

# THE SIDE TRACK

## NEWS

from the Toy Train Operating Society  
Sacramento Valley Division

**SPRING**

**2016**

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

Jerry Azzaro, editor

### President's Message

by John DeHaan, SVD President

The New Year is well underway for us toy train folks. GTE Richmond and GGLCC San Jose are already done and both were really busy. GTE Cal Expo will be done and dusted by the time you read this and Cal Stewart San Ramon is right ahead ( March 6th). Thanks to Jerry's updates, we all have news of these. SVD is off to a good start to 2016. (We had a bit of a stumble when yours truly failed to get a contract with the hotel for our room.) **Curt Darling** stepped up and got a good deal on a new contract, with a few "alternate dates". (It won't always be the first Saturday of each month, so read your Side Track!) We are keeping stable at about 100 members and we have a healthy bank balance.

**Ric Wilson** has come forward to take over the Show & Tell sessions at our monthly meetings with a list of fun ideas. **Jeff Silvera** has done a great job for a long time and deserves our thanks (Jeff will still be part of our Scottish Rite team). **Spencer Freund** has generated some ideas for guest speakers and tech sessions and **Ed Strisar** is working on plans for our annual summer outing. (Maybe a bus excursion to Railtown 1897 (Sonora) or ???) ALL are looking for ideas and volunteers, so speak up and share with your friends.

The **TTOS National Convention** is aboard the Queen Mary in Long Beach, August 1-6 to celebrate the Club's 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary. The hotel is already accepting reservations at a much reduced room rate, so get your claim in now – space is limited. See your Bulletin for more details.

At the March meeting, **John Briggs** from Sacramento donated his own boyhood Lionel set (an 1847W UP freight set with some great accessories to the Club. It got a LOT of attention and he was pleased with the interest in seeing it all find a good home. We will auction it off at the April meeting! **Rick Rose** has announced his irreversible decision to retire as Layout manager. The commute from Oroville for meetings and layout duties was just too costly. Sadly, he and Mary have decided not to renew their SVD membership. Their spirit and contributions will be missed. **Jack Dieres** has agreed to head up the layout crew for the three promised appearances – Cal Expo, TCA Scottish Rite (May) and our Scottish Rite Meet October 1<sup>st</sup>. He has the truck to tow the layout trailer and one or two employees to help with the heavy lifting of set-up and tear-down. SVD will help cover the cost of his "crew". We need to decide what to do with the big layout. It is wonderful to see and fun to run trains on and is a big hit with all who see it, but it is physically, er, challenging to set up and transport. We have a lot invested in it, money and time. Do we want to sell it, dismantle it and build a smaller modular layout, donate it, or ??? It is the Club's layout so your opinions and suggestions will be appreciated. As part of TTOS's new 501c(3) charitable organization status, we need to do more educational events for the public. Charity fund raising, scouting, schools (STEM programs), public displays, are all ideas. What can you do to help preserve the toy train hobby? Please step forward.

It's always a good time to be playing with toy trains! Enjoy them!

- John DeHaan, President (until 31 December 2016!)

# Minutes, Memos and Musings

*for the last 3 months*

by Jack Ahearn, SVD Secretary

**December 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2015:** Prez John De Haan started the meeting with pointing to and acknowledging members who contributed to the large and very full table of food and toys. Great response to our annual food and toy drive! With no new members or guests in attendance, the meeting went directly into business at hand.

It was opened for and approved by members to hold our regular first Saturday of the month meeting on January 2<sup>nd</sup>. Although not confirmed, the paperwork has been submitted for our club's Large "modge" layout to be operating at the February 27<sup>th</sup> and 28<sup>th</sup> Cal Expo Show.

President John again brought attention to the criticality of our club to reinforce our (TTOS) tax exempt status. This, he reiterated, can be accomplished by more members either bringing their own or volunteering to participate with the club layout at train shows or other venues. Educating and introducing folks to model railroading is the key to justifying our present IRS status.

The first of many discussions about the upcoming August 1<sup>st</sup> thru 6<sup>th</sup> Queen Mary convention was voiced with Q&A's in regard to Hotel \$'s. and Resv's. Plenty more info to come.

