

# THE SIDE TRACK

## NEWS

from the Toy Train Operating Society  
Sacramento Valley Division

### 1995 Convention Issue

#### Welcomel

by Don Rosa, President  
Sacramento Valley Division

Welcome to Sacramento and the TTOS National Convention! This column could be devoted to "let's have a great time" and "while in Sacramento you must see ...". But that's covered elsewhere. So I would like to share some thoughts with you.

Is our hobby changing? I think so, and I fear we may be forgetting to enjoy ourselves as greed and politics replace friendship and fun. I would like to see our annual convention be more than a train meet. I would like for us to re-examine the purpose of our organization, and to ask ourselves how we can contribute to the longevity and integrity of our toy train hobby. As we meet for this 1995 Convention, let us consider these questions:

- Are we encouraging growth and stability or are we merely interested in maximizing our profit now without regard for the future?
- As we sell our trains, do we encourage the novice to become our "hobby friend," or do we just think of the sale?
- Do we give newer members the guidance they need?
- Are prices of toy trains becoming too high and unrealistic?

- Is the grading system being diluted?
- How can we encourage members to be more involved in TTOS business?

Toy trains will be around as long as there are people to operate them, kids to play with them, and collectors to cherish them.

Why don't we give up the idea, "he who dies with the most toys, wins!"? Instead, let's concentrate on promoting our hobby and encouraging those future collectors and operators who look at our layouts and say, "Oh, yeah, I think my dad has one of those up in the attic!"

So during the convention, how about each of us making an effort to make a new acquaintance, share some toy train expertise, take in a clinic, and attend the membership meeting to express our view points and support nominations for national officers?

Oh, and by the way, "let's have a great time" and "while in Sacramento you must see ...".



#### In Memoriam

The members of our Division were saddened to learn of the recent passing of two of our long-time members.

Ed Howe was looking forward to this convention and to seeing old friends again. His sudden death on July 23 shocked us all.

Gordon Beasley died in late June after a long struggle with ill health.

Ed and Gordon faithfully attended every Division meet, and we will miss them both.

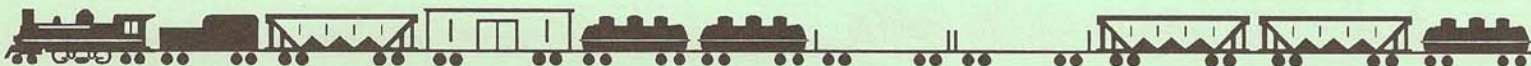
#### October Meet

The Sacramento Valley Division's River City Toy Train Meet and Open House will be held October 7, 1995, at the Scottish Rite Center.

In keeping with the new name for this annual event, we're planning a bigger and better show. There will be about 150 tables, contests, prizes, food, layouts—the works!

Be sure to pick up one of the flyers at the registration desk. Meet details and table applications will be mailed during the first week in September. If you are not on the mailing list for this show, a sign-up sheet will be at the registration desk.

Now, we don't want to railroad you in to coming to another meet, but we hope we'll see you there!





## Tolerance

by Jack Ahearn

Years ago, during the time I was a scale model aficionado and an active member of NMRA, my closest friends and relatives lived in a state of near terror when they entered my scale model railroad room.

They soon came to understand that the most dangerous words they could utter included "little", "cute," or worse, "train set." The very utterance of the word, "toy" would call for immediate ostracism, signalled by my head-to-toe sneer and my finger dramatically pointing toward the door! Banished forever, they became history.

Now in the wiser years of my life, I have achieved the maturation necessary to understand and fully appreciate the real joys of model railroading. I've rediscovered tinplate and have become an active member of TTOS.

Currently, my train room is completely out of all proportion, both size and budget wise. The air is filled with that magical aroma of forty-year-old oil, and never to be mistaken smoke, from both above and below the engines.

