

# THE SIDE TRACK

## NEWS

from the Toy Train Operating Society  
Sacramento Valley Division

FALL

2015

*Come for the trains. Stay for the people.*

Jerry Azzaro, editor

### President's Message

by John DeHaan, SVD President

What a summer this has been! The National Convention was a great time. The excursions on the Cumbres & Toltec and the Durango & Silverton were terrific, with spectacular scenery and amazing engineering to put a railroad on the side of vertical cliffs. All enjoyed in good weather with real, vintage steam power! We got to see the Animas River while it was still pale blue (the day before the EPA turned it orange with 3 million gallons of gold mining waste). If you get to go in the future, while both rides are great – the Cumbres & Toltec, leaving from Chama, New Mexico, was more fun as you could stand on the vestibule decks and move -with a great docent - to the open “observation” car (a gondola with railings). The windows opened fully to allow reaching cameras out for great photos. The D&T is reserved seating, the windows open only part-way from the bottom, you can't stand on the vestibules, and the “observation car” is reserved seating only - for an extra fee. I'll try to get some photos to Jerry for the next issue of the Side Track and will bring some to future meets. The Museum tours in ABQ itself were great, if all too brief. The Nuclear Science Museum and the Unser Museum were highlights for me. A visit to the Santa Fe 4-8-4 #2926 was stunning for everyone. This all-volunteer group is restoring this magnificent beast to full operational status, with the FRA boiler certification scheduled for next spring and operational status expected for Summer 2016. All this was done with no “shop” – the tooling and materials are stored in shipping containers - and no deep pocket funding – all by donations! The 1944 loco served on the Chicago-Los Angeles route with some of the prime passenger trains. It was rescued after years of exposure and vandalism in an Albuquerque park.

Meanwhile, at the board meeting we learned that TTOS National is in great financial shape and considering the

formation of two new divisions. Sadly, negotiations to bring the Southwestern Division and the Grand Canyon Division back to TTOS have failed. The TTOS and logo (s) have been copyrighted and SWD will be advised to stop using both in their ads. The 2016 National Meet will be at the Queen Mary in Long Beach to celebrate the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the club. Be sure to book early, as the club will be given priority for the cabins facing Long Beach. Interior suites will also be available. The first wonderful Miller Engineering “animated” roof signs (of the TTOS logo) were delivered and 500 are on hand. Order yours from club HQ at about \$30 plus shipping. The board also approved the purchase of the license plate frames proposed by our own **Elias Amaral** to celebrate the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary as well.

At home, we had a terrific time on our own “historic” rail line – the Niles Canyon Railway, thanks to **Ed Strisar**! Great weather, fun ride in our own caboose! We got a

GREAT private guided tour of the shops there. Those folks are doing some awe-inspiring restorations of BIG locos and passenger cars. All on a volunteer basis. Be sure to visit and donate when you can, it's only an hour or two from the SVD area.

Coming up is our big annual meet at Scottish Rite on 3 October. **Beverly Sigafos** has sent out the vendor notices and is looking for volunteers for ticket taking and admin assistance. Layout Boss **Rick Rose** is looking for layout set-up folks and operators. Be sure to sign up at the meeting on

September 5th. (Remember we will not have a regular meeting in October!)

We are also planning to take the big layout to the Folsom RailFest, September 26-27. Plans for the CSRM are still in flux. We may substitute a flock of our great personal layouts for that (due to the time restrictions imposed by the CSRM). It was voted at the last meeting that we encourage having workshop seminars and tutorials at some



**Chuck Brasher** gives #2926 the once-over.

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# President's Message

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of our future monthly meetings, so get your suggestions (and offers to conduct some) to the board as soon as possible. Our usual food and toy drive will take place at the December 5th meeting, so start stocking up so we can beat last year's donation.

On a personal note, I'm sorry to report that **Tom Gibson** has been very ill and was not able to attend the National Meet. And, word just in that **Suzie Brasher** fell in Grass Valley and broke her leg on Saturday. Please send both your best wishes.

That's all for now. See you at the Scottish Rite and our monthly meetings!

John DeHaan, President

## Membership News

by Tim Taormina, SVD Membership Chair

I'm happy to report that former members **Bob Rhodes**, **Steve Bertolucci**, and **Claire Sallee** and her son **River Kenneth** have rejoined our club. We welcome their return! With their return we have now reached the century mark in our membership and hope that with the additional outreach we are doing we will entice even more train enthusiasts to join our "train gang"! As we move into the fall months and begin to accept dues for the new year, we will be continuing our commitment to National to check to see that our members are current with them before accepting renewal in our division. 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](mailto:trainfun@att.net), or see me at one of our meetings. Be safe this fall and enjoy your model trains!