**Jerry Azzaro** and **Craig Benner** were recognized for their outstanding production of the Side Track!

Most other scheduled events will be history by the time you're reading this and will be reported on in the next two months of this column. Following the raffle results, which pocketed **Geary Musselman** the monthly ten bucks, John D. closed the meeting at 9:30 and opened our appetites to our soon to arrive Christmas Party luncheon and desserts. The Side track and all members join in thanking **Ed Strisar** and the ladies who jumped in to set up the buffet and serve all the goodies.

**January 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2016:** Early comers to our January meeting were surprised to find our meeting room doors locked and the room not set for our monthly meeting. The situation was quickly corrected and **John D.** opened our meeting on time by introducing and welcoming our newest member, **Bruce Peterson**.

Our club's Large modge layout will appear at this year's Cal-Expo show on February 27<sup>th</sup> & 28<sup>th</sup>! Volunteers to set-up and run were called for and a further suggestion invited other members to bring their own smaller layouts.

**Prez John D.** also acknowledged and thanked members for contributing so generously to our annual Christmas food and toy drive. He reported that this year our food donations weighed in at 200 pounds and toys at 75 pounds. I guess that's one way to measure our division's goodhearted nature! John also measured it by inviting all to give **Jeff Silvera** a large round of applause for organizing and facilitating this yearly event. Way to go Jeff! Speaking of Jeff S., our Show and Tell program was also discussed. Jeff's also

been spearheading that for the last hundred or so years and he suggested he step down and let another take charge of that monthly feature. In the following discussion it was suggested and met with approval to hold the S & T gig on alternate months with the intervening meeting to feature members offering to present a workshop or similar demonstration. The idea of a guest speaker was suggested, followed by several opines that they could speak no longer than 20 minutes! Let's see what develops in the months ahead.

Placing member offerings for sale of train or related items posted either in the Side Track or all-member e-mails was briefly discussed. Mixed negative opinions put the idea on hold for future consideration.

**Ed Strisar** was called upon to announce any plans for our annual summer outing. It looks like a trip to Jamestown is in the works. Ed suggested that chartering a bus would be ideal if we could reach the magic number of 35 members registering. With that low number and including spouses, etc., I'll predict a bus is likely in the works!

The meeting closed at 9:40.

**February 20<sup>th</sup>, 2016:** Meeting started at 9:30 with our Prez introducing guests **John Briggs** and **Ray Keener**. A generous amount of toy trains was donated by John Briggs to SVD to be used as we so choose!

**John D.** suggested, without any opposition, to place them on auction silent or otherwise for our members, within a month or two after being sorted out and evaluated. Uh, the donation, not our members.

**President John** also reminded all that renewal of National membership is required and reminded us that renewals made in 2016 will benefit from the 2 for \$50 offer. That's \$35. for the current renewal and only \$15 for an additional year, a \$20 saving. John also noted that National will remain on the quarterly rotation dues schedule.

Our Prez also announced that **Tom Gibson** and **Phil Fravesi** were on the sick bay roster. Get well guys!

Speaking of schedules; our next meeting will be Saturday March 5<sup>th</sup> and the April meet is slated for the second Saturday, April 9<sup>th</sup>. Also, although the name has been dropped, the semi-annual biggie train show will be held on Sunday March 6<sup>th</sup> in the San Ramon Marriott Hotel. An orange card will knock a buck off the \$10. entry and they offer reduced parking for \$5.

It was announced that **Ric Wilson** will succeed **Jeff Silvera** as Show & Tell coordinator. A large round of applause went to Jeff for his many years of heading up this program and Ric was welcomed into the slot with a similar loud greet. We all look forward to Ric's efforts on this very successful and participated feature of our meetings.

NOTE: Ric announced the March 5<sup>th</sup> S. & T. will have an Easter influenced theme: "Best Basket Cases" you have resurrected or successfully rebuilt. It'd be neat if you had a before and after pix! Remember to jot down your name and a short note describing it.

Meeting closed at ten, shortly after Bryan Stanton won the raffle and the ten script!

