

THE SIDE TRACK

NEWS

from the Toy Train Operating Society Sacramento Valley Division

SPRING

2013

Come for the trains. Stay for the people.

Jerry Azzaro, editor

President's Message

by Jack Hornor

I hope this is a new beginning for the Sacramento Valley Division of TTOS. I thank all of you for voting for your new Board of Directors, and we plan to work hard to make our Division something we can be proud of and enjoy. As your new President I will try to keep these meetings as short and sweet as possible. The controversial issues will be handled by the Board and only the final results will come to the members. You may come to the Board members at any time because we intend to be open to everyone on every issue at all times. If an issue must come to a vote members will have time for review and comment and that includes the new bylaws and definitions. To save resources (that means money) we will send most of what we do by email and will still see that those members that do not have email receive copies. I am working on having better contact with National TTOS on what and how they are doing, especially how they are managing their budget. Except for ongoing expenses like mail, stamps, paper, copying, gas and layout maintenance

any large expenses will be discussed with the total membership and approved before they are done. Our treasury report will come to you quarterly.

Several members have come to me and said that "if you (I supposed that meant me your new president) do not make this club more fun I am going to quit".

In the beginning this worried me but the more I thought about the issue the more I realized that it was not just me that had to make this club more fun but it had to be every member also doing their part to make it more fun as well. I will do my part by reducing meeting time, taking politics to the Board of Directors not the members, and overseeing all of the activities.



*A new executive board for TTOS-SVD: (from left) Treasurer **Phyllis Chiaino**, Membership Chair **Tim Taormina**, Vice President **John DeHaan**, President **Jack Hornor**, Secretary **Beverly Sigafos***

Now here is the rest of the equation: Each member, INDIVIDUALLY, is also responsible to do his or her part to make this club fun and exciting again, starting now. Therefore when one of the members asks me to do something like bringing the layout to the meets I expect them to be not only the first to volunteer but also to have asked others to help when the job requires more than one person to accomplish. I will do my part in this, all I ask is for everyone else to do their part.

I will always be available to any member to discuss any issue, my phones are home 209-744-0626, cell 209-329-1917, e-mail jwhornor@gmail.com

Treasurer's Report

by Phyllis Chiaino, SVD Treasurer

Hello All,

I would like to say "thank you" to those people who voted for me as your new treasurer. I hope to do my best. Since I took over on Jan 4th, 2013, I have some updated figures I would like to share with all of you. The figures are as follows:

Checkbook	\$4,072.23
Business Investment Account	\$12,244.28
CD	\$33,938.96
Expenses	(\$810.54)
Auction money	\$254.00 (less \$10 train bucks)
Club cars sold (4)	\$144.00
Great Train Expo, Cal Expo	\$150
2/2 Meeting made coffee money	\$10 petty cash box

All money has been deposited into checking account.

Thank you all again,

Phyllis Chiaino

Membership News

By Tim Taormina, membership chair

Many thanks to all of you who have renewed your memberships by mail (address below) or in person at our monthly meetings. Please keep in mind that the renewal dues of \$20 individual or \$25 family are due January 1 and late (\$5.00 charge) if paid after April 1. So if you are one of the couple of dozen members who have not paid as yet, please get your dues in the mail to me or plan to pay me at the March 2 meeting. Also please remember to stay current on your national dues as we are dependent upon them for our liability insurance.

Our membership has grown to 113 with the welcome addition of the following new members:

Michael Radent - individual

Warren Dean - family

Rick Rose - family

Phyllis Chiaino - individual

Beverly Sigafos - individual

Brian Farnsworth - family

Tim Taormina, Membership Chair

5509 DanJac Circle

Sacramento, CA 95822

916-441-4778

trainfun@att.net

Auction Action!

At our January meeting, a collection of donated toy train items was auctioned off for the benefit of the club.

Chuck Stone served as auctioneer, while new treasurer **Phyllis Chiaino** handled the cash transactions.



