

THE SIDE TRACK

SUMMER

NEWS

from the Toy Train Operating Society
Sacramento Valley Division

2011

Jerry Azzaro, editor

President's Message

by John DeHaan

Wow, what a summer! Our new operating layout is up and operating thanks to the incredible dedication of the layout crew. We had the first test session with it on May 21 and everything went well (see story elsewhere). What a moment when we had standard, S and three (!) O-gauge trains on the layout all at once. The next challenge will be fitting and wiring the accessories. It will be a feature of all our upcoming shows – Scottish Rite, the TCA National, and the like. The old layout will not be needed for emergency duty and will be offered for sale (by the current owner – yours truly). If you have a lot of room and want to run all three gauges – here's a bargain! The TCA National Convention will be here June 26th through July 3rd. A lot of our members will be there doing double duty. The Sunday meet is officially the TCA Nor-Cal Cal-Stewart Meet and will be open to the public on Sunday, July 3, so be sure to plan on coming then, if not before! One-day tables are still available. The TTOS National Meet is in beautiful Charleston SC in August and the Embassy Suites is ready and waiting, with the Convention Center connected to it by an enclosed walkway. There are 1:1 scale railroad adventures planned as well as numerous layout visits. If you didn't get a brochure, go to [the TTOS convention page](#) and download your very own copy.

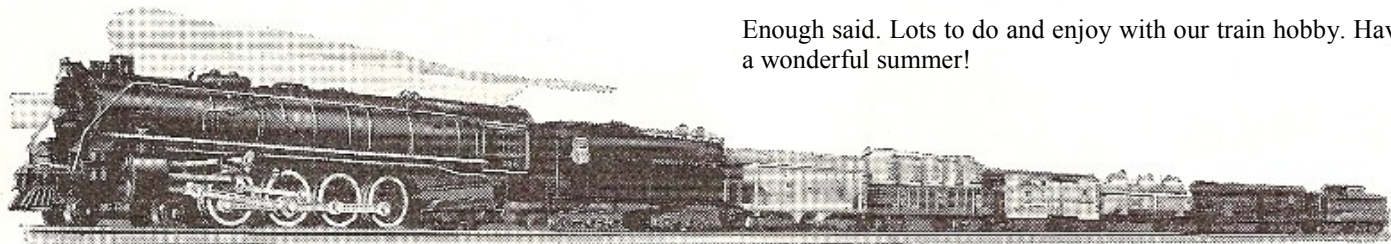
Plans are coming together for our own mid-summer adventure on Saturday, July 16. In place of our monthly meeting, we will visit the Heidrick Agricultural History Center and the Hays Antique Truck Museum in Woodland (see "Summer Special Event" in this issue).

On the National front, there was good news during the teleconferenced Board meeting on April 30. Thanks to the concerted efforts of **Randy Giroux**, **Brian Fields** and the Executive Board, the National TTOS is expected to be in the

black by the end of 2011. (Last Fall the projection was for an expected loss of \$23,000!!) The Divisions donated some \$17,000 (including SVD's special donation!) and there were nearly \$8,000 in individual member donations. That generosity made all the difference. There were over \$50,000 in car sales in 2010. This enabled TTOS to pay off Lionel (for convention cars) and nearly pay off the overdue publishing bill for the Bulletin (down from \$9,446 on 12/31 to less than \$3,800 as of 4/15). They moved the HQ to cheaper quarters (in Fullerton) and reduced office operating costs. The Roundhouse Sales of past issue cars has been successful but they still have some nice ones left. The San Antonio convention broke even, and the plans for Charleston have been carefully crafted to do the same. If you want more details, see me at a meeting.

The current convention cars (Firefly Distilling) are selling VERY well in both O gauge and S gauge. (If you haven't ordered yours, do so now as they are both expected to sell out soon.) There are continuing efforts to co-ordinate the National Membership with the Divisions. Our thanks go to **Tim Taormina** for his ongoing efforts to keep SVD in compliance. Despite efforts at many levels, the Southwestern Division has numerous members (including several Board members) who are not members of TTOS National. The SW Division recently removed the joint membership requirement from their website. As a result, the Board voted to suspend SW Division and ordered it to discontinue the use of the TTOS logo and affiliation until these members join. Needless to say, this has caused great discussion and discontent, especially considering the large number of SW Division members and the role SW Division plays in the Pasadena Cal-Stewart meet. Both sides are working to resolve the issue. The Pasadena Cal-Stewart Meet (and its special cars) will go on as planned this year. It is a mystery to me why these members refuse to follow the mandates of the National Club. This is supposed to be a hobby club, there to promote the enjoyment of toy trains through co-operation and comradeship. Such divisiveness cannot advance that intent.

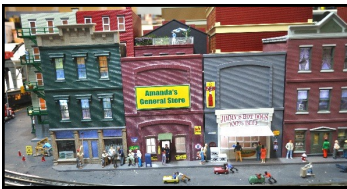
Enough said. Lots to do and enjoy with our train hobby. Have a wonderful summer!



Home Layout Tours

by Jack Hornor, SVD Vice President and Layout Tour Coordinator

LAYOUT TOUR APRIL 2, 2011 AT TONY BASILE'S



photos by Jim Henson

If there ever was a family dream layout, I think we found it at **Tony Basile's**. This is a 16 foot by 8 foot layout on a rolling table in a 3 car garage. Why is that so great you ask? Well, when it is in use it has plenty of walk around space - otherwise it is rolled over to the empty car space and covered for dust reasons and the two family cars can park in the garage. However this is just the beginning of the family project. Tony's entire artistic family is involved. Tony's wife **Nancy** and their children **Gaetano** and **Amanda** have done some of the remarkable scenery and buildings including detailed interiors with lights, people and furnishing, even down to the pool table

in the pool hall. Oh, did I mention the roof top garden? Even his sister, **Candi**, helped design and build the Grand Central Station, complete with sports bar - and the game is playing on the televisions.

