

THE SIDE TRACK

NEWS

from the Toy Train Operating Society
Sacramento Valley Division

WINTER

2016

Come for the trains. Stay for the people.

Jerry Azzaro, editor

President's Message

by John DeHaan, SVD President

Happy Holidays to All!

We are well into toy train season and the holiday season that goes with it for many of us. This is a special holiday message because it is my last as President of SVD. It has been an interesting eight years. I won't say it's all been fun but we have had a lot of fun. It hasn't all been successes but we have a solid club with a good treasury and a good Board of Directors to keep things on track. I was very pleased when most of the Board agreed to stand for a second term but I was especially pleased when long-time member **Curt Darling** was elected your new President by affirmation at the November meeting. Curt is brimming with new ideas and has already started putting some of them into action. We realized at the last meeting that the annual CalExpo train show (which we have supported for many years) is taking place this year on 7-8 January 2017. Rather than compromise anyone's attendance we have agreed to move the first SVD meeting of 2017 to the following Saturday, the 14th. We will be taking the big layout to CalExpo and Curt is already making changes to the layout and the trailer to make set-up easier. He still needs a crew to set up and tear down, and especially to OPERATE the trains. We are, after all, the Toy Train **Operating** Society! So dust off some trains, recharge the batteries (or BCD's) and bring 'em over to play. This is our big chance to encourage new members from our area. TTOS National is almost done with its application for Non-profit 501C(3) tax status. That will be a boon to all of National and Divisions. But, it means we have to do more educational and charity related activities – schools, community centers, hospitals, etc.

I was very disappointed that the new staff at the CSRM refused our enquiries about the Thanksgiving weekend Toy Train event that gave us such great exposure in the past. They limited parking at the museum, then would not offer public parking refunds, and rebuffed any attempt to accommodate the time required to tear down our Christmas layout. A few of our members are displaying their personal layouts and we certainly applaud their enthusiasm. The CSRM is overwhelmed with their commitment to the Polar Express guests. It will be interesting to see if any negative feedback is registered there about our absence.

The Carquinez Toy Train Operating Museum (in Crockett) holds a continuous food drive and open houses as part of its community support efforts. We have been invited there some time in the New Year to run trains as one of our "layout tours". (Check out their wonderful video on YouTube, click [here](#). Their Holiday Open House is December 10-11 so plan on hitting that after our big luncheon!

We have already started enquiries for fun events for the spring and summer. Dinner train excursions and "behind the scenes" tours may be ahead! 2017 promises to be great!

Ed Strisar has arranged for a wonderful barbeque meal for our Holiday Celebration on the 10th, with desserts, salads, and appetizers on a potluck basis, and drinks (soft drinks only, alas) hosted by the club. There will be trading early, and a brief business meeting at 10, with food to be served by 11:15. So come hungry!

In closing, I must recognize the efforts of the Board in making the last years so successful:

Continued next page



President's Message Continued from Page 1

VP Ed Strisar for his dedication and energy in organizing events; **Treasurer Dean Busick** for keeping our books so skillfully; **Secretary Jack Ahearn** for his patience and skills; and Don Rosa for being our Board Member-at-Large, ready with experienced counsel.

Tim Taormina has done a wonderful job as our Membership Secretary for too many years to count and will be very hard to replace. **Beverly Hornor** did a terrific job as registrar and Boss of the Tom Gibson Memorial Meet. To the man who brings forth the best Divisional publication in all of TTOS -**Jerry Azzaro** every quarter, my most heartfelt appreciation! His is a wonderful talent and we are so fortunate to have him creating Side Track!

Lastly, my thanks to all who have offered advice, guidance, friendship, and support for all the years of my term(s)!

With my best wishes for a happy and train-filled holiday season,

John DeHaan

Membership News

by Tim Taormina, SVD Membership Chair

It has been my pleasure to serve as your Membership Chair for the past seven years! I have enjoyed the camaraderie with all of you and have appreciated your support in performing my duties associated with this office. Sometimes hectic, sometimes harried, but always fun and, most importantly, always giving me the opportunity to interact with all of you and getting to know you better as friends and fellow train enthusiasts.

