

THE SIDE TRACK

SPRING

NEWS

from the Toy Train Operating Society
Sacramento Valley Division

2011

Jerry Azzaro, editor

President's Message

Hi Everyone!

Well, 2011 has been an exciting year for us! We got the year kicked off with a great potluck on New Year's Day. Those of you who watched the Rose Parade instead missed a great party. MANY thanks to everyone who brought such wonderful goodies – we had it all, from hot entrees to cold drinks to salads and desserts. Maybe we'll do it again on January 7th, 2012!

We didn't need an officer's installation because the elected officers were reelected (when we announced the vote count). So, **Jack Hornor**, **Phil Fravesi**, **Bryan Stanton** and I will head up SVD for another two years. We had a major change, however, when **Tim Taormina** agreed to take over as Membership Secretary from **Barbara Rohrs**. Barbara has been in that position for several years and deserved a break (actually, the broken arm she suffered late last year made it really hard to get everything done, but she REALLY didn't need to take it so literally!) She was presented with a certificate of appreciation for her diligent efforts.

Curt Darling was presented with a certificate for his extensive hard work in maintaining, storing and trailering the SVD operating layout. Behind the scenes, **Craig Benner** has been our webmaster for several years. Because we don't see him very often at meetings, his certificate was mailed to him along with a complimentary membership in SVD-TTOS. Jeff Silvera took our December food and toy donations to the Sacramento Food Bank. Thanks to everyone's generosity, we gave over 70 pounds of food and dozens of toys to the needy in Sacramento!

Speaking of the layout – BIG news on many fronts! The new layout is making terrific progress thanks to the long hours and hard work of **Tom Alger**, **Dave Ashman**, **Mike de la Pena**, **Jack Hornor**, **Tom Wackerly**, **Carl Curtis**, **Tim Taormina** and many others. All eighteen tables are built and the electrical work is under way. Sample tables have been on display at recent meetings for the Club's input. There are several major work parties planned, including the entire weekend of April 1-3 (where the layout will be up in all its glory at the fire station in Diamond Springs – the only place BIG enough to hold it!). The layout was planned around Lionel's promise to donate enough FasTrack for it all and have their layout/repair expert come out and help install it all. Well, the BIG news is that Lionel's pulled out of the deal last month completely and without any offer in compromise. We did extensive research and determined that the alternative systems were not suitable for our modular layout. After a lot of enquiries, **Ken Flory** came through for us with a greatly discounted offer for the O-gauge FasTrack. We will be installing that for the two O-gauge loops. The S-gauge

equivalent may not be available before our BIG debut at the Scottish Rite meet so we may be using regular S-gauge tubular track. We plan to use Lionel standard gauge tubular track with customized rubber roadbed until the promised std gauge Fast-Track is released.

The "old" layout is presently being stored at **Tom Gibson's** place (Thanks, Tom!). The Board decided at the Cal Expo Meet to offer it for sale and we had a deposit put on it by a hobbyist from Manteca, but he has not taken delivery of it yet. In the interim, yours truly has "purchased" the balance of the layout to get some capital (for the track we'll have to buy now!).

Other BIG news – the old trailer was not going to have the room for the new layout, so **Curt D.** and **Jack H.** did the legwork and arranged for the purchase of a super, new enclosed trailer with a rear loading ramp, interior light, side door, and roof ventilator. With the trade-in of our old trailer, they got a \$5600 trailer for \$3200! Curt had it at the last meeting and it is terrific (and he says it tows better than the old one, too). **Dave A.** and **Mike D.** are now building rolling racks to fit it. The layout sections will then be rolled in and out of most of our venues much more quickly and easily than our one-by-one plan of the past.

The CalExpo show was really a BIG hit, with big crowds both days (despite the weather and the costs). We gave out dozens of flyers for the club so we are hoping for some new faces in the door in the next few months. Our next BIG show is the TCA Scottish Rite meet on Memorial Day weekend. And then a month later is the TCA National Meet (June 25-July 3). A lot of our members will be helping with the meet (some with homes layout tours, some with operating layouts on-site, and some as docents or "handlers" for the many tours planned). TCA is planning a major public train show as the finale on July 3 so keep that in your plans.

We will have to plan OUR summer activities soon, so we don't conflict. It has been suggested we do a Club tour to the Truck and Ag Museum in Woodland and visit the Reif's Drive-In also in Woodland for refreshments. We might want to plan this for July 9th (since all of us might be trained out by then) but we are open to suggestions!