This state of the art layout is equipped with Lionel Legacy/TMCC, and running at the same time Mike's Train House (MTH) DCS with PS2 engines, therefore all operations are by remote control with the latest sounds, bells and whistles. The engines are equipped with cruise control for consistent speed throughout the layout. The track is ballasted Atlas where it can be seen. The switches are Atlas and Ross. There are four independent loops on two levels with 81 inch curves on the outside and 63 on the inside. The layout is not only accessible completely around the outside but has hidden access holes from under the table to work on the internal scenery. Even the insides of the tunnels are lined with rock and lighted.

Trains ran flawlessly and the Basiles were gracious hosts, furnishing a complete lunch after the long drive into the foothills. A great big thank you is due to the Basiles for a wonderful afternoon. Thank You.

FUTURE MEETS

The next layout tour will be June 4, 2011 following the regular SVD meeting. This layout tour will be in Meadow Vista at the home of **Kit and Rose Craighead**. It is a long way but well worth the journey. Not only have they rebuilt their house and the train room after the tree fell through it, they are planning a grilled hot dog lunch for those who make the trip. As an added incentive, **Paul and Susane Wells** who live two doors away will have there living room layout open to those who make the

journey. So don't miss this great two-for-one layout tour.

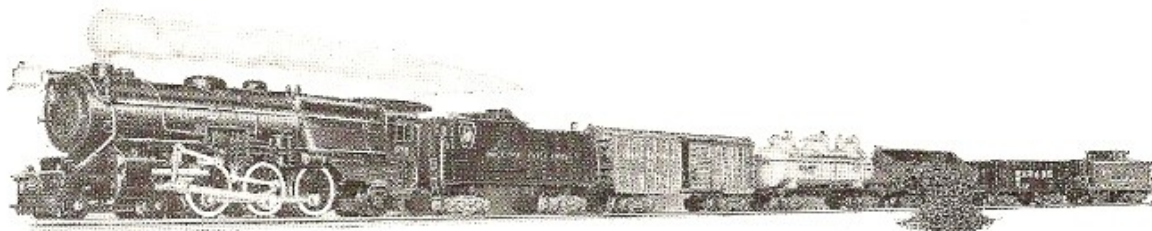
Because of the TCA and TTOS conventions and summer schedule the next layout tour is scheduled tentative for September at **Dean Busick's** and after that in November at **John Leins'** (however only if he is ready). Thank you for your interest in the layout tours, the program has so far been successful

Editor's note - a Flyer issue of the Side Track

I admit I was skeptical when **Jack Ahearn** approached me two months ago with his idea for a Side Track issue devoted mostly to American Flyer, with members telling about their favorite Flyer trains, how they got started, etc. I thank Jack for his help in putting this together, the results of which you see throughout this issue.

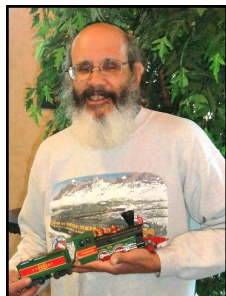
We're using **Times New Roman font** instead of **Arial font** throughout this issue because one of Jack's contributions is a direct photo scan of an article he wrote for the TTOS Bulletin in 1997. They used Times New Roman and we wanted to be consistent.

- Jerry



Jeff Silvera's two-rail story - from a little Christmas gift to a big Flyer operator/collector

Member profile by Jack Ahearn



Jeff had a very early start in our toy train hobby...perhaps almost too early. He received his first train set at age three! Four, okay...but three may be a bit unusual...Happily, he had a loving grandfather who helped the little guy place the Marx wind-up freight set on a small board and got it running. From then on, it was uphill all the way... Jeff made the big time

at age seven when he got a complete American Flyer train set for Christmas!

However, the manner in which he was given that Set was also a bit unusual. Indeed, I've never heard of any kid who first saw his life's M.V.P.* in this way. (*Most Valuable Present) Yes, we got a train set for Christmas. Yes, it was beneath or along side the Tree. And yes, it was already set up and ready to run full throttle down the main line. But not Jeff's!

On Christmas Morn' of 1963, Jeff ran into the living room saw the tree, the fireplace and then... a complete train set!... But his train set was not seen as other kids saw theirs. Instead, stacked in front of the fireplace, was what appeared to be a mountain of red and white boxes...instantly recognized by Jeff as American Flyer 'S' gauge train boxes! Kind of unusual... but think of all the added fun had in opening every single box...each opened flap revealed another car, a caboose, a locomotive and tender, a transformer and even track! Wow... what a great way to give a child so much added fun in discovering his or her first train set!

Needless to say, after a few ventures into related hobbies and time spent in 'N' scale modeling, Jeff returned to the fold in the mid 1980's. On a visit to Old Sacramento he walked into a train store and an old love resurfaced. He walked out with his arms wrapped around an American Flyer freight train headed up by a #303 Atlantic loco! Within a few years he was leaving hobby shops, train meets and thrift stores with equally full arms. This can be attested to by the thirty or forty boxes of trains in his attic! By the early 1990's he was about to go full cycle; He bought his son, Sean his first 'S' gauge train set! Jeff then knew for sure...he was in the Toy Train Hobby for Life!

Along with several SVD members, Jeff lists his parents as being his hobby's main support team. He now realizes how much time and love was shown by his dad when taking him to so many near and far away train meets and shows. As for his mother...Jeff is very sincere and emotional when he states it was she who got him back into the Flyer Fold. She had given



him a Flyer set. Soon after, when he wanted to expand his small layout, she accompanied him to a Gemco store to buy some switches. The clerk gave them the bad news . . . no more Flyer tracks because . . . no more Flyer. "Out of business", the clerk broke the news. The distraught mother shrieked, "You mean I bought something obsolete?" I asked Jeff how that revelation supported Jeff's stated testimonial to her. His emphatic reply didn't describe her disappointment about the switches, but rather . . . with gleaming eyes and raised head he answered . . . "It was because of that American Flyer Set she bought me."