# Membership News

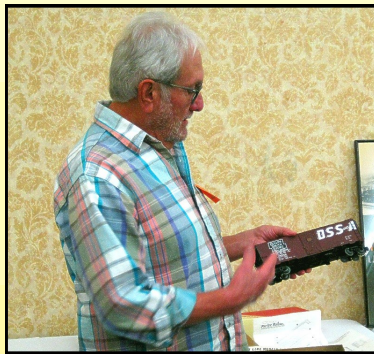
by Tim Taormina, SVD Membership Chair

I want to thank the members for being very diligent in making sure they stay current with national dues because it is so important to our club. Please take advantage of the one-time offer being made by national to get a reduced rate on national membership by paying for a two-year renewal when you get your renewal letter this year (\$50 for two years instead of

\$70—a \$20 savings). Regarding our Sacramento Valley renewals, we still have members who have not renewed as yet for 2016. Please get your renewals to me at our monthly meetings or send them to me at **5509 DanJac Circle, Sacramento, CA 95822**, and I will get you your membership card immediately. If you are uncertain of your current status with our club or national, please contact me at **(916) 441-4778**, send me a note at **trainfun@att.net**, or see me at one of our meetings.

## February 20th Show and Tell

*Photos by Jack Ahearn and John DeHaan*



**Carl Curtis** shows and tells of his fondness for under the table deals at train shows. His latest find of “Dreams in a Box” consists of an undecorated box car in a caboose box for \$5. Also discovered were twelve (12) assorted freight cars and kits all for \$15. Wow, what dreams deals!

**Jack Ahearn** shows and tells of his \$5 find on eBay. Although completely unmarked, the opened mystery kit box revealed a late 1930’s refrigerator car made by the Comet airplane folks.



**Mike de le Pena** proudly shows and tells about a poster in the Murzzuschlag Museum showing Semmerids Pass with lots of rolling stock and a crocodile (engine).



# Boxcar Jack Ahearn makes the Soft Rock scene!

Kenny G has nothing on our Jack when it comes to this genre



Along with the enjoyment of seeing another member's dream empire is the benefit of appreciating or adapting one of their model railroad features into your own layout. Such was my experience during a SVD tour of **Bill Wilson's** wondrous layout in Nevada City.

I've been modeling toy and scale layouts for over fifty years. I've progressed from my first cardboard box cut-out tunnel, to papier mache, plaster, hydrocal and Styrofoam for modeling hills and dales. Thanks to Bill's use of carpet foam padding (underlayment) for soundproofing his multi train operations, I've modified the use of that product for another modeling purpose. An easy to use economical scenic material that's ideal for low contour land-



Easy scenery made with Jack's technique

scaping; I call it "Shape a Sponge"!

For my latest layout, I topped the bench work with five-eighth ply and a sheet of sound proof board.

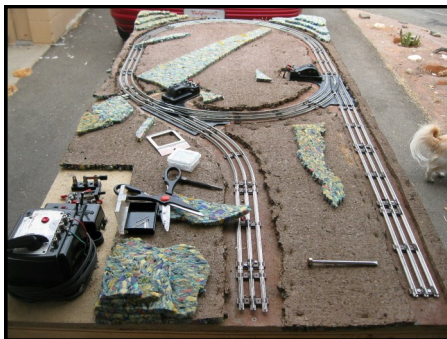


Photo #1

(Home Depot) I mopped the sound board with cheap brown paint and an old brush. While drying, I got out the carpet padding which Bill Wilson generously gave me.

Let's take a look at what I've found to be easiest



Photo #2

and cleanest method of creating a reasonably natural looking landscape. The padding is ideal for making rock

formations and un-level terrain. No mixing mush or gooey adhesives and no supporting structure. (photo #1) It's particularly advantageous for portable layouts. Sponge is light weight and doesn't show accidentally chipped white plaster spots caused when being transported.

This overall process requires a minimum of tools. (photo #2) Scissors, a punch, box knife, razor blade, tweezers and plenty of one and a half inch straight

pins. Pushing the pins on an angle through the various layers of padding eliminates using glue. Placing pins at opposing angles securely anchors each layer and using the punch makes pushing pins easier on tender finger tips.

NOTE: All sponge padding uses a bonding nylon net on its bottom side. Before you cut out your desired shapes, be sure to place the netting side down. Otherwise, the netting will show and be very difficult to later cut or alter. Try cutting a scrap piece, netting side up, with a box knife. (I learned this the hard way.)



Photo #3

Let's try a corner piece, as shown in photo #3. Pins on the lowest layer were pushed at an angle right into the sound board, using the punch. The upper layers, shaped to your preference, were easily pinned (angularly) each into the layer below. I learned that keeping the pins a bit back from the edges allows for future trimming should you decide to alter the appearance.