On a very sad note, however, I must announce the passing of one of our long-term members, **Tony Rohrs**. Tony died of a heart attack on February 1st just as he was leaving his Amtrak duty for the day. Tony helped build and operate the original layout and was very active in recent years with

Continued D. 2



President's Message (cont'd.)

operating display layouts at all the major meets with his wife, **Barbara**, and with his good pal, **Dave Thomsen**. A wonderful memorial service was held on 19 February (very well supported by SVD members). Our sympathies to Barbara, their three children, and the grandkids. A full appreciation is elsewhere in this issue.

Also, longtime member **Frank Jablonski** is in very serious condition fighting a MRSA infection and other medical complications. Our best wishes for a full recovery go out to him. No visitor or phone calls but cards may be sent to him c/o: Mercy San Juan Medical Center, 6501 Coyle Avenue, Carmichael, CA 95608.

On a happier note, let me close with my best wishes for you and yours to get out and play with those trains!



We earned a certificate of appreciation and a check for having our layout at Great Train Expo at CalExpo

Home Layout Tours

by Jack Hornor, SVD Vice President and Layout Tour Coordinator

Dave Thomsen Layout Tour

Even after the tragedy of losing his best friend, Tony Rohrs, **Dave and Marcy Thomsen** put on an outstanding open house after our February 3, 2011 meeting. The highlight of the open house was the display Dave had created in remembrance of his friend. He had written a touching tribute to Tony and surrounded it with pictures taken of their train experiences over several years.

Their home in Woodland is a triple-wide mobile home to which he has added an enclosed 10' x 22' side porch to house his workshop and train layout. If you say you don't have room for a layout, you need to see this one for big ideas in a small space. The 4.5 by 16-foot layout has four loops – 054, 042 and two S-gauge loops on a second level. At the open house all four were continuously operating without incident (except when yours truly knocked one of the trains over). The track is tubular Lionel O Gauge with eight K-line switches for sidings and to connect loops. It is powered with an MRC Dual Power Transformer and two Lionel 125 watt old style transformers.

The scenery is a good representation of Dave's artistic talent. His RV park features a circle of N gauge track around the park where O scale engineers operate a small-scale tourist railroad. Some of the fifth-wheel trailers in the park were featured in O Gauge Magazine a few years back.

In addition to this great layout and train collection, Dave also has large collections of John Deere and Alice Chalmers tractors, old cars, race cars, and WWII airplanes – all miniatures of course. There is even another N gauge layout in his office. All of this is in a mobile home with plenty of living space left over and for a craft room where Marcy creates and designs jewelry.

Dave and Marcy were great hosts and I loved the pizza. And everyone loved the dog. Thank you so much for your great show and effort. Everyone had a good time.

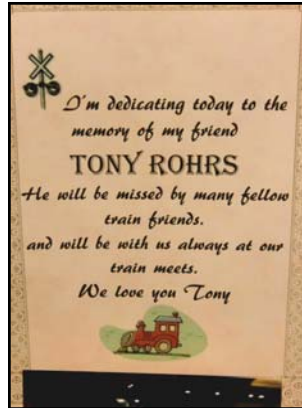
FUTURE MEETS

On our next layout tour we travel to Eldorado Hills to see the layout that **Tony, Gaetano**, and the entire **Basile** family have created. It's bound to be great. Since this is also the weekend of the three-day modular work party in Diamond Springs, those interested can travel about 30 more minutes from Tony's to the Fire Hall. That address again, is 501 Main Street, Diamond Springs, 95619.

In June, it's time for our return trip to Meadow Vista to see the **Craigheads'** new train room and to visit **Paul and Suzanne Wells**, who live two doors away.

John Leins and **Dean Busick** are still planning to have us later in the year.





Modular Layout News by Mike de la Pena

Wow - things are really moving along.

Twelve members (**Tom Alger, Dave Ashman, Dean Busick, Carl Curtis, Mike de la Pena, Steve Gower, Jim Groth, Don Gueffroy, Jack Hornor, Tim Taormina, Tom Wackerly and Justin Wescott**) worked all day in the cold on Wednesday, February 23rd and made a lot of progress in wiring the tables, gluing the carpet, and building rolling racks for the trailer. The O track is all here and the S-gauge will be here before the 9th of March.

The weather has not been our friend, but we'll make our deadline of May 28.



Jim Groth wields the angle grinder



Mike de la Pena, Tom Wackerly, Dave Ashman, Tom Alger, Carl Curtis and Justin Wescott are all part of the layout crew. **Jack Hornor** is behind the camera.