Happy Railroading, Tim Taormina, Membership Chair

## Treasurer's Report

By Dean Busick, SVD Treasurer

As of August 21st the club has a total of \$47,416.78 in its combined accounts which include \$1,021.16 in checking, \$12,248.53 in the business investment account, and \$34,147.09 in the CD account. These figures do not include the cost of the Niles Canyon tour which will be paid out at the September meeting.

## Meeting Notes

by Jack Ahearn, SVD Secretary

### Minutes, Memos and Musings

#### *for the last 3 months*

Let's try something different. It has been suggested, to no one's shock or surprise, that there are members, about 99.9% I'd guess, who neglect to read all three months of prior meeting minutes when they appear in our quarterly newsletter. (Incidentally; what's so newsworthy about a quarterly newsletter?) Sooo, starting with this Fall issue, I'm going to offer a less formal and quicker way to learn what physical or mental absentee meeting members may have missed. (I've a thing for my M key.)

Let's cleverly start with the current month and go back to the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 1<sup>st</sup> months of this quarter.

**August:** President **John** opened the meeting by greeting guests and introducing new members. (reread and memorize for all future minutes reports.) He went on to emphasize the past success of distributing flyers for our October Shows. He reminded us of the Galt Show August 29 and the Folsom Rail Fest on September 25-27<sup>th</sup>. An interesting post meeting idea was proposed and received voiced enthusiasm. What might be called *Ask the Experts* would have a knowledgeable member in a pre-announced subject, sit at a table with appropriate visuals or tools and individually assist members on said subject. It was further suggested that this program might alternate with our Show and Tell gig. That's the meat for the August meet. Oh, yeah; it started and ended on the announced times as always (unless a speaker goes on and on and causes a tick-tock-gasm.)

**July:** No meeting and ya'll know why. However, during that time span, a National letter to all divisions requested assistance in compiling a listing and documentation of all Division activities that support T.T.O.S.'s tax exempt status. Our Division responded with a three page written, pictured and documented report which our Prez brought to the National Board in ALB.

**June:** Still with me? **Jack Hornor** and **Ed Strisar** each gave extensive mention of the Galt and the Niles Canyon events. In retrospect, both events went off well, attendance and otherwise. Our Prez also announced several other, now past, events and train shows. They too went off well. The big wowee award for the meet was the huge amount of contributors and premium items for the Show and Tell program. It literally occupied the entire front of our room! **Jeff Silvera** made a plea for Show and Tell contributors to please jot a short description of their items along with their names. Starting with the next quarter's abbreviated minutes, etc., I'll report who won the monthly raffle. So if you don't want your name seen in this column, don't win!

Respectfully submitted; Jack Ahearn, Secretary

# SVD members ride the Niles Canyon Railway

By Ed Strisar, SVD Vice President

On June 14, twenty four Sacramento Valley Toy Train Operating Society members visited the Niles Canyon Railroad in Sunol. Westbound to Sunol/Fremont, our members were treated to a ride in an old Santa Fe cupola caboose. We were blessed to have a very animated car attendant who not only provided narration but railroad songs as well!



Returning on the eastbound run, the train stopped at Brightside Yard to discharge our members for a one hour tour of the yard. Niles has a variety of equipment and the highlight of the Brightside Yard tour was viewing a Krauss-Maffei ML 4000 diesel-hydraulic locomotive being restored.

All participants had a very enjoyable day.

Ed's daughter **Emily Strisar** took hundreds of excellent photos during the event. The panel below is just a taste.

Rather than trying to select a few for this article, you can go to her Flickr page to view all of them (click [here](#)). Be sure to allow time for the photos to load after you go there.

***Editor's note-** If there's another SVD camera clinic, I hope Emily will conduct it. I'll be in the front row! -JA*



Photos by **Emily Strisar**





## Let's Meet Jane!

**Jane Howard** is an exhibit technician with the exhibits department at the California State Railroad Museum, and has been involved in every major exhibit since joining C.S.R.M. in 2007. One of her many rolls is that of being a guiding light for and the maintenance of the Thomas W. Sefton collection and its operating model railroad. In short, Jane keeps the trains running on time!

