

THE SIDE TRACK

NEWS

from the Toy Train Operating Society
Sacramento Valley Division

SUMMER

2015

Come for the trains. Stay for the people.

Jerry Azzaro, editor

President's Message

by John DeHaan, SVD President

Summer must be here - the TCA meet is history (with a good turnout) and the weather is warming up as the train season slows down a bit. We were glad to see **Clyde Easterly** back in action after his surgery. **Geary Musselman** reported that his mom **Betty** is in failing health and confined to home. Cards might boost her spirits (and Geary's), letting them know how much we appreciate their activities with us.

I hope you have made plans to come to the Niles Canyon Railway excursion on June 14. VP **Ed Strisar** has put together a great day, including a private caboose for the first 24 members in line that day. Niles itself was the seat of the first movie industry in California and there is a fun museum and a theater showing silent films there on Saturday nights, so make a day of it! Antique shops and restaurants are there as well.

We will be supporting the Galt Summer Fair on August 29, so plan on hitting that, as well as the Crockett Railroad Days on June 27-28. The [Crockett Toy Train Operating Museum \(CTTOM\)](#) has a fantastic multi-gauge layout that they are now landscaping. It is on the top floor of the historic Odd Fellows Hall in Crockett. On the floor below them is

an awesome HO layout operated by a long-time club there. Both will be open to the public on Railroad Days. Come and see what clubs can do!

I hope, too, you are planning to go to the TTOS National Convention in Albuquerque in August. They have put together a great program of cultural, historic, and social visits.

SVD had its display layout at the TCA meet, and it looked great. We got some new faces to help with set-up and tear-down, thanks to **Jack Dieres** and his family and Layout Boss **Rick Rose's** friend, **Bran-don**. But we had very few members come to run trains (maybe the temptation of the trading floor was too great.) Yours truly managed to bring a couple of O-gauge sets and an S-gauge Franklin (in addition to the usual standard/wide gauge stuff) to keep the tracks full all day (meaning I never got to shop!) It is a 12 hour day for the layout crew to transport, set up, and tear down, and that is a lot of work to have so few come to run trains. We need to discuss the future of the layout in light of the current situation. We are committed to have it at Galt and our own meet in October, so plan now to come and run!

We will NOT have a meeting on July 4 - too many have other plans - so we'll see you on August 1 if not at the June 6 meeting.



Meeting Notes

by Jack Ahearn, SVD Secretary

SVD March 7th 2015 meeting minutes

Meeting started at 9:30 a.m., Pres. John DeHaan presiding.

The meeting started with a welcome to guests, new and returning members.

Our club's layout presentation at the recent Cal-Expo train show was discussed. Many favorable comments were received from both the show's management and the 3,300 visitors. Due the large space allotted us, we were able to present almost the full layout. Set-up was accomplished within three hours and operation during the two day show went well. Our new promotional sign was displayed along with a plentiful supply of membership applications. **John DeHaan** voiced the need to improve our members outside the layout promotion of our club. SVD received a payment of \$150.00 for our layout participation and was also issued 50% discount tickets for the set up team's parking. A strong vote of approval was given the motion that those members also be awarded their travel expenses from the one hundred and fifty dollars.

A discussion concerning the layout trailers maintenance was discussed and centered mostly on the need for proper tires and wheels. However, **Carl Madsen**, a qualified tire shop manager, stated he had inspected and driven the towed trailer and found no problems.

TTOS National has announced that the new bylaws have been passed by the membership. They also noted that 2016 will be our organization's fiftieth anniversary. To commemorate it, they're introducing a brightly colored and operating illuminated sign featuring our national logo. More information forthcoming in due course.

Ed Strisar spoke of the upcoming June 14th Niles Canyon field trip. He presented the idea of chartering a bus. At this time, as many members are geographically far apart, he just wanted to ascertain how many members would be interested before he proceeded with researching the logistics and expense.

The number of raised hands would rule out a large bus. A Super Shuttle fifteen person van will be looked into. Further details at our April 4th meeting.

Don Rosa raised the issue of SVD not having an operating budget at this time. The matter was openly discussed and concluded with all agreeing a budget was certainly needed. **John DeHaan** asked for a qualified volunteer to offer a framework and discuss the matter further.

Meeting adjourned at 10:20 a.m.

SVD April 4th, 2015 meeting minutes

Meeting convened at 9:30 a.m.

Among guests being welcomed was our former fellow member **John McLeod**. John had retained his membership in National and his rejoining SVD is pending. It was reported that **Betty Musselman** is currently in a nursing home. She apparently is doing well and the members voted in the affirmative to cheer her with a bouquet of flowers. **Clyde Easterly** was also hospitalized for surgery last week.