It was MOD

By George Ann Hornor

Jack Ahearn wrote this article for the Spring 1994 "Side Track":

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.

Jack's name for the group was a clever play on words inspired by the "Mod Squad" TV series. **Ken Knott** was the leader of the group, and here he is running at Sierra 2 in 1995 with **Chuck Grigg** and **Bill Bender** looking on. So many of us have fond memories of that first layout and all the places we took it, all the people who hauled it around and set it up, and of course all of the trains that ran over its often temperamental tracks. Here are some pictures of the places and people.

The layout's last appearance was at the Sacramento Great Train Expo on January 16, 2011, where **Mike Boyd** and **Jeff Silvera** are coaxing their Flyer trains to make one last run. And here are a few shots of the last takedown.

By the time the next Side Track comes out in June, we will be writing about our brand-new layout. **Mike de la Pena** tells me everything is on track to be finished in time for the TCA meet on May 28.

This gallery of photos is an affectionate look back at the layout which served us well



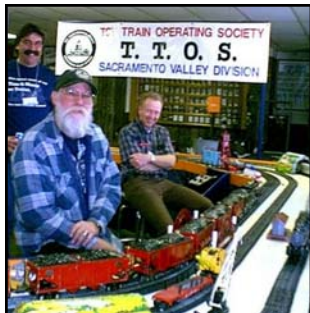
Ken Knott 1995



Ladies, too



Norman LaClair 2009



Paul Wells hauled us to Placerville in 2002



CSRM 2002



Valley Springs 2008



All decked out CSRM 2009



Coloma Picnic 2004



We had vests in 2004



Last run - January 16, 2011

Packing up for the last time—CalExpo January 16, 2011



O SCALE WEST ADVENTURES

By George Ann Hornor

What makes some of our members drive all the way to Santa Clara each winter to attend a train meet where the trains for sale won't run on their layouts without modification and where they feel a little embarrassed to admit their tracks have three rails? Oh, sure, there are amazing built-from-scratch structures and rolling stock and gorgeous brass engines. And the scale layouts are awesome. And once in a while, if you look under the tables in the junk boxes, you'll find a treasure at a bargain price because it's not quite true to scale.

But, except for me, who goes to eat sushi in the hotel bar, what they really go for are the drive-yourself home layout tours. I counted thirty-one this year, ranging all the way from Santa Rosa to Santa Cruz to Mariposa to Nevada City. And since many of them are on the Peninsula where the homes can have basements, these scale layouts can be very large, and thus the envy of every train operator. The open houses are in the evening after the exhibit hall closes, so (and this adds drama to my tale) you must find your way around many twisty roads and confusing intersections in the dark.

Following their own tradition, three of our members, Jack Hornor, Carl Curtis and Jerry McClellan, started their Friday evening at Original Joe's, where they sat so they could watch the cooks toss food – always exciting. Then off they went with Jerry driving Carl's car and Carl reading the maps to Jerry. At the first stop (Bob Brown's magnificent On30 layout) they were joined by their friend, Bill, who followed them in his car and had the foresight to bring his GPS device but not the maps. Just to clarify this – the maps are in one car and the GPS is in the car behind with Carl directing Jerry and Jerry and Bill communicating via cell phones. Thus they navigated their route with Bill calling Jerry to tell him when he missed a turn (and with Jerry arguing) until they reached the HO layout at the very tip of a high knoll in Belmont.

Once there, they followed a walkway around the house and knocked on the door of what looked like a train room. And indeed it was, but the layout came right up to the door, and to enter you had to maneuver through a duck-under which was

blocked by a very large and loving dog. Jack has played a minor part so far, but here the guys made him point man to crawl through the duck-under. He had managed to convince the dog to let him through, so in went Jack, followed by the dog who was sniffing what dogs love to sniff, followed by his laughing friends, all in a row. The hosts were very happy that our "O" guys wanted to see an HO layout and gave them the royal tour. The layout room, which had been excavated under the house, was huge, and the builders had gone to great lengths to utilize every inch, resulting in some interesting configurations. The layout was flush against all four walls with narrow paths to several separate sections, some with more duck-under or obstacles such as foundation walls that had to be crawled over. Some tracks could only be reached by crawling over the layout, but that is not unusual. What was unusual was the home's sewer clean-out drain which could only be reached by lying on your back on the layout. But most amazing was a large side-loop that was maybe three feet high. When asked how they reached the back of the loop, they explained they went outside and took the siding off the house. And I thought layouts that hung from garage ceilings were a lot of trouble! Happy hour had begun, which didn't help their hosts get their trains through all the switches (and we all know trains don't like to run when guests are watching). Our guys had a great time. Leaving presented a challenge because the door could only be opened or closed from inside the layout, and the dog had gone to sleep in the duck-under. It fell to Jack's lot to convince the dog to move, so he squeezed himself alongside the dog, led him back inside the layout, and crawled back through the duck-under while Carl leaned over the layout and opened the door. So out crawls Jack, followed by the dog (who immediately watered the nearest bush), followed by Jerry and the others. The owners called the dog back in, said goodbye, and reached over the layout to close the door.