Obviously Jeff receives a lot of support from his wife, Kathleen . . . I say obviously because . . . well those forty odd boxes of trains are going to go somewhere . . . ! Jeff's plan calls for a 12x15 double level layout. A two track upper route will serve passengers, while below freight will be handled on a couple of loops and service tracks.

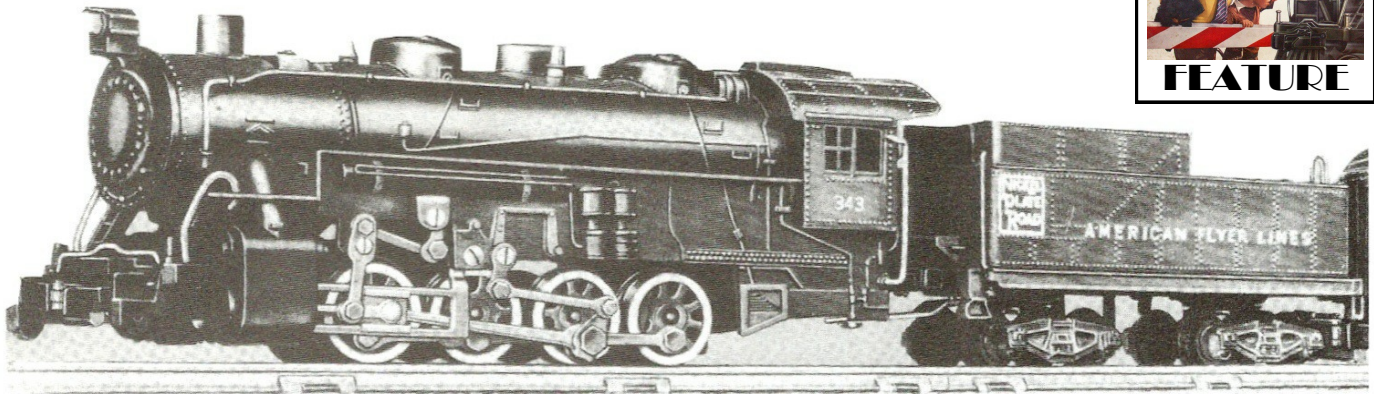
From a child's age three to an adults age, uh...3+; how does Jeff describe his life long, two rail romance?... "Love it...Flyer for life!"

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.





My childhood memory of that dreamy S-scale beauty with red passenger cars swaying across a tranquil river through a #750 trestle with the Nickel Plate tender, a whistling white rim wheeled engine puffing real smoke and echoing the chug-chug sounds may be reproduced in my next layout. Who knows, maybe the arrow atop Flyer's water tank is pointing right at me!

Confessions of a Closet Flyer Fan!

Once again I have fanned the windmills of my long-ago mind. This time I've reflected on my early loyalties to Lionel while, at the same time, being lured by the synchronous chuggin' sounds of the S-scale seductive sirens of the two-railed Nickel Plate Road roadster.

Text by Jack Ahearn, TTOS, Sacramento Valley Division

I was raised during the late 1940s near the toy train triangle terrain of New York City's Madison Hardware, the Gilbert Hall of Science and the second floor sanctuary of the Lionel showroom. In short, a few square blocks of Utopia--toy train heaven!

American Flyer's Fifth Avenue window display of white rimmed drivers on small engines puffing and choo-choosing as they whistled past white and red, gray-based accessories, held my attention just long enough to slow me down before racing across Madison Square Park to Twenty-Sixth Street and ascending to the second floor paradise of three-railed ecstasy. Lionel, just one name, but what a name--what a world! I would spend hours watching the perfect blending of scenery and long speeding trains. There wasn't a visible flaw in either.

Looking at the 1949 Lionel showroom layout, one could almost visualize the great artists, musicians and inventors of the ages--Van Gogh, Rodan, Beethoven, Strauss, Edison, Bell--all looking in awe, perhaps saying, "Yes, what we achieved was greatness, ah but this--this is grandiosity!" Reluctantly, I would finally descend earthward to street level, humbled by my Saturday morning glimpse of the real heaven.

After leaving Lionel, I would always stop back at American Flyer. I'd try to compare the two layouts. In one sense, there was no comparison. But yet in a way, I felt an uneasy comparison with the Flyer layout and, not Lionel's, but with the one I was dreaming about building. I couldn't quite put my finger on it. I would be drawn closer to the plate glass window. As I watched the S-scale trains chugging around the narrow, but realistic looking tracks, I wondered about the name on the tenders. Nickel Plate Road--was there really one? Where was it? Even though they looked great, I wondered why the engines had those white rimmed driver wheels. My eyes were really hooked on those engines and tenders.

I remember one Saturday morning, while looking critically at the Flyer display layout, I complained to the salesman (archaic for salesperson) that a plastic hollow-bodied automobile driving down an impossibly steep viaduct would look better if the nail stopping the sedan from rolling down hill was placed under the car body rather than in front of the bumper. He said something to the effect of, "Just watch the trains go around and don't worry so much. Enjoy." I didn't quite get the "enjoy" toy trains message. (It's obvious to me now after spending twenty years in scale modeling worrying

about "it" and not enjoying "just watching the train go around").

On another Saturday critique of the double looped and inside figure eight two-rail S-scale empire, I was agast to witness a two train collision. "This," I shouted in disbelief, "would never happen on Lionel's layout." However, I thought, this is what did happen on my layout--a lotta times! I also wondered why it never happened over there, on the second floor sanctuary. The first seeds of doubt were beginning to enter my youthful mind.

As I look back on the Lionel showroom, it did seem to be too good to be true--too perfect, too well orchestrated. In an age of innocence, why then would I suspect what I would only learn many years later? The whole layout was expertly electrically rigged to prevent any possible mishaps. For openers, all engines had lobotomies performed on their E-units!