If you haven't as yet renewed your national membership, you only have a short time to do so to take advantage of the two-year discounted offer which will end on December 31, 2016. The special application to take advantage of this offer is [still available on the ttos.org website](http://ttos.org) if you didn't receive it in the mail. I will be available at the December 10 Holiday Luncheon meeting for those of you who need to renew your Sacramento Valley membership (\$20 single and \$25 family). I look forward to seeing you all there!

Happy Holidays,

Tim Taormina
Membership Chair

Open House Photos

John DeHaan sends these photos from the open house events held during the October 1-2 weekend

Carquinez Toy Train Operating Museum, Crockett:

The huge multi-level layout is looking good!



Just Trains, Concord:

Lots of traders and layouts, including **Bob Remley's** fascinating operating accessory layout.



Minutes, Memos and Musings

for the last 3 months

by Jack Ahearn, SVD Secretary

September 3rd, 2016

Meeting called to order by **Prez John**. No new members or guests announced so the assembled members were focused in on nominees for the upcoming election. As it's recorded at this time it appears that **Ed Strisar** will upgrade to President, **Dean Busick** will renew as Treasurer and **Jack Ahearn** will be a rethreaded Secretary. That leaves an opening for Membership Chair and Lay-out Chief. We also hope and look forward to **Jerry Azza-ro** continuing his highly professional job as Side Track Editor and **Craig Benner** continuing with his very talented work as Webmaster.

The rest of the meeting was centered on our Fall Scot Rite Show. I could use up a paragraph or two reporting on what we planned and hoped to happen but it makes more sense and better reading to simply report what did happen in the October Min's, Mem's and Mu's.

Ric Wilson pointed to a good turnout for this month's Show & Tell while Prez John, for the second to last time called out the winning raffle ticket which was #651 with **Leroy Wallace Jr.** accepting the coveted counterfeit bill from our (SVD) president. Meeting adjourned at 10:10.

October 1st, 2016

As announced, our October meeting is replaced with our Scottish Rite Tom Gibson Memorial Toy Train Show. To entertain our visitors, members' layouts were up and running. Notably, in a last day's effort, a few members got together and with a good spirit and hard work, managed to once again have our club layout draw a lot of young smiling faces and interested adults. Across from it was **Dave Thomsen's** annual animated and colorful layout. Adding to the excitement was the surprised look on a twelve year old boy named **Shawn** as his name was called as the winner of this year's Lionel Train set. (See the photo spread for the meet elsewhere in this issue)

November 5th, 2016

The meeting started promptly at 9:30 as our Prez advised there were a lot of items to be covered. In keeping with our practice, the first item was to announce guests and new members. No guests but happily we had two new members introduced, namely: **Mike Schafer** and **David Mickela**.

Sadly, we were informed that **Ric Wilson** is being hospitalized with issues dealing with his heart. On the brighter side, **Phil Fravesi** was welcomed back from his sick bay gig.

Meeting notes: The December 10th Christmas party meeting will start at 10:00 rather than the usual 9:30. This will allow for better digestion of our breakfast before starting an early lunch.

Ed Strisar, keeping with his usual efficiency had a list of those planning to attend and enough space to list the choice of either a salad or desert. A desert please. No dessert sand! If you failed to add your name to Ed's list, please give him a call or E-mail as listed in our SVD directory.

You'll also note that the 10th of December is the second Saturday of the month. Do not arrive a week early! Again, we're requested to fulfill our annual Christmas donations of food and toys. The food is to be in pre-served packaging and the toys unwrapped. Last year we did great so let's go shopping and top all previous totals!

Because of new rulings issued by the California State Railroad Museum concerning their annual Thanksgiving Small Train Show, neither our Division nor individual members will participate in that event. The chief complaint is CSRM's decision to not provide for free parking.

Our Tom Gibson Fall Train Show held at the Scottish Rite Center was a huge success. And speaking of cherished names and honors; **Chuck Brasher** and **Clyde East-erly** have been honored to receive Life Membership status in our Division. Kudos and congrats to them!