Go ahead and start getting imaginative and do the cutting for similar outcroppings or moderate rises in the terrain. Later on, you can always create more and best of all; they're simple to unearth or move should the need or desire arise. Look again at photo-



Photo #4

#1 on that first module I opted to cover the entire 3'x5' train board with the padding material. I did this because it was designed for the tall Toon-

erville trolley to run around some fairly low houses. In a sense, I raised the earth with the image of the rural track running through a cut in a hilly terrain. (photo #4). I think that trick worked!

Now for the real fun part! No one has ever seen a multi colored sponge rock formation or orange and purple meadow. So let's look at photo #5 to see what I used to naturalize my little world. One or two tubes of acrylic flat light gray and brown paint, a couple of shades of

fine artificial grass and soil and a spray can of less expensive adhesive and white glue. A fine

kitchen type sifter is usually added to this list however, I find for smaller area as discussed here, the two finger pinch of salt method better targets the exact spots you want accented. Finger tapping of a small spoon with the grass or soil in it also works well. Either method, held about twelve inches above the intended spot works satisfactory. Tip; the smaller the target the lower your fingers. And now you're ready, in a way, to paint the town!

For ladder rock formations: start with covering the entire area with light gray paint. Looks better, doesn't it; no more multi colored appearance!



Photo #5



Photo #6

(Photo #6) Let the face of the rocks remain grayish and proceed to dab the rock surface with varying shades of brown paint. Before the paint is dry, sift most of the area with the soil. You may want to leave some patches of the gray rock exposed. Next, lightly sift some shades of grass on areas with the soil. If you prefer or intend the layout to be portable, cover the surface area with a light shot of spray adhesive or thin brushing of a 50/50 mix of white glue and water, prior to sifting the earth and grass onto it.

When you're completely satisfied with the coloring you may want to place a small tree and a few multi colored shrubs into your creation. Another advantage of having a sponge earth is that it's much easier to plant trees and bushes. For trees (photo #7) simply X

slit the desired spot, use an old tweezer or small needle nose plier to widen the hole, stick in the trunk and let the

sponge tighten it grip. It's easy, no gooey gluing! For lichen shrubbery (photo #8) make it colorful and permanent. I find using white

glue unreliable for a good bond. Instead, angled straight pins angled in the soil serve as good anchors. Suggestion: Place a bunch of pins halfway

into a small strip of Styrofoam or scrap padding and brush with greenish paint across the tops. The pins will stay unseen in the bushes.

If this landscaping process appeals to you, start at a flat blank area on your layout and create a small eye-catching mound on it. Use your imagination and see how easy and fun it is to create or improve your railroads landscape!

-Jack Ahearn



Photo #7

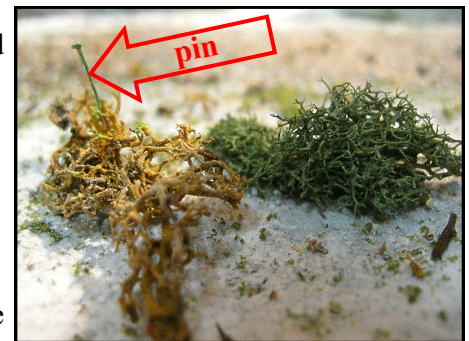


Photo #8

# CHRISTMAS 2013

We invited *SV* members to send in photos of their home holiday layouts

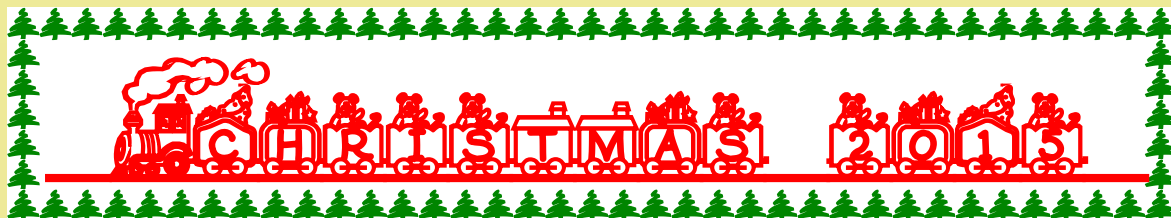


**Bryan and Lisa Stanton's** winter scene includes skiers, skaters, a sleigh and a dogsled. No snowmobiles.



**Richard and Dina Zannotti** sent these photos of their dual-gauge ("O" and Standard) around-the-tree layout. A Lionel streetcar and dummy run on the Standard loop. Richard wanted to run a repro O-gauge freight set, but the orange loco was kaput. A British ACE 4-4-0 steamer had to take over.