Today, as these same friends enter my "Choo Choo Zoo," they are confused at the look of my new layout. Bewildered, they carefully start to refer to my trains as exact scale models of a prototypical railroad, along with accepted operating schedules and practices. However, instead of giving them their anticipated knowledgeable nods of approval, I simply smile and shout, "Waddya nuts or sumptin'?" These are toys. Aren't they cute?

If it's mint in the box, why isn't it chocolate?

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*The Side Track* is published by the TTOS Sacramento Valley Division. Contributing editors are Jack Ahearn and Brady Burdge. George Ann Hornor is chief editor because she has the computer.

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## It's Mod!

We hope you enjoy watching the toy train world of yesterday and today parade by on the Sacramento Valley Division Modular Layout.

Several years ago, when Division members started talking about the project, it was decided to issue a Division Car and use part of the proceeds to build a modular layout. Thanks to the huge success of that WP car, we were able to start the project last summer. When a small core group began brainstorming, the decision was made to emphasize the two key words of our Society—*Toys* and *Operating*. The goal was to keep it simple so as to show-case the classic toy trains instead of elaborate scenery. The trains were to be the stars of the show.

The second consideration was to build a layout for the enjoyment of all members. Flyer Fans, Lionel Lions, Marliners, and devotees of the old Standards—all were to be included in a common layout. To this end, the trackage consists of all three popular gauges: S,O, and standard.

The color scheme was to be subtle, again so as not to detract from the stars of the show. Hence, the subdued colors of Lionel's early Hell Gate Bridge were chosen. To further define the subtle statement, the four rumbling mainlines were quieted by using rubber roadbed. To enhance the long, sleek lines of the tables, instead of using sharp corners that demand sharp curves, angular lines were chosen to compliment the gradual turns. Our "bay window" sections allow for passing and test tracks. To further please the eye, the height of the protective plexiglass was limited to finger and fist level rather than viewing height.

Behind the scenes are the equally important, if not as aesthetic, aspects of the nuts and bolts and wiring. We have prepared a fact sheet if you are interested in the technical details. Just ask an operator.

## Let's Eat!

At great personal sacrifice, I recently roamed around Sacramento tasting food so I could offer these culinary tips. I have since learned you will have other lists, but I can't let those calories go to waste, so here are my favorites:

The cafeteria in the basement of the State Capitol building is good and reasonable. They open at 7:30 a.m. for breakfast and lunch, Monday through Friday.

Two cafes at the Plaza Park between 9th and 10th at J are great for light breakfast or lunch. Lemon Grass, at 900 9th, is a satellite of a four star Thai restaurant out on Munroe Street. And right across the street is Cafe Soleil, with salads, sandwiches, gourmet pizzas, and scrumptious ice cream. Both places close at 4 p.m.

For something different, Sacramento has several dim sum restaurants. Dim sum, loosely translated from the Chinese, means "pieces to please the heart." A dim sum meal is made up of small portions of a variety of foods similar to hors d'oeuvres served from a cart or ordered from a menu. The tidbits are usually steamed or deep fried. I like har gow (steamed pastry with shrimp filling), shui mai (similar, but with pork filling), and steamed pork or chicken buns. Sticky rice in a lotus leaf is different and very good. Capital Tea Garden is located at 1110 T Street and King's is in West Sacramento at 1500 West Capitol. Don't expect elegance, but for a fun lunch I recommend either place. You will need a car, though.

Pescados at 28th and P specializes in fish tacos, and it's very popular. If you like fish and haven't tried it in tacos, you're in for a treat!

Bon Appétit!

George Ann Hornor

TTOS Members  
are big Operators!





## Of What Dreams are Made

by Jack Ahearn

My spirit was born in the Lionel and American Flyer showrooms, window displays and department store toylands of the 1940's and '50's.

I learned to read right out of the catalogues of those years. I memorized every word and dreamt every picture a thousand nights. I knew what every car and every engine and every accessory looked like better than the men and women who built them. There wasn't a salesman or a store owner who knew more about toy trains than I did.

In those years we didn't have "toy" trains. We had *real* trains. And we believed it. Lionel, Flyer or Marx ...we kids had real trains and we knew it. In our hearts, in our minds, and in our dreams—we knew it! The smoke and the whistles and the bells were all real.