Back then, I would devour both American Flyer and Lionel train books. (Now, I call them catalogues. Then, because they were free, I called them train books.) I remember staring endlessly at page 5 of the 1948 Flyer catalogue. I thought of building a dreamy layout just like that one. I knew it wouldn't be too hard to do. It was only about 4 X 8 feet. Although in my family's Brooklyn apartment, it just as



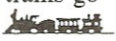
(CLOSET FLYER FAN CONFESSIONS from previous page)

well might have been 40 X 80 feet! The point is: I could imagine it!. Unlike the miles and miles of "desert vistas" portrayed in Lionel's dream books, Flyer's empire was feasible, and, except for the necessary funds, it was doable!

Another American Flyer image etched in my memory was of two early postwar crane cars. (Can you imagine one kid having two of these red and yellow beauties?) Again, unlike Lionel's catalogue which showed a huge crane car set out in a yard miles from a transformer, Flyer's two cars were jammed onto a two track siding squeezed behind a Mystic Station. This I could relate to. As a kid, this was my reality. Unlike Lionel's drawings of mega length sidings, this I could fit into my allotted space.

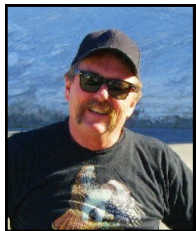
Today, like many of us, I'm dreaming about my next big layout. I'm pretty sure as a lifelong Lionel lover my mainline

will have a middle rail. (But maybe, just maybe, my childhood memory of that dreamy S-scale beauty with red passenger cars swaying across a tranquil river through a #750 trestle being pulled by a whistling white rim wheeled engine puffing real smoke and echoing the chug-chug sounds, and with a Nickle Plate Road tender.) With the memory of the timeless oohs and aahs, who knows, maybe that arrow painted atop Flyer's water tank is, knowingly, pointing right at me.

Regardless of how many rails my mainline will have on the next "big one," I do know one thing for sure, its scenery will definitely include an impossibly steep viaduct, a plastic auto, and a large nail firmly planted in front of the car's bumper! This will always remind me of the message given to me so many years ago by a very, very wise man: "Just watch the trains go around and don't worry so much. Enjoy." 

Mike Boyd's rekindled love affair with Gilbert American Flyer

member profile by Jack Ahearn



It was during a trip to Reno, Nevada that Mike Boyd felt drawn into a hobby shop; as he looked around, his eyes focused on several 'S' gauge cars. Then, for the first time in about twenty years, a deep feeling of fascination came over him...just as it had on that long ago Christmas Morn when his Dad gave him his first American Flyer train set.

Predictably, those American Flyer cars on the Hobby Shop shelf returned home with Mike and he's been going home with more and more Flyer cars, locos and accessories ever since. His romance with the colorful Red, Gray and White American Flyer seeds had been planted when he was seven and started to harvest in his early thirties!

Unlike many kids who fell in love with puffing smoke and chug-chug sounding locos highballing around their realistic looking 'T' rail mainline, the set his Dad gave him neither smoked nor chugged. But Mike loves and cherishes its memories to this day, along with his first 'figure eight' layout. Like many of ours, Mike's early 'all-thumbs constructed' layout was probably built atop a fairly warped and worn four-by-four plywood board. And, like many of our early 'empires' it was a bit scant on accessories. However, his main line did rumble thru a Marx trestle (who, at that age, had enough money for American Flyer or Lionel?) Also, the engineer of that early non-smoking, chug-chug deprived locomotive, could wave at cars stopped by Mike's, (then) non-working cross-bucks warning sign!

After his return to the faithful following his Great Nevada

Purchase, Mike met some T.T.O.S. folks and the love of toy trains grew...and grew and grew!

For the last ten years, Mike's been acquiring Pieces that, as a kid, he could have only dreamt. One of his first dreams came to life in the form of an operating Stock Car and Cattle Pen. While still mooing over that acquisition, he bought a string of auto coal dump cars and added what is now his favorite; a late model #24323 (late/5digit= redundancy. See, I'm learning) Bakers Chocolate Tank Car! His current ongoing search is for #980 series box cars (all 980's are boxcars...I'm learning more) which for 'other-than-Flyer' fans are as favored as your #6464's.



Currently, Mike is starting construction on a 10x15 foot layout which will take up (his) half of the garage. In the planning for ten years, the completed dream layout will consist of three trains running around as many loops. The track plan will also place many sidings for accessories and car storage. Mike already has several vintage coal loaders to keep all those coal cars on the move. As for the storage track, I'm sure we'll see many #980's set out waiting for a #343 0-8-0 to shunt them out to a vintage white rimmed drivers

2-6-4 smoking, chug-chugging 'Nickle Plate Road' Loco and Tender! Mike's search for traditional accessories for the new layout will also include the rarer 1950's Mini-Craft line of wood buildings and railside accessories.

Closing questions;

Most influential on starting him on Flyer?...Dad!

Most supportive?...his wife of 20 years...Martha!

Asked to express his feelings about his first train set, his upcoming layout and American Flyer in general...he answered all in one word...Fascinating!

Jack surfs into American Flyer waters for this special Side Track issue . . .

BOXCAR JACK'S WEB PICKS

by Jack Ahearn

GILBERT HALL OF SCIENCE...as seen thru my own eyes so very long ago... yet...so very near and dear to my heart today.

Okay youse Flyer guyzes...so far, yers had lotsa remaninceseses uh, or sumpin lik dat,... 'bout Flyuh en all...but, uh..nowzits my toin ta memburr wayse bacx wenz I useta take da subway frum Bruklun ta da Gilbit Halla Syuenze ta seeze alla 'Merican Flyuh trainz and tings der...an uh, den I'd what wud brinze home, uh da, trainz book* wid alla pitchers innum!