After a few more layouts, they found their way back to the hotel about midnight. And what was I doing during their jaunt? I was learning a lot while visiting with folks attending the US Composting Council conference.



HO hard-to-reach loop



Admiring the lighting on the Twain Harte & Sonora Pass Layout



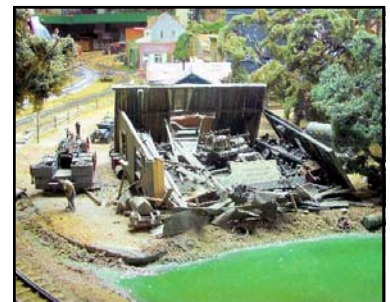
Yosemite Short Line in On3



Check this clean-out drain location



Bob Brown's Chinatown



Bob Brown's Earthquake Epicenter
October 17, 1989

Jack doubles down this time with two excellent finds for SVD members-

BOXCAR JACK'S WEB PICKS

by Jack Ahearn

Ladies and gentlemen, boys and girls.....in this Issue of the SideTrack we're going to take a far away journey into deepest darkest Africa. Not the one of dense forests, high swinging vines, lions and tigers, which we watched at the Saturday matinees, but another Africa; the Africa of today, of towering skyscrapers, plush five-star hotels and elegant restaurants!

All Aboard for an unforgettable journey on*The Most Lavish Train on the Planet...*

THE BLUE TRAIN of AFRICA

Many of some-of-us have toured Europe and other far away places, Why not now consider what is proudly hailed as:

A TRIP INTO THE SOUL of SOUTH AFRICA

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NWKEvpAeH5s>

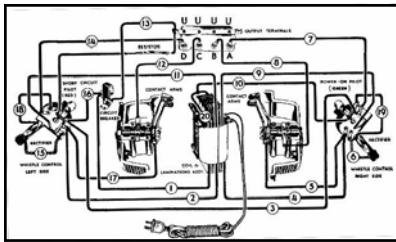


How much does a trip on the Blue Train cost?

Fares		
Cape Town to Pretoria or vice versa. Meals & drinks included.	Low season (1 Jan to 31 Aug & 16 Nov to 31 Dec)	High season (1 September to 15 November)
Luxury suite, per person sharing	R11,805	R14,685
Luxury suite, per person sole occupancy	R17,705	R21,830
De Luxe suite, per person sharing	R10,930	R13,485
De Luxe Suite, per person sole occupancy	R16,390	R20,215

The fares shown are in South African Rand. At present, the exchange rate is about 7.12 Rand per US Dollar.

NOTE: For those interested, I've another slide show video with spectacular scenic views of the Blue Train's journey across South Africa. However, due to possible copyright concerns, Editor Jerry Azzaro has prudently opted not to release it to world wide access on our Side Track website. However, if you'll e-mail boxcar-jack@comcast.net I'll forward you that website address.

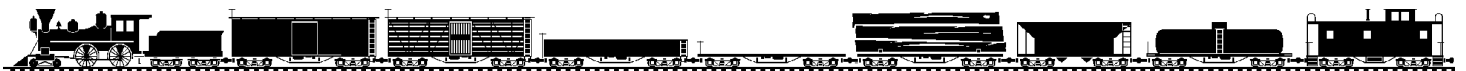


Help to Transform a non-Transforming Transformer into one what do Transformerate!

Here's a convenient handy-dandy all in one place reference and schematic guide to almost all of Lionel's Post War traditional (my euphemism for non-electronic) transformers. Easy to use: Simply click on the catalogue # of the little devil you're trying to repair or otherwise attempting to have a 'working' relationship with. To enlarge the schematics and text, click on the diagram and you'll have a full printable page to hopefully aid in your 'dialogue' with said devil!