So what happened? What happened to that wonderful world, that whole magical empire that could fit on a small sheet of plywood?

Well, I guess high school happened first, and then—of all things—girls happened. Then cars. But most of all, I think, the calendar came along. The calendar with all its realities of birthdays and anniversaries, graduation days and pay days. So many days, so many years. What I would give for just one night of dreams filled with the smoke and whistles and bells of those earlier days!

But wait, I almost forgot—those yesteryears of, "No, you can't have that!" or "Maybe for next Christmas." And the final, resounding, "NO, you cannot leave your trains up all year!" It seemed the argument went on forever. In my youthful years of give and take, I was sure I was doing most of the giving!

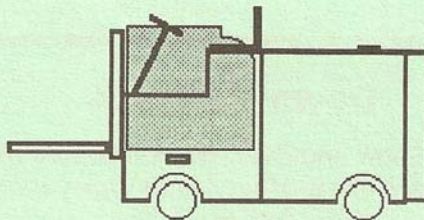
But with it all, there are always the happy memories of the real smoke and the real whistles and bells, the memories of the '40's and '50's, and the wonderful world of those free catalogs!

## Mini-Clin

**Tune up the K-Line Barrel Loader: Three simple steps to improve its performance.**

The K-Line barrel loader is a neat and inexpensive accessory, the little forklift moving forward and back, depositing little wooden barrels into a waiting gondola or boxcar. Mechanically, the action is simple—when you press the button the forklift moves forward, moving back a C shaped lever that allows a barrel sitting in a trough to roll down against the back of the forklift. When the button is released, the forklift moves back, the barrel rolls onto the "forks" and at the same time the C lever moves forward, restraining the next barrel. Press the button again, and when the forklift shoots forward the barrel is dumped in a waiting gondola, the next barrel rolls down and rests against the rear of the forklift until the forklift moves back, and the barrel is deposited in the forks.

Sounds simple, but sometimes when the forklift moves back, the barrel catches on the driver's area of the forklift and ends up in the poor driver's lap (oof!), or, the barrel rolls forward off the forks.



I did three things to tune up the barrel loader. First, I attached a shield to the side of the forklift to keep the barrel in place and stop it from landing in the cab (see illustration). As a test I cut out a piece of 3 x 5 card and used glue stick to attach it. I had planned to replace the card with a piece of plastic painted to match the forklift, but it's worked so well I haven't removed it yet. Second I raised the track side part of the accessory a couple of eighths of an inch to help keep the barrels from rolling off the front of the forks.

Third, I placed the accessory on a variable voltage tap so I could set the right voltage. These minor adjustments have made a lot of difference in the barrel loader's operation. Give it a try, I think you'll be surprised at how well this under-rated little accessory works.

*Brady Burdge*

### But it's only temporary!

I'm sure many of us have rushed home from a meet with a newly acquired blinking cross signal ready to install it at a choice three-rail grade crossing. But alas, no track contactor!

Here's a *temporary* solution to placate your non-purist audience (wife/kids). Purists, please indulge us over-anxious operators. In turn we promise to buy an appropriate track contactor at the very next meet—even if it does cost more than the signal!

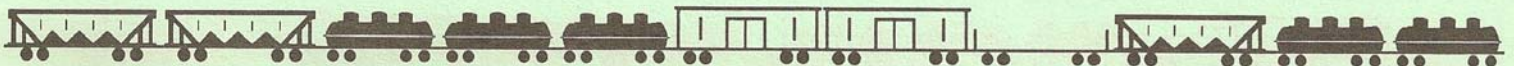
Start by insulating the outside rail of your choice for a distance you like. Secondly, install insulated track pins at each of your insulated track(s). Connect the signal's hot and cold ground wires to your center and outside insulated rails, respectively. At this point all you'll get from your signal light is a steady flash as the train rolls by.