<http://www.rfgco.com/gilberthalofscience.html>

Seriously AmFlans...this was the Gilbert hall of Science my friends and I visited during the mid and late 1940's. It is also the subject of my 'Closet Flyer Fan' article in this issue. The triangular shaped building was situated where Broadway and Fifth Ave. 'X'ed each other at the southern tip of that Building**



Fifth Ave. display window thrilled kids and dads. Doors to the right ushered visitors into the Show Room which had tiered shelving, featuring the best and newest of 'S' gauge train sets. Port-hole windows on the Broadway side showcased Erector, Chemistry, Microscope and Magic sets.

*In recent and more informed years, I refer to 'train books' as Catalogues.

**Point of interest...the Hall of Science was situated in the top of the X where the two famous avenues crossed. On the bottom of that X, was the location of another triangular shaped building. You've all seen it in countless movies and pictures...it is the famed 'Flatiron' Building. So named because its shape resembled an early pressing appliance, a "flat iron"

Jack sends three YouTube videos, the intro and parts 1 and 2 to a great AF layout - and a link to a Gilbert exhibit at the Eli Whitney museum. Click at will: [Intro](#) [Part 1](#) [Part 2](#) [Eli Whitney Museum](#)

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

Summer Special Event

Tour three nearby attractions on July 16th

In place of our July monthly meeting, there will be a mid-summer adventure on Saturday July 16. We will visit the Heidrick Agricultural History Center in Woodland. This unique museum encompasses some 130,000 square feet of exhibits including the Fred C. Heidrick collection of farm tractors, implements, and harvesting machinery dating from the late 1800's to the 1950's, and the Hays Antique Truck Museum. Wayne Hays was one of the pioneers of the trucking industry in California and his collection of 25 years includes dozens of 20th Century commercial vehicles.

We will enjoy a catered lunch in the courtyard there and after guided tours of both collections we will proceed to Reiff's Front Lawn Gas Station in Woodland for a private tour, cold soft drinks and ice cream. Mark Reiff started out with a collection of gas pumps and auto memorabilia. Today, it encompasses his entire house and yard with a replica 1950's diner and gas station, and lots of surprises.



Heidrick Agricultural History Center



Reiff's Front Lawn Gas Station

Date: Saturday July 16.

Where: Heidrick Center: 1962 Hays Lane, Woodland, 10AM to 2PM \$7 admission plus lunch (arrangements pending, reservations required, contact John DeHaan for details)

Reiff's Front Lawn Gas Station, 52 Jefferson St., Woodland, 2:30 to 4PM. \$7 per person, reservations required).
Contact John DeHaan (707- 642-8023 or jddehaan@inreach.com)

Jim Groth - Prewar Flyer collector and creator extraordinaire

Member profile by Jack Ahearn



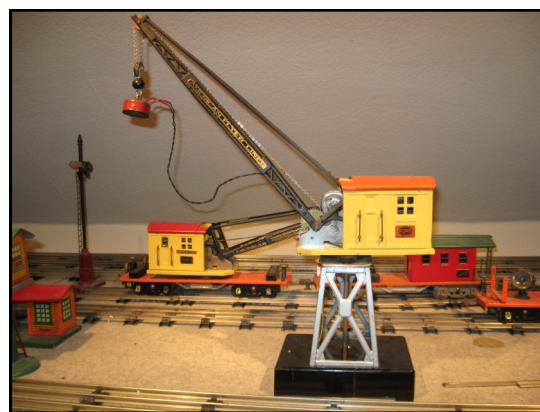
In this special American Flyer issue we highlight just some of our noteworthy Sac.Val. Div. Flans* Let's take a look at our very innovative flan. The designation of innovative is right on because Jim Groth has a way of turning old broken things that don't work, into new fixed things that do!

As seen in the picture at right, Jim frequently fabricates a fortuitous funky find into a functioning figamajig. As examples of this form of fruitful feat, he recently shared a picture of a few fascinating freight friendly cars and accessories that he fashioned from his fertile imagination.

Along with helping recycling efforts by salvaging old and worn accessories and train cars into imaginative and workable new ones...Jim also expends a lot of time helping fellow club members in all kinds of ways. Why...he'll even show up at a train show at five or six in the morning just to see if he can help members to unpack and set their goodies out on tables.

Thanks Jim...for simply being...Jim Groth!

*Flan...Flyer fan....or AmFlan...American Flyer fan.



Jim's Wide/Standard gauge "Flyonel" motorized magnetic crane is a Flyer cab and boom on a Lionel base, powered by a motor from a power drill. It works great!

Membership News

By Tim Taormina, membership chair

We currently have 110 registered members for 2011. Membership Rosters will be available at our June 4th meeting.

From Marx through Lionel to American Flyer and SVD by Jerry Azzaro

Starting out in the Pearl Harbor days following the Great Depression, and living in a basement one-bedroom apartment, toy trains were a luxury for me. My first train was a hand-me-down clockwork Marx Commodore Vanderbilt, but it went into the trash after I took it into the sandbox to play with it. A second hand-me-down, a Commodore Vanderbilt freight set with one-way couplers, sustained me until Christmas 1947 when Santa brought a new Lionel freight set pulled by a #2025 2-6-2 locomotive. I ran both the Marx and Lionel trains on my 3-rail "rug railroad" for a few years, but eventually let it be known that what I REALLY wanted was one of those gorgeous streamline diesel passenger sets Lionel introduced in 1950. My mother scrimped and saved, and for Christmas 1951 presented me with the most beautiful, shiny, new, diesel powered, streamline **American Flyer** passenger set I had ever seen. Dear mom didn't know that there was a difference between Lionel and Flyer.