When Jane came to the railroad museum, the Thomas W. Sefton operating layout was relatively new and at that point, had two concerns; due to a lack of an effective maintenance schedule, the trains didn't quite run on time, or just didn't run. This major concern was addressed and corrected by then museum director, Cathy Taylor, by enlisting the aid and technical toy train knowledge of docent Phil Fravesi. Together, as a team, Jane and Phil have kept the trains and accessories in good operating condition.



The second challenge was the scenic operating layout and its collection of early 20<sup>th</sup> century iconic accessories. Before Jane's arrival, it was strictly limited to the important pieces of the famed collection and a purist's dream. But Jane was concerned about the tens of thousands of average visitors who just wanted to hear bells ring, see lights blink and toy trains run. What did Jane do? Jane raised eyebrows!

She began a plan of humanizing the layout with non-Lionel people, cars, animals, trucks and horse-drawn wagons. Indeed, there was even a need for air traffic control for the suspended airplanes and a hot air balloon. Magically, the snow-capped mountain got footprints, downhill skiers, and wild animals all watching as a Boy Scout troop hiked across its peak. When some skeptical "purists" questioned Jane's placement of some objects on the layout, she replied "*You do realize this is not real....right?*" She is quite content to be overseeing a toy train layout.

The layout started receiving lots of visitor oohs and aahs as the towns gained people and pets. Shortly after that initial well-received *Touch of Jane*, she began decorating the highways, byways and villages for the annual holidays. The Christmas holidays were resplendent with boughs of holly, and wreaths appeared on doors, windows, lamp posts and locomotive headlights. Railroad flat cars were loaded with pine trees, and gondolas carried brightly wrapped gifts to far away children in far away places. And there was Rudolph and his eight friends. Oh yeah, and that jolly ol' guy in red! The Fourth of July fireworks, Easter, Halloween and even April Fool's day ... all received a *Touch of Jane*.

Currently, Jane is filling a major role in another positive change. Assigned by museum director, Paul Hammond, she is coordinating and directing the annual Thanksgiving Small Train show. And, I'll be right there watching with you, as a participant, running trains on my Small Train Show layout!

Doubtless, within a few years, we'll all witness some examples of that *Touch of Jane* appearing within that show. For openers, she may do some streamlining with the paper work; watch your 'puter in-box for revised and shorter forms.

By Jack Ahearn

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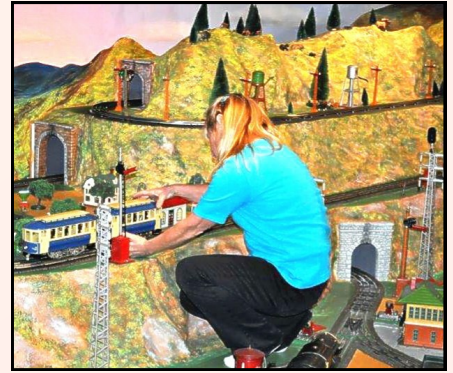




Jane helps to keep the trains rolling on time by sharing engine cleaning chores with **Phil Fravesi**.



Jane has developed a clever procedure for cleaning tracks, which are wiped clean almost daily.



August was National Railroad month. Jane places two MTH light rail trolleys to commemorate.



Jane is quite agile when traveling around her little world Here she's helping a fatigued Boy Scout get back on his feet.



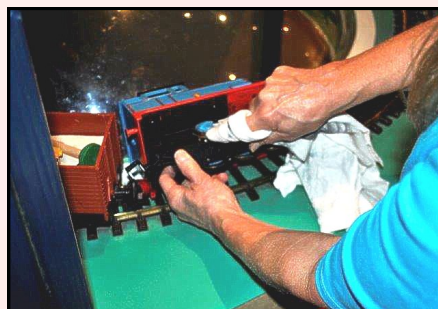
Jane lists items to be replaced or relocated within the Thomas W. Sefton area.



A Thomas helicopter pilot playfully buzzes Jane as she prepares to clean the Thomas layout track.



A Thomas gondola gets a kick out of Jane's right foot track cleaner.



Thomas' rolling stock needs constant care to keep the kids smiling.



When day is done, Jane picks up derailed Thomas trains.



# Show and Tell

By Jeff Silvera, S&T coordinator

The theme for June 6th was “Railroad Art”. Who knew our members had so much art? The turnout was so overwhelming that only highlights are shown here.