News of the Niles Canyon tour: Firstly, the proposed Super Shuttle bus was a super \$ bust! **Ed Strisar** announced only four members had signed up for the tour but that increased substantially as twenty-nine members signed up immediately after the business meeting. An additional feature to the tour was announced by Ed S. - a Santa Fe caboose will be made available with room for twenty four lucky riders!

The process of creating a budget is progressing quickly. Treasurer **Dean Busick** and member-at-large **Don Rosa** have compiled the income and expenditures figures for the years 2013, -14 and -15 as a reference for the basis of a more detailed reporting form. Dean Busick will produce such a document for the board and the process of creating an annual budget and financial forecast will then begin. The goal is submit to the membership a profit and loss statement on an annual basis. We thank **Don Rosa** for his input and **Dean Busick** for following through with all the hours of numerical calculations he has volunteered to undertake. At our May 2nd meeting the remaining pieces of the **Tom Griffith** donation will be offered to members through the fun, suspense and excitement of a silent auction. Bring money!

Club Layout happenings: Due to severe back problems and pain brought about by the loading and unloading of our modular layout at Cal-Expo, **Rick Rose** had but little choice but to resign as layout supervisor. However, he has kindly agreed to oversee the set-up/ tear down at future shows strictly as a supervising coordinator. We're presently committed to have our modular layout at three events; the Spring and Fall Scottish Rite and this summer's show in Galt. **Jack Dieres** is recruiting some young and strong "volunteers" to do the heavy lifting.

From National we understand that the design for the 2016 TTOS anniversary sign is making headway. The multicolored illuminated sign will now have an outer golden rim on the circular sign. It's planned to have the sign available to members at a reduced price of \$30.00! There is no further word at this time in regards to the TTOS auto license plate frames.

There was no Show and Tell at this meeting however, **Jeff Silvera** announced a Boxed Set theme for the May meet.

Meeting adjourned at 10:15 a.m.

Meeting Notes (continued)

SVD May 2nd, 2015 meeting minutes

Meeting began at 9:30 am, President **John DeHaan** presiding.

The meeting opened with welcoming **Bob Rhodes** back into our SVD membership. Also, members were reminded of the silent auction to be held after the meeting and close for bidding at 10:30.

Members attention was also drawn to the June 14th Niles Canyon field trip which is quickly coming up. **Ed Strisar** has finalized arrangements for the caboose. Those eligible for riding in the Santa Fe caboose will be chosen from the first twenty four registered members. The tour will include a walk through the yards and all were reminded that the train ride starts at 10:30.

The TCA Scottish Rite show is only three weeks off and volunteers were again called for to set up and tear down the club layout. **Jack Dieres** has volunteered to transport the layout to and from the Show.

John DeHaan made mention that there was thought being given for a change concerning SVD meeting minutes. Rather than members getting all three months of meeting minutes in the quarterly Side Track, it has been suggested that the minutes (only) be e-mailed to members shortly after each meeting. Printed copies would be available to non-computer members at the next meeting. Before discussing this further, John stated that he will get in touch with Side Track editor, **Jerry Azzaro** to discuss this idea and get Jerry's point of view.

Early discussion about our October TTOS show approved a motion made by President DeHaan. The motion repeated our previous years raffling of two age appropriate beginner train sets. Accordingly, kids between 3 and 6 or 7 and 12 years of age are eligible and must be present at the drawing to win. It was seconded by Rick Rose and unanimously passed.

The June 6th meeting will be followed by a tour of **Phil Fravesi's** fabulous and exciting layout.

Meeting adjourned at 10:00 a.m.

All minutes respectfully submitted,
Jack Ahearn, Secretary.

Treasurer's Report

By Dean Busick, SVD Treasurer

The club has a total of \$47,557.30 on deposit with the Bank of America as of April 30, 2015. Of that total \$34,134.32 is in a CD account, \$12,248.09 in a Business Investment Account, and \$1,174.79 in the Checking Account.

Membership News

by Tim Taormina, SVD Membership Chair

Since our last issue **Stephen Bergdahl, Spencer Freund, Jack Dieres, and John McLeod** have joined our Sacramento Valley TTOS. We still have a very few of you who have not as yet paid your national dues. I must remind you that our board has given a commitment to national that they will not allow members to renew their Sacramento Valley membership in the coming year if they are not current with national. Since this is a requirement for our association with national and we are dependent upon them for our liability insurance, I would ask that you give attention to this if it applies to you. If you are uncertain of your current status with national, please contact me at (916) 441-4778, send me a note at trainfun@att.net, or see me at one of our meetings. Be safe this summer and enjoy your model trains!