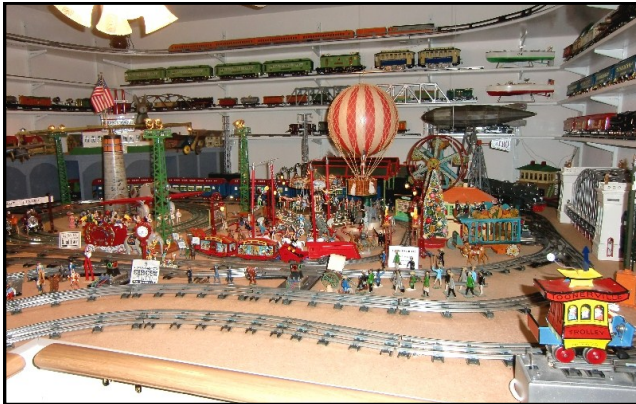
TTOS Vision Statement:

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.

Home Layout Tours

by Jack Hornor, SVD President and Layout Tour Coordinator



*There's so much packed into **Pete's** train room that it's impossible to get it all into one photo.*

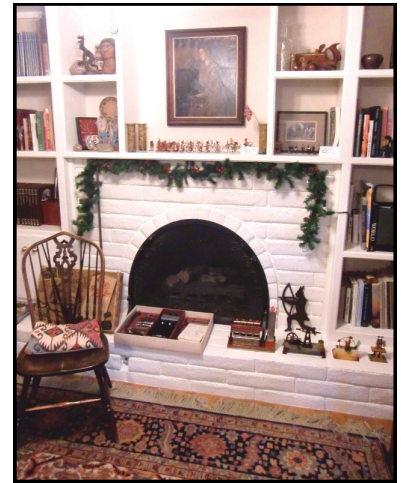
As usual the White House tour was spectacular, with displays of collectable old toys, lead soldiers and of course lots of trains of every size and era. The turnout was good and everyone had a good time admiring Pete's and Nancy's collections. The train room was operating in its regal form with its mixture of original and reproductive trains. We really want to say a large thanks for having us because they always are willing to fill in when we run out of layout tours for any given year. So a great big THANK YOU for **Pete and Nancy White**.

Future Tours

As of this time there are no layout tours scheduled and it has become necessary to obtain input from the membership as to what they would like to do with these future events. There is the question of distance, what distance is to far? Next is food - how much, if any, and who pays - the club or ...???. The next issue is that we have been to all of the available layouts twice in the last few years and when we set them up too few of our members show up. So I ask you: what do you want to do? Please give me some ideas as to where we should go with this. I also need someone to take over setting up and carrying through with these tours if we are to continue as I am now your President and with many other duties to perform.



***Pete White and Jack Hornor** in Pete's train room*



Pete and Nancy decorate for the season. With a houseful of gorgeous antiques, toys and trains, it's the perfect place for a home layout tour in December.

Sneak Peeks (Editor's note):

Side Track investigative reporters have uncovered two very fine home layouts which are nearing completion. We hope to be invited for a group visit soon.



The Making of a White Christmas

Story and photos by Jack Ahearn



Figure 1 - overall view of my Christmas putz.

As some members are aware, about two years ago I took a leap into another of our hobby's many facets. Like my other leanings, I turned the pages of history back to the 1930's and '40s.

This came about when I surfed into an extensive web-site dealing with vintage, 'neath the tree, cardboard houses....aka "Glitter Houses".

They're the ones

with the big hole in the back for tree lights and were made in Japan, the U.S.A. and Germany. **Jerry Azzaro** had done a fantastic job with the editing and graphics on a feature story which appeared in the Winter 2011 Side Track. The "Christmas Supplement" introduced S.T. readers to that website..."Papa Ted's Place".

So why revisit that subject now? Well, since that feature appeared, "**Papa**" **Ted Althof** has succumbed to the cancer which I was made aware of while writing that Side Track feature. As a gesture of respect, many of Ted's cyber "fans" proposed a memorial to him, expressed in the form of individual abilities. Leading this endearing cause was Paul Race, webmaster and founder of "[Cardboard Christmas](#)" (click link for website). He will place those memorial efforts on that website as his tribute to his good friend Ted, who brought many warm memories and lots of joy...to his many fans.



Figure 2- View of lower level.

My memorial to Ted is a very, very special layout and likely a favorite and most cherished. It is as much a part of me as I am of it. It's nostalgic and reflects a warm seasonal glow that can be found and felt in our most treasured moments of the year...Christmas morn! My objectives and how they were accomplished follow: I'll begin by skipping the bench work. Ya'll have done plenty of that and yours is probably a lot better than mine. So, let's move on to the five-by-four tabletop and fully smear it with two coats of snow white paint. I let it dry before laying an oval of Lionel O-27 track. I followed that with a likewise painted 48 by 30 inch board for the upper level. I shaped and cut the board to span the layout's four foot width, yet fit in eight sections of curved track in the middle. (See figures 1-2-3).