<http://pictures.olsenstoy.com/searchcd2g.htm>

Find the link to these and to previous web picks at the TTOS web page: <http://www.ttos-sv.org/BoxcarJack.htm>



Tony J. Rohrs 1946-2011



Member **Tony J. Rohrs** passed away suddenly on February 1, 2011. At the time of his death, he was working for Amtrak as a conductor. His passion was trains of all sizes. He could be seen at train shows running with fellow member and friend Dave Thomsen. Tony was involved in the designing and building of the club's original layout that was recently retired.

Tony was a student of the histories of the railroad, military, circus and the Old West and how they related to each other. He had just finished the final plan for a home layout and was looking forward to building it. Tony always enjoyed talking trains, real or toy, with anyone.

He loved sharing his hobby with his grandchildren -- Jordan, Emily, Adam, Nate and Olivia; one or more of them would often accompany him to meetings and train shows. He is also survived by his wife Barbara, son Christopher; and daughters Kate and Kacey.

A memorial service was held on Saturday, February 12. Donations can be made in his name to CA State Railroad Museum – Model Train Exhibit, 111 "I" Street, Sacramento 95814.

His sense of humor and big happy smile will be missed. Happy Rails to You.

Barbara and her family would like to thank everyone for their prayers and many expressions of condolence. They are appreciated immensely during this difficult time.

Meeting Notes

by Phil Fravesi, SVD Secretary

December 4, 2010

Guest: **Matt**

Election results were presented (contained in last edition of Side Track) A suggestion made to donate the old layout was tabled for now.

January 1, 2011

Certificates of appreciation were presented as follows:

Craig Benner - web master
Barbara Rohrs - Membership
George Ann Hornor - Membership roster
Curt Darling - layout

Dues will be due and collected at the February meeting by **Tim Taormina**.

February 5, 2011

Guest: **Barry Menges**

Treasurer's report was given by **Bryan Stanton**.

Jack Hornor discussed the new club layout and the unfortunate situation with Lionel reneging on their offer to supply the track. He also presented the reason for moving forward using "That company that must not be named" track. Based on the experience of other clubs with large portable layouts, it is the only practical solution. **Mike de la Pena** and **Dave Ashman** gave updates to the work progress and the need for more help.

Treasurer's Report

by Bryan Stanton, SVD Treasurer

For the new layout we are getting close to finishing up many of the items needed to complete it. So far we have purchased a new trailer and traded the old trailer in at the time of purchase, acquired all the Lionel "O" Gauge FasTrack for all the modules for dual mainlines, Have the new carpet, and rolling storage structures for the modules. Looking good. Just need some "S" and some Standard Gauge Track

P.S. We still have TTOS Weaver Club Cars for sale at 35.00 each. Also have a few of the 6464-1993 & 6464-1995 Lionel Club Cars for sale at 35.00 each too. See me at the TTOS meets for purchases of these cars.

Membership News

By Tim Taormina, membership chair

We had a very successful February meeting with membership renewals. It was so successful that we have only about three dozen members that have not as yet renewed their memberships for 2011. If you are one of these chosen few, I have your cards ready for you! See me at the March 5 meeting with your dues (\$20-single or \$25-family) or contact me by mail with a stamped self-addressed envelope and I will get your card to you.

Annual Food and Toy Drive

By Jeff Silvera

Following our December meet, I had the honor of delivering your kind donations to the Sacramento Food Bank. They also accept the toy donations for distribution to the children of needy families which are very much appreciated. Thanks to all members who participate in this annual holiday charity drive.



Down the track

Upcoming events of interest to SVD members

March 5: SVD Meet* - Holiday Inn, Elk Grove

March 13: GGLRRC Show - Cubberley Center, Palo Alto

April 2: SVD Meet *- Holiday Inn, Elk Grove**

April 1, 2, 3: Modular Layout Work Days, Diamond Springs Fire House

May 28 - TCA Sacramento-Sierra Train Show, Scottish Rite Center, Sacramento

May 7: SVD Meet* - Holiday Inn, Elk Grove**

*meetings begin at 9:30 AM **Followed by a home layout tour

TTOS Vision Statement:

The future of the Toy Train Operating Society is predicated on one simple fact. We must attract new membership. The TTOS National Club will focus on developing, in conjunction with the divisions, viable recruitment and retention plans and provide support both at the divisional level and the national level towards these goals. Potential new members are typically attracted to our hobby by experiencing our toy trains in full operation and witnessing the camaraderie that comes from sharing our passion and hobby with others, not unlike the original direction our founding members envisioned. This will be our primary focus.

Membership First – both new and old is our goal. Happy members are proud members and typically these members want to share their experience with just about anyone who will listen. Everyone likes being a part of a successful organization. TTOS National will plan and design all efforts with this in mind.