Happy Railroading,

TTOS-SVD Mission Statement:

Our mission is to bring together persons interested in the hobby of collecting and operating toy trains.

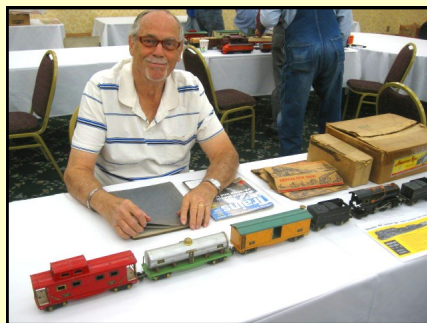
The focus of activities shall be on promoting the best interests of the hobby through fellowship, a sense of good will, camaraderie within the membership, and exposing the general public to the hobby, encouraging greater interest in it and increasing membership.

Show and Tell

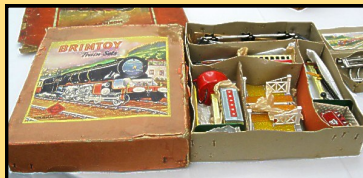
The May 2nd theme was
"My favorite boxed set"

By Jeff Silvera, S&T coordinator
Photos by Jack Ahearn and John DeHaan

Tom Gibson showed two American Flyer sets, a 1939 No. 310 "Double Header Powerful Synchronized Mountain Red Ball 2-4-2". This unique set came with two steam locos, one powered and one "dummy". He also had a beautiful 1941 American Flyer O Gauge set.



Richard Zanotti brought in a beautiful Brimtoy train set from the 40's... and also a couple of low- end small kid's tin toy train sets.



Our Club President **John DeHaan** brought in a very nice 1936 Hornby train set, with some awesome artwork on its set box. Very nice.



Bill Bender's portable layout and his custom-built Vandy tender:



"My tender started as a tank car, then was modified with balsa wood, plastic and brass railings. When I built it several years ago, one could not get a short SP tender by itself, so I built one" - Bill

A Piper Cherokee begins the takeoff roll beside the Plasticville hangar while Thomas impatiently waits on the spur track. Around the bend comes a Lionel 2-6-0 with a custom-built tender, pulling two TTOS commemorative convention cars.



Jack Ahearn brought a like new early postwar Marx set #8994 in its original box. Spread out, it looks like it was worth every penny of the \$8.49 price penciled on the box!



An Electrifying Rebirth of Thomas the Tank Engine

From a *Toot-toot* to a *Wooo-woo!*



Story, photos and special effects by Boxcar Jack

While speaking with Bill Bender at a recent SVD monthly meet, I noticed a Thomas whistle actually running around Bill's layout. He responded to my curious look by explaining that he replaced the air vales and mouthpiece with an old Lionel locomotive motor and drive wheels. Wow, what a subject for a Side Track photo feature and a way to show off the modeling talents of one of our members. I just didn't know how imaginative the story would become!

Bill refers to Thomas as an anthropomorphism*. Checking my dictionary, I realized that was the perfect word to describe Thomas. Pondering others who added a human touch to non-humans, I thought of Walt Disney, scores of Hollywood movies and the latest entry; Geico's gecko.

Continuing with this line of thought, I remembered another person made famous for turning a non-living creature into a human appearance, sans any attractive features. Mary Shelley brought her monster to life using electricity. Hmmm, I reflected; Bill also used electricity to bring his still life whistle to life. Hey, why not try an anachronistic plot? Yeah, Frankenstein meets Thomas!

After a few frustrating attempts to write about Bill's efforts to convert an inanimate steam engine into a working locomotive, I came up with little more than a step-by-step instruction sheet. I just wasn't comfy with those shallow results. Two factors prompted me to change my approach. First, how much reader interest would there be in such a conversion project and secondly; I just wasn't enjoying writing an instructional type of article. Oh yeah, there was another dissuader; Classic Toy Trains had published a similar feature story © in their December 2004 issue! I was sure they would have taken offense at what would appear to be plagiaristic! Our Side Track has too good a reputation to be so impugned.

Rather than giving up on bringing Bill's talent and successful modeling project to our members' attention, I opted to consider writing a light-hearted tale. After checking with and getting Bill's approval to present his efforts as a farce, I felt revitalized. Hence, a slightly darker side of my creativity.