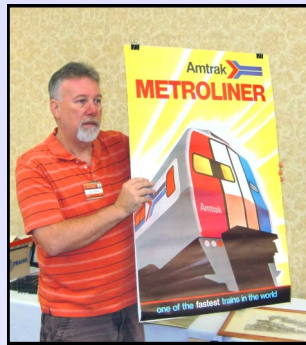
**Jack Ahearn** presents some humorous AMTRAK ads



**Dave Thomsen** delighted us with another of his fine layouts



**Geoff Langmack** shows an uncatalogued prewar Lionel set powered by locomotive #248. It was offered with a Marx transformer and an armload of track.



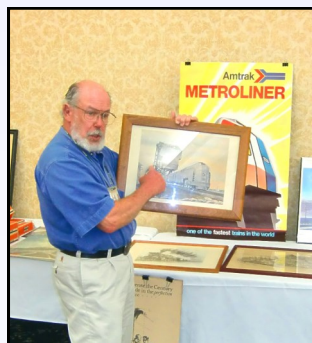
**Bryan Stanton** shows an Amtrak poster featuring the METROLINER



**John DeHaan** shows a colorful 1933 World's Fair poster .



**Tom Gibson** presents some early prints.



**Ed Strisar** presents the New York Central 20<sup>th</sup> Century Limited .



**John McLeod** shared pencil drawings of Texas & Pacific 2-10-4 locomotive and a framed locomotive metal sculpture among other items.



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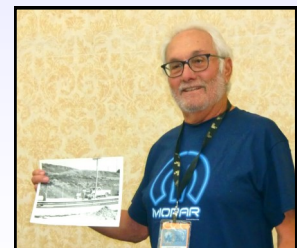
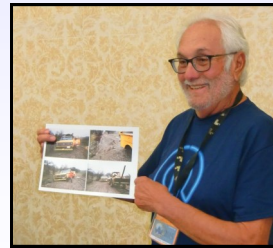




...June Show and Tell *continued from previous page*



**Jim Henson** gave us a treat of Santa Fe's fleet of their Chiefs along with other fascinating pieces.



**Mike de la Pena** brought a photo of himself standing alongside a restored 1916 Viennese loco, and memorabilia from its 2010 fan trip across Hungary.

**Carl Curtiss** showed photos of some track equipment he had been using

## The theme for August 1st was "My most cherished item."

Photos and submission by Jack Ahearn, substituting for vacationing Jeff Silvera



A duplicate favorite of **Jack Ahearn**. That garage was on his layout in the 1940s and he had been trying to replace it ever since. eBay to the rescue! It is believed to be a Wyandotte.



**John DeHaan's** Lionel #8 electric engine was purchased from Chuck Brasher and Clyde Easterly in 1996. John's first Standard Gauge purchase began a long and treasured friendship with **Chuck Brasher** and **Clyde Easterly**.

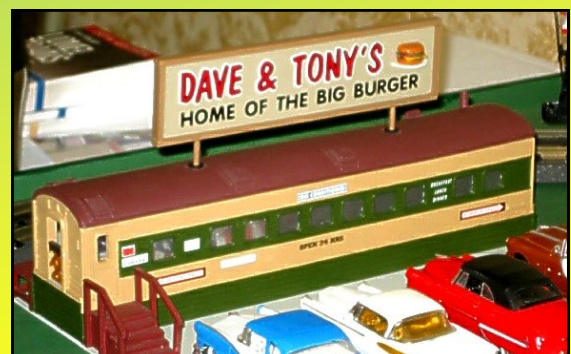


**Bryan Stanton** showed his 1958 Lionel X-617 set sold by Chicago department store Gifts Galore, which he received for Christmas in 1961. Original box lost. This set led Bryan down the track to a love of toy trains.



Member **Dave Thomsen** came upon a diner called "[Dave & Tony's](#)". This reminded him of the great times he shared with his friend, SVD member **Tony Rohrs**, before Tony's passing. As a tribute to Tony, Dave built a model and gave it the same name.

## Remembering Tony Rohrs



# **Down the track**

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

**September 5th: SVD Meet – Holiday Inn Express, Elk Grove\***

September 19th-20th: Flyer Fest West, Elk Grove

September 26-27: [Folsom RailFest](#), Folsom CA

**October 3rd: River City Toy Train Show - Scottish Rite Center, Sacramento**

**November 7th: SVD Meet – Holiday Inn Express, Elk Grove\***

November 27-28th: Small Train Holiday, CSRM Sacramento

**December 5th: SVD Meet – Holiday Inn Express, Elk Grove\* \*\***

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

**\*\* Annual luncheon, food and toy drive**

**BRING YOUR SVD and TTOS NATIONAL MEMBERSHIP CARDS**

## **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.*