So let's do something Unspeakably Evil! Grab a roll of transparent tape and secure a strip the full length of your insulated rail minus a quarter to a half inch at each end of your "block." The two exposed positions will, of course, be your metal wheel trigger bridging the juice to your now flashing bulbs. Experiment—the shorter the exposed rail, the shorter the blink.

Just remember, you promised to buy the real McCoy contact at the next meet ...

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





## Waiting for the Big One

by George Ann Hornor

Not earthquake—layout! What began as an N-scale layout in a coffee table has mushroomed alarmingly as a bedroom became "the" train room, layouts appeared in the family room and the living room, and we were forced to rent storage for the boxes of bridges and tunnels. The only explanation I get is, "I'm gathering stuff for my BIG layout!"

After visiting the Brashers and Easterlys and seeing the sheer joy in my husband's eyes, I had an inkling that I should prepare for the worst. After all, I have seen the Rosa's house and garage! So I asked a few questions of my friends.

Erma Easterly should have known. When Clyde took her to meet his parents before they were married, his dad asked her, "Has he told you about the trains?" In their first apartment, he was frequently in trouble because the operation of his 5x9 HO layout kept interfering with the landlord's TV reception. Still newlyweds, they rented a U-Haul trailer—big enough for the layout, of course—and moved to Phoenix.

Clyde had chosen their new home, and at 3:00 a.m., Erma was awakened to a roar as a train sped by on the SP tracks at the edge of their backyard. She's still with him, of course, and Clyde points out that he once paid more for a four-car train set than he did for that first house.

Susie Brasher had no idea what would happen when she found Chuck's old Flyer O gauge packed away and decided to have it repaired for him. That was 30 years ago. Although he became an avid collector, he did not have a permanent layout until he moved to Grass Valley and built his beautiful Colonial home in 1980—complete with his BIG layout

Pete White was subtle. Nancy had already sacrificed her utility room and garage to boxes of Civil War, Wild West, and Indian artifacts. After a trip to England where Pete bought a Hornby locomotive, Nancy began to notice the shelves and cases that housed his toy soldiers now held engines and rolling stock. A layout appeared in a spare bedroom. One signal became a dozen and scale figures became burgeoning families. He's presently eyeing a larger room for his BIG layout.

Barbara Rohrs knew Tony was a train nut early on. He was the only guy she knew that did not get impatient when forced to wait for a passing train at a crossing. And not because he used the time to steal a kiss! The overrun of trains started innocently enough—they had a son. Slowly they progressed from plastic trains to HO to Garden to Marx—the trains he had as a kid. Keeping the old, of course. Now that their son and grandson have temporarily appropriated his "perfect train room," Tony has to be satisfied with an oval of track on the dining room table while boxes line the "perfect train room." That's O.K. One-year old Jordan's first words were "Grandpa" and "train" with a whoo-who sound effect.

Clarence Hanks has been collecting since 1978, and despite Glenda's urging, has not built his layout. He's waiting for the BIG one.

Now the question is, "How big is BIG?" Evidently, 750 square feet is not enough. Clyde Easterly mentioned today that he would like to expand his train room! And Chuck Brasher figures he has room to add another 20 feet or so to his layout room.

## Down the track

Tracy Boys & Girls Club Train Show and Swap Meet, 753 Lowell Ave	August 19,20
Chico '95 Model Railroad Show & Swap Meet, North Valley Plaza	August 26, 27
Sacramento Valley Division Meet, Sierra 2 Center	September 2
GATS, Cow Palace	September 9,10
Schwafel Estate Auction (Engine House) San Francisco	September 13, 14
River City Toy Train Show & Open House, Scottish Rite Center	October 7
Sacramento Valley Division Meet, Sierra 2 Center	November 4
Roseville Railfair	November 11,12
Cal Stewart, Pasadena	November 15-17
GATS, Oakland	November 25,26
Sacramento Valley Family Christmas Party, Sierra 2 Center	December 2
GATS, San Jose	December 9,10
Cal Stewart, Santa Clara Convention Center	March 22-24, 1996

