Jersey?" I realized my question sounded like a person in shock.

"Irvington — Irvington, New Jersey." He beamed proudly.

"Irvington — of course," I nodded.

"Do you live in Lionel City?" His voice dropped to a sociable drum-roll.

"Live here? Why, yes," I looked out over the benchwork ".... you might say this land is my land," I sang out.

"Mine, too," he replied.

"You win. Tell me," I asked, "how'd you get all the way out to the West Coast?"

"Oh, you might say, layout by layout. Lately it seems more like swap meet to swap meet. I'm snapped up pretty quickly and then I find myself working on another railroad. I've been working on different railroads for over fifty years!

"Swap meets, huh?"

"Yes, but in the beginning it was different. I was a present. Nice little kid got me for Christmas. I can always tell when it's Christmas. Those days I only worked a week or two each year. Now-a-days I'm placed on roads that operate all year round. Mostly by bigger kids.

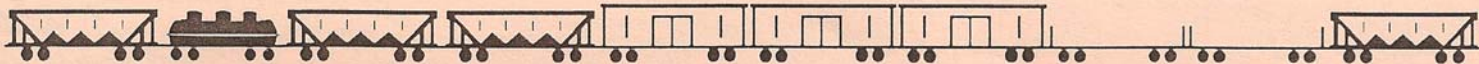
I wondered to myself what "bigger" might mean to him.

"Yeah, I've worked them all," he added, "... Lionel, Flyer, Marx — I've seen them all in my day, the big layouts and the small ones."

"Which one was the best?" I was really getting into his reminiscing.

He looked down with the same warm smile I wore when I was five and saw my first train under the tree, and answered with matching warmth ... "Son, they're all the best."

I looked to my left and saw smoke bellowing in the distance. "I've got to be going now." I waved and walked away rubbing my jaw as a 2-6-4 behemoth neared.



'O.K. to come visit with you again?'

'Anytime you'd like. I've got tales about toy train layouts all over the country. And you know ... you're bound to love every one of them.'

As I walked back down the yellow sawdust road I knew he was right. I'll be back!

Taken to the Cleaners?

Wednesday, June 8th, as the Sacramento Railroad Museum was closing for the day, over a dozen culprits filtered into the building and proceeded directly to the second floor toy train display.

Glass barriers were quickly removed, and by 7:00 p.m., not a square inch of the icon lay untouched. Everything the gang came for was removed from the display by suspicious looking vacuum cleaners, brushes, feather dusters and rags.

To add to the debauchery, leader Tom Gibson led his merry gang to the first floor engine area. There they feasted on fine cuisine from the kitchens of 'Carls le junioire' served up by the 'Don' of Elk Grove, Rosa!

Among the dusty-handed gang of revellers assisting Tom were Lynn Cochran, Ross Crawford, Clyde Easterly, Francis Eister, Phil Fravesi, Barry Garland, David Gray, Jim Groth, Ken Hall along with his wife, Laura, and son, Corry, Ed McKown, Don Rosa, John Shelton, Pete White, and ... oh yes, investigative reporter, Jack Ahearn.

We all look forward to their next dirty deed. Would you like to join them? Check with Tom Gibson or Ken Mizner for details.

This is your newsletter. Please tell us what you would like to see. There will be a "Side Track News" box at each meeting. Or you can talk to Jack or Brady.

The President's Corner

The 1994 TTOS Convention is now history. National membership is an all-time high of 7,338 with a record-setting convention registration of 850 members. Growth has its challenges, and the National Board meeting reflected some of these. There are important issues which deserve discussion and consideration at future Division meetings. I will make a full report at our September 3 meeting.

The October meet is upon us. Please call Carl (916 626-0421) to volunteer your services. Because of the Toy Train Parade celebration at the Museum, a big crowd is expected and we need lots of help! Please get your table reservations in early because we will expect to sell out.

Also, the Christmas season will be here soon and toy train activities will highlight many weekends. But be sure to mark your calendar for our festivities on December 3rd.

The success of the 1995 convention in Sacramento depends on you! We will have some 'firsts' and there are changes we would like to make to the traditional format. Please talk to Gene and sign up.

The Amtrack trip to Reno is scheduled for February 10-12. We will leave Sacramento at noon on Friday and come back Sunday afternoon. We have our own Amtrack car booked and reservations at the El Dorado Hotel. We'll have the details later.

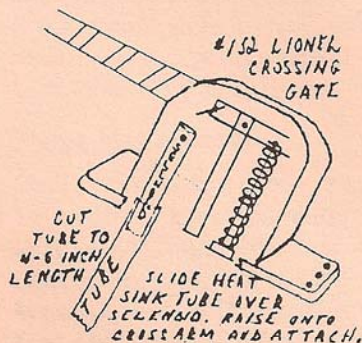
Thanks again to Jack Ahearn and George Ann Hornor for giving their time to do this month's newsletter.

Don Rosa

Jack's Mini-Clin

Instead of trying to hold a slippery solenoid with pliers or tweezers, try slipping a snug-sized tube of Heat-Sink insulation over the end. I hooked onto a hard-to-reach lever on a Lionel #152 Crossing Gate six out of six tries instead of once in three nights while trying to use pliers.

The best place I've found for Heat-Sink is Marvac Electronics, Del Paso at El Camino. They have 3' lengths of popular diameters for under \$2.



TCA Winner!

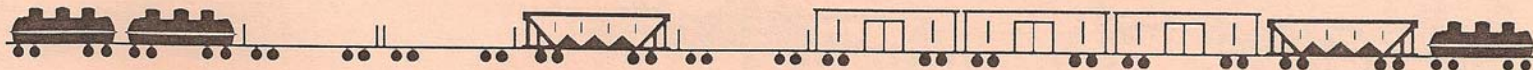
'Total Success!', shouted Dave Cristofani as he described the May 28 TCA meet at the Scottish Rite Temple. 'All the tables were sold and good attendance figures held right up to closing time,' he added.

In his enthusiasm, he added special thanks to Clyde Easterly for his help. He also praised all of the other volunteers, especially the ladies who served up the 'beans.'

The 250 attendees were delighted with lots of tables to shop from, and they also enjoyed the operating layouts set up by Jim Groth, Ken Mizner, and Ken Knott.

Thanks, TCA, for the warm welcome and a good meet!

Would an engine without a bell get a Nobel Award? Probably not. It wouldn't be a pealing enough.



Down the track

Division Meet, Sierra School Center September 3
 Scottish Rite Temple Meet October 1
 GATS – Cow Palace October 8,9
 TCA, York October 14,15
 Division Meet, Sierra School Center November 5
 Cal-Stewart, Pasadena November 11-13
 GATS – Oakland Coliseum November 19,20
Division Holiday Party, Sierra School Center December 3
 GATS – San Jose December 10,11

1995

Division Meet, Sierra School Center January 7
 Division Meet, Sierra School Center February 4
 Reno Amtrack Trip February 10-12
 Division Meet, Sierra School Center March 4
 Cal-Stewart, Santa Clara Convention Center March 10-12



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