Figure 3 - Upper level featuring Pineville Village.

The lead-penciled track plan was now tin-plated! Okay, now for the scenery; I kept two objectives in mind: first, it was to be a memorial to Ted and I also wanted it to look 1930's-40's Christmassy. If I could, I would have added the aromatic flavors of a Woolworth's dime-store, wherein we inhaled the sweet smells of darkly varnished counters, wood floors and orange tipped candy corn! Oh yeah, and the 15 cent grilled cheese sandwiches!



Figure 4- Ted Althof Memorial Park.

For a backdrop I wanted a foreboding, cloudy sky above snow covered mountains. For this, I scrounged a small amount of leftover "clouds" wallpaper used earlier on my other living room "mini-empire". I closely measured the paper from the ceiling down to about eighteen inches above the upper lever. If I cut shorter lengths, I would

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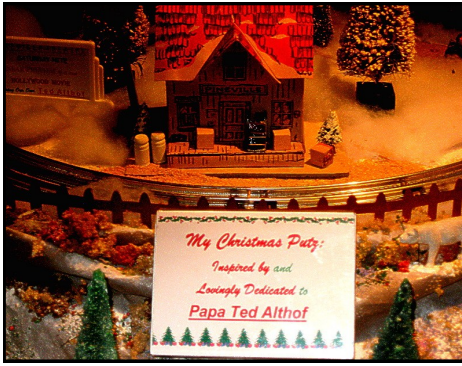


Figure 5- Dedication Sign and Pineville Station.



Figure 6-Starting with plastic bags of "peanut" Styrofoam, the mountain begins to be shaped using blue tape. It is then secured to the wall using thumb tacks at top and sides.



Figure 7- The styro mountain gets molded with deep crevasses and natural cuts. Note: straight pins and tacks help shaping.

have had to make the mountains taller! As the captioned photos pretty much tell how the various steps proceeded, I'll go light on the text so you can go heavy on the pix. As for all the construction processes, I followed the objective of keeping it 1940ish. Sooo, unlike using more advanced techniques when I was in "scale", I didn't use the more realistic types of molding, Hydrocal and Parisian plasters. Instead I did what any kid would have done way back then...I got a roll of paper and twisted it lightly, top-to-bottom. Why? If I spread it open lengthwise and twisted, rather than having gullies and crevasses running down the mountain, I would have had a mountain with accordion folds running across it. (Not good). As for the plastic

bags, they came freely from super market produce counters! Before continuing, I'll point out that the following techniques which, while working well for my snow packed Christmas tree layout, would work on any project you may have in mind or wish to try. A snowy scene is not necessary...just your desire and imagination. Note: Figures 1 thru 5 are just for your perusal. The methodology starts with figure 6.

Figure 6 simply shows how the, uh...creative process, molded its way into a reasonably rough mountain terrain. I found that crease-by-crease visualization and finger-crossing was what brought about the final results. I also discovered that imagination and some daring play a major part in creating a mountain. Figures 8 and 9 bring the mountains a bit closer to visual reality. Notice the paints and brushes in figure 9. They're the next step of actually painting the mountains into what one hopes they'll look like when finished.



Figure 8- A sheet of postal wrap (roll) is loosely placed across the mountain awaiting final shaping.



Figure 9- Paper is pressed and molded into the desired shape. Straight pins can be helpful to keep forming in place.

As they aren't apparent in the photo, I'll offer a few points about the paints used and how they were applied. First, second and thirdly...I ain't no artist! I considered myself extremely lucky in how the mountains and sky turned out. Truly, I'd almost fear repeating this phase of the layout. Honestly, you can do this as well, or perhaps even better! When securing the mountain's 1x6" base

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support to the wall, I was careful not to have it attached to the layout bench work. As you can see in figure 9, that stroke of genius allowed for room to work on the painting. Fortunately, "Michael's" narrow plastic jars of acrylic colors, which I purchased several years ago were, with some shaking, were still very usable! Since they were on sale, I had many varying colors and shades. As you can see, I had almost as many brushes, most of which are no longer in existence. Point...have a lot of cheapies on hand.