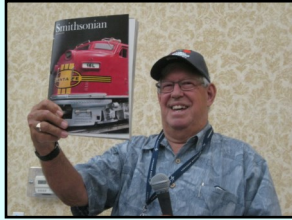
Big doings on the agenda for this month are our scheduled election and installation of the new/returning Board of Directors members. The results and those placed on the President: **Curt Darling** V-P: **Ed Strisar** (incumbent) Treasurer: **Dean Busick** (incumbent) Secretary: **Jack Ahearn** (incumbent).

John DeHaan will be taking the Member-at-Large spot on the board as immediate past-president. Layout Chair **Jack Dieres** has resigned from that position (work conflicts) and **Tim Taormina** will retire as Membership Secretary effective January 1, 2017, so we need volunteers for each of these critical positions.

The meeting slowed to a halt after a solo Show and Tell presentation by **John DeHaan** and the awarding of the ten spot drawing to ticket # 765651 AKA **Steve Hamer**. There'll be no Show and Tell at our December meet due to meal timing and tables needed for food service. Meeting adjourned at 10:15, respectfully submitted, Jack Ahearn, Secretary.

September 3rd Show and Tell

Photos and text by Jack Ahearn

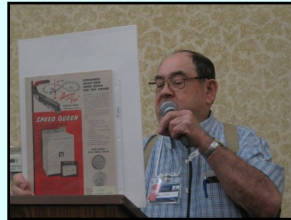
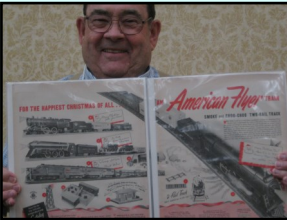


Mike De La Pena holds up a December 1988 issue of Smithsonian Magazine which featured a story about the Lionel recovery during the Richard Kughn leadership era.



Ric Wilson's neatly framed advertisement features the California Zephyr and its luxurious lounge car. To the right is a postal card illustrating an American Flyer flat car carrying very, very large potatoes.

Don Rosa (below) showed us an early post-war American Flyer center fold advertisement and several other ads with toy train tie-ins:



November 5th Show and Tell

Photos by Jack Ahearn and John DeHaan, text by Jack Ahearn

For the "Presidents and Patriots" theme, John DeHaan brought his American Flyer Wide Gauge "President's Special" passenger set. This top-of-the-line set from the 1930s featured a brass eagle positioned on the front platform. John also brought a Hornby rotary snow plow and two Hornby steam passenger sets to admire.. The 3-rail O-gauge (20v) model was made 1935-38. The rotary plow is belt-driven from the axle, so it can work on electric or clockwork tracks. John also brought in two Hornby passenger sets from 1935-36, one modeled on the LMS (London-Midland-Scotland) and the other on LNER (London-Northeast Railway) prototypes.



October 1st Tom Gibson Memorial Toy Train Show

Photos and text by Jack Ahearn



(left) SVD President **John DeHaan** presents the Lionel train set prize to the winner “**Shaun**” who holds it tight as he walks off. (right) Is that a membership application in his pocket?



Carl Curtis (left) was among many members who set up and operated the SVD layout in its usual spot. The layout is a great tool for introducing the public to the toy train hobby and its significance. Shown in operation: an MTH standard gauge #384 red Christmas engine pulling Lionel’s #219 cattle car and #237 caboose, and a modified Atlas Plymouth engine fitted with a Lionel Phantom motor.



Dave Thomsen’s 4 x 6 ft. American Flyer layout featured the usual number of visual delights, including some cleverly modified Plasticville buildings.



Franklin D. Roosevelt was in the White House when Boxcar Jack first started running trains around the Christmas tree, and he hasn't missed one since

Christmas is in the Air!

by Boxcar Jack Ahearn

The Christmas season means many things to many people. However, to a kid in heart, like all of us reading this, it means just one thing: Toy Trains!

I know a lot of us have had our childhood fantasies come true: up all year 'round layouts! The empires of your young dreams have come to life. Great!

Alternatively, there are those who, for a box car load of reasons, never quite get around to building a layout, small or otherwise; neither a Christmas two-weeker nor an all-year-'rounder.