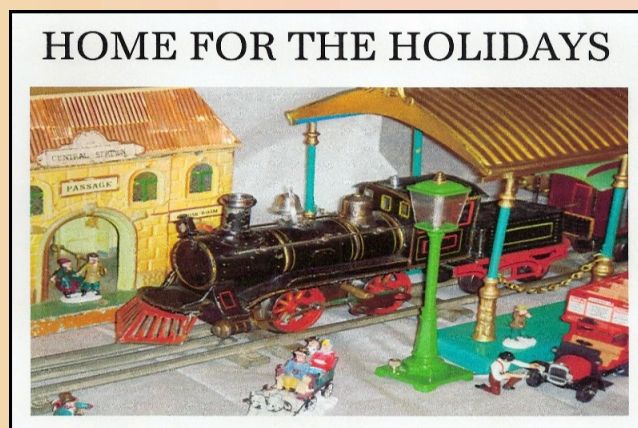
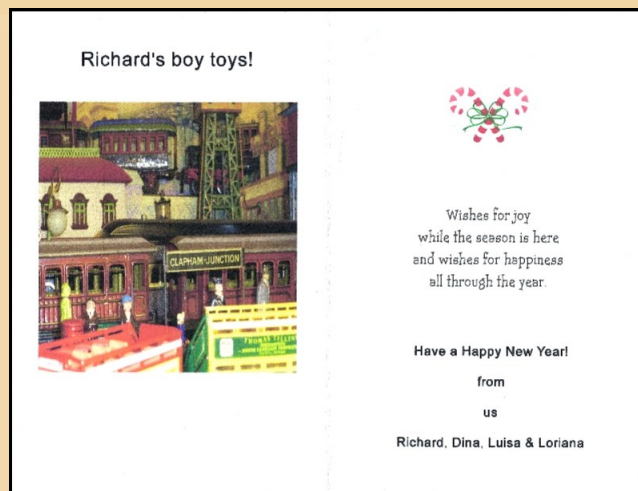
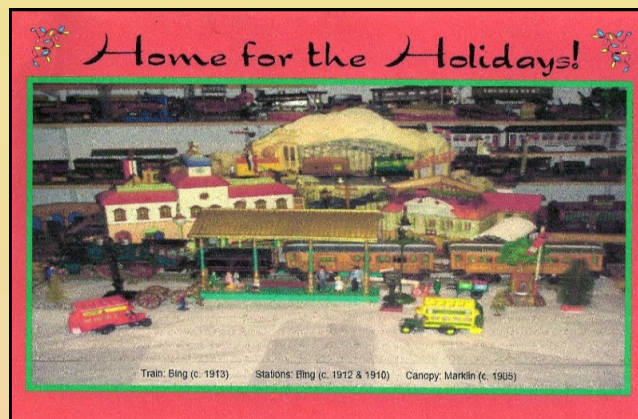




**Jack Ahearn** always hits all the right notes with his 1940s-style layouts and ornaments. He thought everyone had seen his 2015 Christmas layout - which was at CSRM at Thanksgiving - so he sent these photos of layouts from prior years. The last photo is his layout from mid-1990s. The train on the siding is a reconstruction of the one Santa brought him in 1942, while the one in the foreground reproduces his best friend's set from the same period. A nice way to summon the spirit of Christmas Past.



**Richard and Dina** also sent along some of their custom-made Christmas cards from previous years. The cards feature photos of Richard's trains. Great idea!



## **Down the track**

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

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

**April 9th (2nd Saturday): SVD Meet – Holiday Inn Express, Elk Grove\***

**May 14th (2nd Saturday): SVD Meet – Holiday Inn Express, Elk Grove\***

**June 4th: SVD Meet – Holiday Inn Express, Elk Grove\***

**October 1st: River City meet - Scottish Rite Center**

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