As seen in figure 9, some light spraying precedes brushing. Use a couple of shades of light browns and tans, then spray over them with a very random passing of white paint. A snow covered area cannot be painted on the mountain, but it can very effectively be represented. Again, light on the hand..."spritzing", I believe, would be the operative word. If you opt to plant some trees and brush, do so before spritzing, as they too get snowed upon. Remember...lightly! As for rocks or rock outcroppings, in nature they are really closer to whitish than grayish.

As for the sky...I remind you, all of my painting was applied to a cloud imaged wall paper. I left the upper clouds area untouched. Then, just above the paper mountain, I started to paint in the nearer background mountains. Experimentation was the key word. The first results were terrible. However, unlike most mistakes in life, these were easily covered up and redone. Eventually, shapes came into perspective and learned I could raise, lower and even move a hill to the left or right. You just have to try it to feel and see what can happen. Simply put...be daring, keep at it and it will happen. I soon learned that daintiness for this artwork was not always called for. Example: when blending in varying colors, use a thicker brush in a circular motion and "work in" the blending of colors. You'll be amazed at the varying affects it brings out and...those results will be unique to you.



Figure 10- As seen in fig. 4, a spraying of earth paint (tan/brown) was liberally applied and followed with dry-brushed white and snow.

In figure 10 you'll notice a pretty sharp looking mountain with the sky and clouds. I was going to leave well

enough alone but later decided to try my hand at a fuller mountain range backdrop. For those interested, see me at a next meeting and I'll try to explain how I "think" the results in figure 11 came about. At first I wasn't pleased with the intended foreboding cloudy sky but after having it critiqued by my very good friend, **Maryann**, an accomplished and recognized artist, said she was quite pleased with it. Storm's over, sun's coming out and the purple mountain tops reflecting the snow look majestic. Oh, did I also mention her objectivity?



Figure 11- The lower portion of wall paper clouds are painted over with blending of light acrylics. Original "clouds" remain above the painted mountain range.

As for the remainder of the layout, I'll not elaborate. Firstly, it's tailored to my likes and I wouldn't expect others to build a four-by-five foot seasonal specialty such as this. However, it demonstrates that one can have an operating layout regardless of limited space. If you still doubt that, just ask **Dave Thomsen, Geary or Betty Musselman, John and Mary Leins** and several other SVD members who squeeze a lot into a little!

Member **Dave Thomsen** always brings a layout to our meetings, also to our annual Scottish Rite show. Dave's modeling and painting skills are such that we never know what to expect, and always deserve a second (and third) look.

Dave is available to do custom modeling, painting and restoration. Contact him at any meeting, or see his card below



The State of the State Set

Story and set photos by Craig Benner, SVD Webmaster

The celebration of Grand Central Terminal's 100th birthday on February 1st inspired me to share this "backstory" of the 1991 Lionel Classics brown State Set which many of you have seen running on our club layout at various train shows around the area.



It didn't start out as a State "Set" but rather a mixed-lot purchase from the Richard Kughn Madison Hardware four-part online auction in 2003-5. Though there were many one-of-a-kind items and treasure boxes of parts in those auctions, I merely watched as hundreds (sometimes thousands!) of dollars were bid. I did bid on my first standard gauge train – a couple of (almost affordable) Lionel Classics made by Mike Wolf in the 1990's - a 400E steamer and four brown State Set passenger cars. The matching 408E engine was not part of that auction, which was okay since I hadn't yet acquired a taste for that strange-looking style of electric engine anyway.

I soon found out what other Lionel standard gauge operators knew – a single motor as in the 400E would not pull more than two of those heavy, intricately detailed passenger cars. Lionel had figured that out back in the 1920's after their first State set offering, headed by an underpowered single motor 381 engine, was replaced with an offering that included the dual motor 408. A few months later (in another part of the Madison Hardware auction) I was able to get the matching 408E. However, I

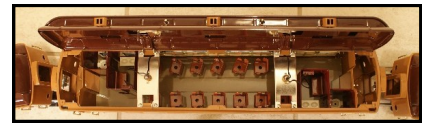


still thought that engine was rather funny-looking and figured I would just sell my now-

complete State Set someday to finance the collection of standard gauge freight cars I would now need for that 400E.