The following is not a typical toddler's tale of Thomasonian triumphs, but rather a shocking experiment executed to electrically transform an inanimate object into a lively and very lovable character.

Now, let's look at where it all began; not hundreds of miles across the world and hundreds of years ago, but now and in a town *not so very distant from where you sit*.

* *Anthropomorphism: an-throp o-mor-phism (ān'thrə-pə-môr'fīz'əm) n. The attribution of human motivation, characteristics, or behavior to nonhuman organisms.*

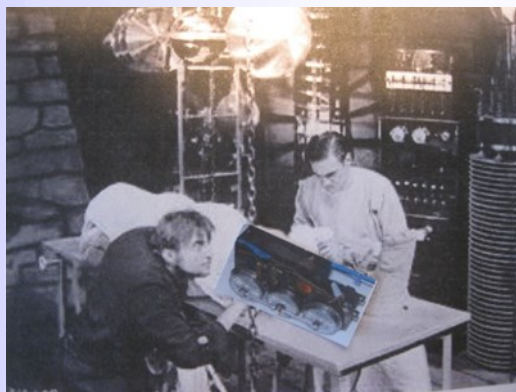
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Doctor Frankenstein's Castle

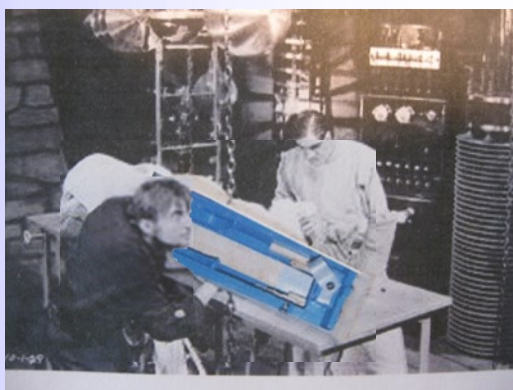
From deep within the dark and cavernous depths of the Transylvanian mountains; well you know the rest of the spiel, so just look and shiver at the rebirth of an earlier time Thomas!



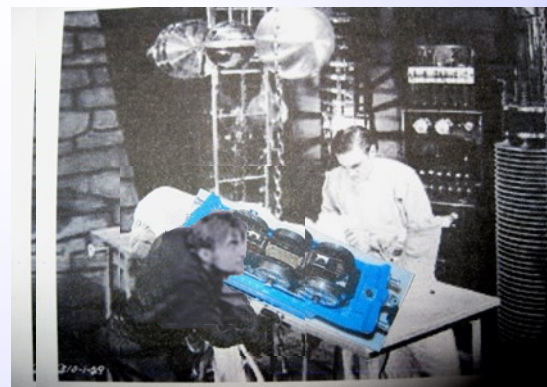
Step 1 Igor places the Lionel heart onto the operating table for inserting it into the body cavity of Thomas.



Step 2 The surgeon prepares to remove Thomas's whistle valves so as to implant the Lionel heart in its place.



Step 3 Igor assists as the now hollowed out body drops onto the table and the waiting hands of Dr. F.



Step 4 Igor attaches the completed new body with its transplanted heart onto the chain hoist. It will now be lifted to the electro-generator for its life giving charge.

Or, the charge of a lifetime!

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Now; that didn't hurt ... or did it? If you have a sense of humor, it shouldn't have.

The operation went fine, whistle's gone, transplant went well and the regenerated Lionel motor and drive wheels run smoothly. The new and improved Thomas is recovering in one of the sub-basement intensive care caves.

Just to ease those of you who may have grandkids looking over your shoulder in horror, here's a post-operation photo of Thomas doing now what he couldn't before; racing happily around Bill's layout, making all of us kids smile!

From a whistling to a traveling Thomas:



Thomas, now a true tank engine, rounds a curve on Bill Bender's accessory-packed home layout.

Authors note: I thank Bill Bender for his understanding and kind permission in allowing me to present his serious and very successful conversion project as a farce.

As for the nice folks at Classic Toy Trains; eat your hearts out!



Down the track

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

June 6: SVD Meet – Holiday Inn Express, Elk Grove* **

June 14: SVD trip to Niles Canyon RR

July 4th: No SVD Meet – Happy Independence Day!

August 1: SVD Meet – Holiday Inn Express, Elk Grove*

August 3-8: TTOS Convention, Albuquerque

August 29: Layout at Galt Summer Fair, Galt

***Meetings begin at 9:30 AM**

**** Followed by a home layout visit**

BRING YOUR SVD and TTOS NATIONAL MEMBERSHIP CARDS