I unpacked and set up the strange new streamliner and began running it. I grew to love it and soon ran concentric or multi-level combination 2- and 3-rail floor layouts so that I could enjoy both. I sent away for Flyer catalogs and found a whole new world of neat train stuff, which also included Erector sets, chemistry sets and magic sets. I picked up a few other used Flyer pieces, and in 1955 the J. C. Penney department store in downtown San Francisco ran a full-page newspaper ad announcing their clearance sale of American Flyer trains. I took every cent I had to my name (about \$50), rode the streetcar downtown, and bought



everything I could afford: a #336 4-8-4 steamer, a #372 Union Pacific GP-7 diesel, and a few freight cars - including a #910 Gilbert Chemical tanker. (Fellow SVD member and Flyer aficionado **Barry Menges** also went to this sale and saved the newspaper ad—he gave me a photocopy!) The die was cast.

After a hiatus from toy trains for the usual adolescent things, followed by a 25 year side trip into HO scale, I regained interest in the Marx, Lionel and Flyer trains from my youth which I had (fortunately) saved. I would unpack and service them at Christmas, set them up under the tree, then carefully pack them away for the following year.

In the fall of 1993 I had some work done on the back of my house. The only way for the workers to reach the job was through my basement, so they had free access. At Christmas, I went to get my trains but couldn't find them. I went ballistic, calling the poor contractor and accusing him of having dishonest employees. An hour later I found where I had stored them the previous year, and called back to apologize.

When my heart rate and blood pressure finally got back to normal, I decided that if these trains meant so much to me I should have them out where I could appreciate them (and know where they were) year-round. I found and purchased the Donald Heimburger book, "A.C. Gilbert's Heritage", and learned more about Gilbert and American Flyer than I ever hoped to know. GATS shows led to TCA and TTOS, where I have been able to expand both my knowledge and my collection of American Flyer trains.

Treasurer's Report

by Bryan Stanton, SVD Treasurer

Hi everyone. The layout is almost finished. Yeah! The total so far we have spent on the new layout, trailer and rolling carts is \$15,500. It is amazing, the bills that have come in for this layout that I have paid. I did not know so much was needed for this layout. I'm getting ready to start my home layout, I hope I come in under budget!

Thank you all for getting your dues in now. Everyone should be up to date with your new badges for the next club meeting. If you need a new badge see Tim at our registration table.

The next TTOS national magazine "The Bulletin" will be coming out soon, and our advertisement for the club cars will be in it. I hope to sell every one of these cars!

Keep on Track, Bryan Stanton.

The club's new modular layout passes its "Smoke Test"

Craig Benner files a report and posts photos in a new SVD web section

First I'd like to give a *huge* thank you to the layout crew and all those who supported their hard work that went into designing and building such a fantastic place to run trains! Check out our website for photos from the "shakedown cruise" on Saturday, May 21 at the Holiday Inn Express at

<http://ttos-sv.org/SmokeTest.htm>

Perhaps at first glance, the only difference a casual observer would notice is the new Lionel FastTrack on the O-Gauge loops, but the elegance and quality of this new layout runs much deeper than that. As testimonial to this, everything ran just perfectly at the first shove of the transformer throttles! Even with volunteers working through their first setup (albeit with the expert guidance of the layout builders). And by my "unofficial" stopwatch, it took less than an hour and a half to setup the layout in the small configuration. And I know we will beat that with practice!

The first thing to appreciate about the process of setting up and taking down the layout is the planning and organization that went into the design and building of the storage and transport racks. For any of us who moved sections of the previous layout one by one, the capability to roll the entire layout into a venue in three or four racks is simply fantastic.

The second item to appreciate is the multi-page manual with diagrams and step-by-step directions. The draft of the manual we used during the shakedown was very helpful and complete, and though it may go through a couple of minor edits, it is already a *must read* for volunteer operators. For example, one significant change to be aware of for those who have worked with the previous club layout sections, is that many of the new modules have just one set of legs, so it is essential to follow the documented sequencing for setup and takedown. Similar to the articulated streamliners of the 30's and 40's, this makes the



The "crew" - guys who built the layout



Loading and unloading - easy as pie!



Layout corner sections in their storage rack. Follow the web link to see more photos.

modules much lighter and stronger than our original "heavyweights."

All four loops of track are as straight and smooth as a well-maintained "high line." For those of us who found operation for some of our more unique trains somewhat finicky on the previous layout, I imagine we can now run a much greater variety of rolling stock from our collections. With the new 84" outside O-Gauge loop, I can't wait to run the Lionel Acela! A super feature is the addition of a "passing siding" on the inner O-Gauge loop which will allow the next operator to setup their train while the previous consist is still rumbling around for more constant action. And yes, that "new-fangled" digital control was in operation as well!

For the takedown, everything is color coded, and each item has its place for storage and transport back out to the trailer.

As many of us know, takedown often comes at the end of a long day or two of operation at shows or meets, and it can get more than a little hectic trying to vacate a venue gracefully, so the system of racks will be much appreciated by the tired take-down crews. And what a trailer! Together the trailer and rack system will go a long way toward smoother transport and better protection of the modules, so that hopefully it will be running as smoothly in twenty years as it is today!

Newsflash! The layout made a successful public debut at Scottish Rite on May 28th! Hopefully many of you were able to see the layout in action and give a shout out to those who made it all possible. [Seeing the trains](#)

[running](#) put many new smiles on faces of the young and the young-at-heart alike.

The rise and fall of Gilbert Flyer as seen in the Atlantic steam locos

By Jerry Azzaro

I never intended to have a collection of Gilbert American Flyer Atlantic 4-4-2 locomotives. Other than the one I had when I was a teenager, almost all of them came along with collections or lots I acquired. I think that my three-rail O gauge #565 is the only one I ever purchased intentionally. Like so many other things, these started stacking up in a drawer, and soon the drawer wouldn't shut.