Now's the time for all good kid-at-heart, adult sized girls and boys, to consider that Christmas is only a few weeks away. That's plenty of time to round up a small plywood board, some track of your choice and those locos and cars that you just couldn't resist at that long ago train show.

Uh, how long ago was that? Oh, if you don't wanna mess with a train board, the floor works just fine!

You can do it! Even if it's just a too-few tracks running around the tree. Trust me - from a guy who over the years has built a lot of small layouts - you can find the room for a Christmas Village that will turn out better than you ever expected. Better for several reasons. It's yours! Your imagination, your personal touch and bestest of all, you'll hear a toy train whistle wailing with real puffing smoke adding to the yuletide sounds and aroma in your holiday home.



A kid of any age doesn't need a lot of space for this Christmas tree layout. Using 0-27 track takes up only 4x5 feet of floor space. Incidentally, I've been watching these Lionel litho cars highball around the rails since Christmas 1942!

The Nethercutt Collection: A Wondrous Surprise

By John DeHaan

*SVD President **John DeHaan**, a respected auto collector and restorer in his own right, shares his experiences during one of the tours at the 2016 TTOS National convention in Long Beach*

For any vintage car collector or enthusiast, the name Jack Nethercutt is forever linked with spectacular cars from the 20's and 30's, beautifully restored, riding off the fields of major concours across the US with



“Best-in-Show” trophies everywhere. For me, the most highly anticipated tour of the TTOS National was the visit to Valhalla – The Nethercutt Collection in Sylmar. I was thrilled to see rows of exquisite and rare cars of many makes and countries, all displayed with élan and care, on two floors of the first hall. The displays were surrounded by floor-to-ceiling glass cases of motoring memorabilia and toys. Little did I know that the REAL treasures were across the street in a huge building custom-built to display the best of the cars in a marble-and-gilt palace designed to replicate the fanciest showrooms of the 1920's. (See photo) Our guide then informed us that all of the restorations are done on site, after meticulous research on all the features, fabrics, and paint colors original to each car. Even better, we learned that all

of the cars are maintained in running condition and are driven to shows and even regularly exercised on the streets of the San Fernando Valley. The balcony above contained an incredible display of motoring mascots. These are not just radiator caps, they are works of art in brass, pewter, and even silver and Lalique crystal. (see photo)

The real treasures of the collection, however, are maintained in darkened and carpeted rooms beyond. One could call them music boxes but they range from silver & gold table top creations from the 18th century to closet-sized nickelodeons to room-sized European orchestrions. The latter were wonders of invention that could play, not just the pipes of an organ, but dozens of other instruments, including violins, horns and drums. These were all driven by compressed air (no electrical relays or motors). They are



“programmed” by cylinders or discs with holes or pins, or “punch cards” like giant IBM cards either laced together or on continuous rolls of heavy paper. Our guide was the curator and restorer of these wonders, and a concert-grade organist. For a finale he played the immense Mighty Wurlitzer from a 1900's movie theater in Colorado. The giant console occupies the center of the display room but the pipes fill three huge rooms along one entire side. The pipes range in size from drinking straws (for high notes) to 15” square tubes of wood two stories tall. The vanes at the front of each room open and close to control the volume of sound admitted to the theater. There are over 5000 pipes and the Wurlitzer can produce any sound needed to accompany silent films, including railroad engines, steam chuff, and whistles. We were treated to a wonderful display of mechanical and musical art, far beyond the incredible display of cars.

Down the track

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

December 10th: SVD Holiday Meet – Holiday Inn Express, Elk Grove***

January 7-8, 2017: Great Train Show, Cal Expo Sacramento**

January 14th: SVD Meet - Holiday Inn Express, Elk Grove*

February 4th: SVD Meet - Holiday Inn Express, Elk Grove*

March 4th: SVD Meet - Holiday Inn Express, Elk Grove*

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

*****The December meeting begins at 10:00 AM**

BRING YOUR SVD and TTOS NATIONAL MEMBERSHIP CARDS

**** SVD club layout will be in operation**

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.