It wasn't until a few years later, after a visit to Grand Central Terminal in New York, that I began to gain an appreciation for the history behind that 408E. Nope, I still hadn't sold the State Set; it was getting hard to part

with, especially whenever I opened the top of one of the passenger cars to show off the wonderfully detailed interior. At every TTOS show, someone would be seeing this "state of the art" twenties toy train technology for the first time and exclaim, "Oh look! There's even a bathroom inside!"



Exploring Grand Central Terminal was quite magical for me, especially as it was Christmas time and the Grand



Concourse was wearing special seasonal decorations and ringing with holiday music. The only things I knew about Grand Central at the time had come from watching Hitchcock's



classic "North By Northwest". Having since learned more of the history, I need to go back someday and see the details and features I missed back then. I can hardly believe that it was almost torn down and lost forever in the 1970's. And I had no idea how lucky I was to be seeing the Terminal after all the effort and money had been spent in the 1990's to restore its grandeur.

I admit the highlight for me was visiting the Lionel Layout on display at the NY Transit Museum Store off the Grand Concourse. Christmas



in New York and toy trains! It just doesn't get any better than that! Seeing a "real" Lionel State Set on display there, I finally began to connect that strange 408E design with its place in history as a New York Central S Class electric engine. The S Class and the 408E got their starts together during the early years of the 20th century.

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What follows are some highlights of those developments.

1900 - Joshua Lionel Cowen starts tinkering with his electric window display seven short years after Chicago's 1893 World Columbian Exposition. The architecture on display at the White Palace launches America's "City Beautiful" movement that will influence things to happen near Grand Central. Electricity is coming of age, showcased by electric transit at the Expo; this too will have an impact at Grand Central. It is both the Age of Energy and the Gilded Age; America is showing itself and the world that anything is possible through a frenzy of industrialization. And railroads are leading the charge.

1902 - There is a terrible train wreck in Manhattan due to the smoke-obscured Park Avenue Tunnel. Teddy Roosevelt is in the White House; Progressives in NY pass a law to effectively ban steam locomotives in Manhattan after **1908**, providing the catalyst for the NYC to finally re-engineer the bottleneck in the railyards and station at 42nd Street and Park.

1907 - Electrification on a scale which can solve the challenge has just become possible. General Electric and Alco provide the S Class engines to power trains into the redesigned station. The NYC provides the willpower and financial backing for what will become the underground tracks and platforms with 3rd rail electrification. They will have to build their own huge power stations to generate the electricity. All work is privately financed by selling the "air rights" for buildings designed to exist above the tracks. Designs are coordinated in "City Beautiful" style that includes a widened Park Avenue and the Commodore and Biltmore Hotels. Commodore Vanderbilt's grandson (William K.) provides a touch of the Gilded Age by encouraging approval of a final classically-inspired Beaux Arts Grand Central Terminal design.

1910 - Cowen, who has been selling toy trains for a few years now adds his first electric style locomotive to the toy train line-up, not surprisingly based on the NYC S-Class now familiar to New Yorkers.

1913 - Grand Central Terminal opens to the public. It took 10 years, 2 million tons of granite had been removed and the trains continued to operate all throughout construction.

1915 - Lionel makes it first O Gauge offerings and they are S-Class styled electrics: the 700's, followed two years later by the 150's. The 250's and 252's follow in **1926**. Here's where you first see those "toy-like" pantographs – actually very prototypical as they were needed for continuity of power at road crossings and across the

more complex track switch arrangements. Boys will have to wait until **1930** for an O Gauge steamer!

1920's - From this time on, Lionel's standard gauge 402/402E becomes rather ubiquitous; it is present on most catalog covers of the 1920's and is featured in many memorable, evocative ads of the era.

1927 - Lionel's standard gauge 408 arrives. It has a 0+D+0 wheel configuration, though the NYC prototypes (now Class S-2's) are a 2+D+2 arrangement. The NYC's S class itself had experienced a change in wheel configuration, as the very first S-1 design had only 1 guiding axle at each end for a 1+D+1 arrangement. Early tests indicated the tendency for "nosing" due to the concentration of engine weight on the short locomotive frame, so GE extended the pony trucks to two axles each. Another tragic train wreck had occurred on the NYC at Woodlawn in 1907, however, this did not involve an S Class engine but rather a T Class electric. (We have to look to Ives and American Flyer for toy trains of this era that were inspired by that prototype, but that's another story).