One day while sorting through my steamers, I realized that what I had before me was an almost archaeological record of the influence of A. C. Gilbert on the American Flyer Company and the changes in the toy train market over the next 20 years. Gilbert's imposition of 3/16" scale on the O gauge trains after buying the company in 1938, the postwar introduction of the S gauge two-rail line, the company's maturity with the postwar toy train boom, and the decline into chintziness are clearly seen in the Atlantic locomotives. (I know that Flyer historians more knowledgeable than me will disagree with some of this, they are welcome to submit their versions to the Side Track for publication.)

The lowly 4-4-2 Atlantic steamer is at or near the bottom of the line in every Flyer catalog from 1941 through 1960, when it was displaced by the even more lowly and regrettable 4-4-0 "Casey Jones". Unlike the larger Pacifics, Hudsons and Northerns, the economy of design and choice of materials fluctuated widely through the 20 years of Atlantic production. Author Joe Deger covers this subject in detail in Volume I of "Greenberg's Guide to American Flyer S Gauge", concentrating mostly on the change from the four-piece to the one-piece die-cast superstructure, and changes in the design of the boiler front, trailing truck and crosshead guide.

The Atlantic freight set price is bested in 1941 by the #556 (O gauge) and again in 1948 by the #350 (S gauge) bullet-nose model of the famous B&O Royal Blue passenger locomotive, oddly offered in a three-car freight set. No doubt this was a less expensive locomotive to manufacture with its one-piece superstructure; also, perhaps Gilbert had some excess inventory they needed to move.

In catalogs 1951 through 1955, both silent/smokeless and smoke-and-choo-choo Atlantics are offered, the former included with the least expensive sets. In 1953 an Atlantic was offered with choo-choo only, no smoke. Throughout the years the Atlantic was offered without smoke and choo-choo in the low-end sets and in some uncataloged sets, but it retained the four-position reverse unit in the tender. This was converted to the two-position unit along with the rest of the Flyer line.

The three-rail O gauge #565 Atlantic looks strange when compared to its S gauge counterparts. The oversize O gauge wheels and tread width give it a sort of "monster loco" look. But it must have been the cat's meow in 1941 when it upstaged #403, the last remaining stamped sheet-metal locomotive (a holdover from the Chicago Flyer line) and solidified Gilbert's die-cast locomotive lineup. With the exception of the wheels and track gauge, the die-cast Atlantic was a nicely balanced

model of near-scale dimensions and detail.

The introduction of Gilbert 3/16" two-rail S gauge trains in 1946 brought the Atlantic with four-piece superstructure into more perfect proportion. This was compromised somewhat when the boiler was widened in later die-cast and plastic versions to accommodate the smoke-and-choo-choo unit. Dozens of changes occurred over the next several years, including the switch from four-piece to one-piece die-cast superstructure, the replacement of separate wire handrails with cast-on details, the change from die-cast metal to plastic, the change from sheet-metal to plastic tender, the switch from link to knuckle couplers, and the introduction and later withdrawal of smoke and choo-choo. Some collectors might argue that the advent of plastic was the turning point, although in my opinion, the plastic tender is much better looking than the sheet-metal version.

The late five-digit Atlantics exhibit the final throes of Gilbert quality. As the now silent and smokeless locomotive approached its demise, the turned metal bell and whistle atop the boiler were replaced by cast-on plastic details. Metal drive wheels were replaced with plastic. The reverse unit became a manually operated slide switch attached to the back of the cab and then disappeared altogether, resulting in a non-reversing locomotive. The headlight bulb disappeared, leaving a non-operating headlight.

What the Gilbert designers had in mind when they replaced the Atlantic with the odd-looking "Casey Jones" can only be guessed. The Casey Jones looks like a child's drawing of a locomotive – perhaps they felt that producing something a child dreamed up would appeal to children.



HOW TO HAVE FUN WITH YOUR SON (and vice versa)

Building an American Flyer railroad is about the most enjoyment—and companionship—a boy and his father can have. Together you lay out the track, locate the freight yards, plan the landscaping and run your trains with "on time" scheduling.

This year, American Flyer features the most exciting train ever, the colorful funnel-stack "Frontiersman" of the 1850 era. With certificate at right, purchase of this train entitles you to FREE "Overland Express" Baggage Car, worth \$6.98

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Made by The A. C. Gilbert Company
New Haven, Connecticut



Show and Tell

By Jeff Silvera, Chairman

At our March 5th Show & Tell, **George Ann Hornor** (bless her), who was a regular contributor to our Show & Tells, showed a Lionel Area 51 boxcar with the alien head that bobs up and down, an add-on car that was not issued until after the Area 51 set was produced. She also showed the 1983 Phoenix convention gondola.

Jeremy Loventhal brought his "Hogwart's Express" from the Harry Potter movie that he built out of Legos. Very nice job!

John DeHaan showed us his Hornby 1936 set that was from the time of the Chicago Worlds Fair. Beautiful set, John!

Richard Zanotti brought a Ranger Loco & Tender (with Leprechaun) for our St. Patrick's Day green theme.

Carl Curtis had a Scratch-built wooden steeple-cab that he had done a beautiful job putting together.

Warren Kennedy brought three American Flyer Pre-war steeple-cabs that he had purchased on eBay. He had

questions he thought our members could help answer.

Our May 7th Show & Tell had a military theme for Memorial Day. Dave Thomsen and Bill Bender both set up some fine military layouts. Dave dressed for the part, in camouflage.

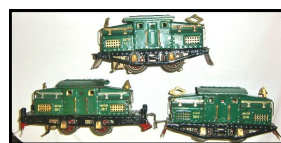
Gaetano Basile brought a military train that he had assembled and built over the past month for the Show & Tell. Flatcar with 3 jeeps, a army tanker, a tank or two, and a Tank Destroyer. He is our youngest fine-scale modeler. What a beautiful Job!

Mark Boyd showed some really nice post war pieces. The Lionel, Sears & Penney's #221 locomotives in olive drab, and a yellow one. Also a Lionel gun set, a safety match cannon. some Army men and tanks. Thanks Mark!

Our next Show & Tell, which I believe will be in September, will be a good one for our Convention finds or your favorite convention cars (unless we come up with something else everyone would like to do.)

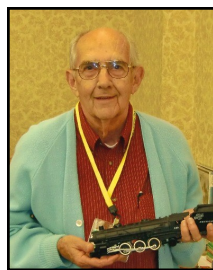
Please don't forget that our annual River City Meet is on October 1st. We need your help! There's lots to do - advertising, table vendors, security and layouts plus set-up. I will have more information as the date approaches.

RECENT SHOW AND TELL HIGHLIGHTS



Barry Menges' early social life - gateway to American Flyer S gauge

Member profile by Jack Ahearn



Unlike most of us who awoke on Christmas Morning to find a train set hastily set up by our parents during the 'twas the nite before'...ten year old Barry was already accustomed to his Dad regularly setting up tracks and running wide gauge Chicago Flyer trains!

Like most of us...the fascination of toy trains stuck with Barry and by the time he started high school he had built a small Marx layout. And like most of us, 'other interests' entered into those teenmultuous years.

However...unlike most, if any of us, Barry had the serendipitous good fortune of finding and dating an attractive young gal...whose dad had an American Flyer 'S' gauge layout in the garage! I'm sure it was great for both men and I don't doubt Barry's gleeful reaction to such a chance reintroduction to model railroading...but I do wonder about the young lady's frame of mind!

At that time Barry was in his early twenties...with just one thing on his mind... no, not that, it was trains, American Flyer trains! As a result of the dad's inspiration...the hapless suitor soon found himself in a buying frenzy... buy, buy, buy. And he buyed and buyed!

One of Barry's most memorable train buying sprees occurred during a visit to San Francisco. He saw a newspaper add for a giant after Christmas train sale at J.C. Penney's. Indeed, it might be said that Barry spent his last penny...at Penney's!



Incidentally, as you'll read in a story written near here, a great Newsletter editor also saw that same add...and to this day... Jerry and Barry cherish that long-ago advertisement!

During the following years, Barry acquired enough Flyer trains, track and accessories to fill the layout he started fifteen years ago...and they have no plans to ever finish it! They? Yes, they. His wife plays a large role in the decision making of how much of what goes where and how. She is also the color consultant on many of the scenic and structural features of 'their' layout.

The layout, planned out to a meticulous degree, covers and area of almost 250 square feet! Oh, okay... fourteen by seventeen.14x17 is big...but 250 sq. ft. sounds even bigger! The track plan, along with many sidings and other routings, current-ly has two separate ovals, and hopefully they'll remain very, very separate. Interestingly, one is wired for trains to run on the customary two rail, D.C. current, whereas the other is powered by A.C. As I stated in other interviews with SacVal Flyer Fans... I'm learning; I wasn't aware that A.C. Gilbert, along with their D.C. locos, also produced an A.C. powered roster of those two rail beauties! Current-ly, I'm "letterly" plugged in!

One of the top features on his, uh,... aceey-deecy layout is a dirt race car track! The track measures about three by three feet. (Wow...1,300 square inches!) What makes this Barry-Brand Race track so very endearing and significant? It was at such a dirt race track that Barry had the good fortune of meeting his loving, endearing...and very tolerant, wife Patricia!

Barry sums up his many years of collecting and operating American Flyers 'S' gauge trains in two words..."Fantastic hobby"!

The Side Track's guiding light - a fond farewell

When I agreed in late 2000 to take over the responsibilities of editing and publishing the Side Track from **George Ann Hornor**, it was with the tacit understanding that she would remain available to help me.

Since then I have called upon her to clarify, correct and proofread every issue . . . 42 issues, to be exact. Her encyclopedic knowledge of TTOS and SVD history and her familiarity with us, the members and our families, were invaluable assets in producing a newsletter which was mostly devoid of errors and inaccuracies. George Ann helped me to get the stories straight, helped me get your names spelled correctly and helped me identify that blurry figure in the background of a photo.

George Ann was devoted to SVD and its members. She

continued to help with improvements in the Side Track, and at the time of her death she was working on a color version of the semaphore masthead to enhance our on-line version.

If you look back through your saved Side Track issues or view them online, you'll see that George Ann was a constant and faithful contributor. Her wit and style make for interesting and entertaining reading, and will be greatly missed.

Oh, and if you find your name misspelled or someone misidentified in a photo caption in a future issue, you'll know it's because The Side Track has lost its best proofreader and fact checker.

-Jerry

Down the track

Upcoming events of interest to SVD members (TTOS and SVD events are in **BOLD**)

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

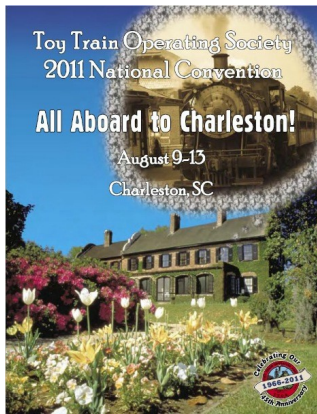
June 4: SVD Meet* - Holiday Inn, Elk Grove

June 10 - 12: Dunsmuir Railroad Days - Dunsmuir

June 26 - July 3: TCA National Convention - Sacramento Convention Center

July 3: Cal-Stewart Toy Train Meet - Sacramento Convention Center

July 3 – 9: NMRA/NASG Convention - Sacramento Convention Center



July 16: Tour to the Heidrick AG Museum and Reiff's Drive-In Museum - Woodland

July 16 - 17: Great Train Expo - Santa Clara

August 6: SVD Meet* - Holiday Inn, Elk Grove

August 9-13: TTOS National Convention - Charleston SC

September 3: SVD Meet* - Holiday Inn, Elk Grove**

October 1: SVD River City Meet - Scottish Rite Center

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