1929 - What many think of as the pinnacle of Lionel's prewar toy train sets arrive: the big, heavy, highly detailed State sets, at first led by the 381, later by the 408 (with some 402's pinch hitting in the interim).

In conclusion, having been reprised by Williams, Mike Wolf, Lionel and most recently Lionel Tinsplate Editions, the 408E's are doing better than their real-life counterparts. Though a few of

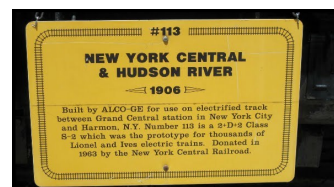


Exhibit at St. Louis Museum of Transportation

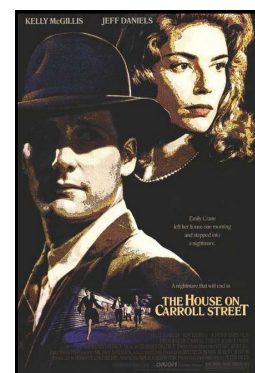


PC 4715 at Illinois Railway Museum

Railway Museum.

Grand Central Terminal can of course be seen today (thankfully!) and I hope you get the chance to visit someday. Until then, you can get a glimpse in the movies . . . (click "*The House on Carroll Street*" movie poster at right to follow the link)

those venerable 1906 S-Class engines remained in service into the Penn Central years, there are only two survivors that can be seen today: one at the St. Louis Museum of Transportation, and the other at the Illinois



Meeting Notes

by Phil Fravesi, outgoing SVD Secretary and
Beverly Sigafos, incoming SVD Secretary

Saturday, January 5, 2013

Meeting called to order by President **John Dehaan**. John recognized outgoing board members and others that have contributed to the club with time and effort over the past two years with certificates of appreciation.

John turned the meeting over to the newly elected president, **Jack Hornor**. Jack announced the passing of member **Bill Phillips** and observed a moment of silence.

Jack asked the membership to think about ideas that would help the club, especially with the changing demographics. Ideas of what the club should look like in the future.

The president then appointed **Beverly Sigafos** to the office of secretary and **Phyllis Chiaino** to the office of treasurer.

The meeting was adjourned.

-Submitted by Phil Fravesi

SVD Layout at GTE Cal-Expo Show

Barbara Rohrs took and sent these great photos of our layout at the January 19-20 event



Enjoying the show: **Rose Craighead**,
John DeHaan, **Adam Fruda**



Minutes for TTOS – SVD General Meeting 2-2-2013

Meeting was called to order by President **Jack Hornor** at 9:30 a.m.

Guests: **John Briscoe's** wife, **Mary**

New Members: None

President Jack Hornor gave the opening statement.

Old Business:

Great Train Expo was a success and so was the Club's layout.

Sign ups were asked for and accepted for set up and tear down at:

World's Greatest Hobby Show at Cal Expo

Cal Stewart Meet at Santa Clara

TTOS National Convention in Reno

Members were reminded that these events are at each member's own expense. Layout expenses for transportation and maintenance will be covered as usual.

TTOS 2012 National Convention made slight profit.

The 2013 Convention is being done in a new way.

Backshop Tour at the California State RR Museum is on April 6, 2013 after the General Meeting. Members with current membership cards are to meet at the museum at 1 p.m. No one under 18 years of age will be admitted and there are no ADA accommodations. The \$5 lunch fees previously collected will be handed back at the door or will be donated to the museum.

No Home Layout Tours are currently scheduled.

Tim Taormina reminded everyone that dues are now delinquent and must be paid by April 1 in order to avoid \$5 late charge.

There will be a Show and Tell at the March 2 General Meeting

Meeting adjourned at 10:15 a.m.

-Submitted by Beverly Sigafos

Down the track

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

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

March 8-10: [Spring Cal-Stewart Meet](#), Santa Clara

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

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

May 25: TCA Show - Scottish Rite Center, Sacramento

June 1: SVD Meet - Holiday Inn, Elk Grove*

July 8-13: [Joint TTOS/LOTS Convention](#), Reno NV

***Meetings begin at 9:30 AM. BRING YOUR MEMBERSHIP CARD**



TTOS Sacramento Valley Division
5509 DanJac Circle
Sacramento, CA 95822