

THE SIDE TRACK

NEWS

from the Toy Train Operating Society
Sacramento Valley Division

Summer

2019

Definition of a "gentleman" - someone who knows how to play the bagpipes but doesn't. - Ronnie Corbett

Jerry Azzaro, editor

President's Message

by Mike Schafer, SVD President



On Sunday, May 19th nine of our members visited the Niles Canyon Railway. The tour included a train ride that left Sunol at 12:30 and traveled to Niles. After a 15 minute wait the train traveled back to Sunol where we met the President of the Niles Canyon Railway.

We followed him to the Railway Yard and Shops. The German Krauss MK 4400 was in the shop with a fresh paint job and was covered in plastic to keep it clean until its Fourth of July unveiling. However, one of the motors has been removed ready for a \$30,000 overhaul. Parts are on hand and work on the motor will begin shortly. When reinstalled it will be ready to pull passenger cars during the rest of the season. It's the only engine of its kind in the world.

The Skookum 2-4-4-2 steam engine is also in the shop as troubleshooting is in progress for a performance problem. It should also be ready for the NCRR June Steam Fest and will be at Niles for another nine months.

The yard tour included some very interesting information on all the rolling stock and engines that are in the yard inventory now. There are some very rare and interesting pieces of rolling stock in the shop and yard.

On May 25th the TTOS SVD Layout was operated at the Scottish Rite Center during the TCA train swap meet. Setup for the layout started at 7AM and trains were running before 9AM, in time for the 10AM opening of the Center. More members then operated trains during the show than have done so

since in recent memory. Everyone who wanted to operate got a chance. The tear down was completed in less than one hour as we had nine people helping. That help by so many is really appreciated.

The next layout setup is September 28, 2019, for the annual TTOS SVD Train swap meet. If you haven't run your trains recently please take advantage of the all-members opportunity to run your trains.

We've been notified that the California State Railroad Museum will include our layout setup on November 15-16-17. More details are forthcoming.

If you haven't signed up for the Portola tour on June 22, please do so for our June 1st meeting. We had quite a few inquiries during the May 25 train swap meet. It looks like at least 20 members will be going to Portola.

Please keep us updated on any e-mail address or phone number changes. That's the only way you'll get the club newsletter and Side Track. Every once in a while we'll have a last minute announcement or change that you need to know about before coming to the meeting.

Thanks for being a member of our Club.

Mike Schafer
President TTOS SVD

Membership News

by Barbara Rohrs,
SVD Membership Chair

We welcome new member **Ken Hall** of Granite Bay with family member **Mary Grimwood**. Ken's interest is Lionel O Gauge. He was sponsored by **Phil Fravesi**.

SVD Layout at TCA Scottish Rite Meet May 25, 2019

Layout Photos by Barbara Rohrs, plus one photo in the hall from Rick Kotowski



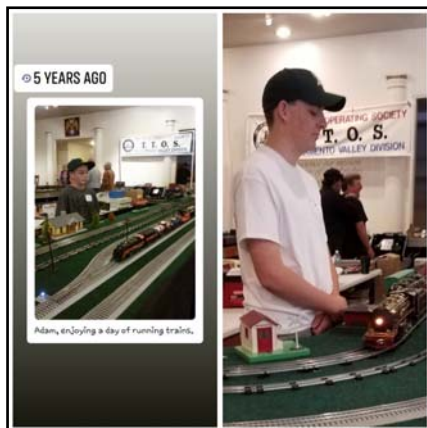
Mom and son visit Ed Strisar's layout.



Younger members help the old-timers with the layout tear-down.



Kids love to push buttons.



Adam, then and now.



Kids duck down for a ground-level view as Don Gueffroy's big GS-4 rolls by with a string of SP Over-night boxcars.



Rich Kotowski's lens captures some trading hall action.

A Scenic-Friendly Safety Fence

Jack adds a fence to Layout #1,001

by Boxcar Jack Ahearn

As several fellow members are aware, I've started to build another layout. I haven't counted since I built my first railroad empire in the late 1940's but I'd estimate this is about my one-thousandth (Approx). My



Jack's tree-lined lane and tourist shops



I'm sure many readers would mention many types of model fences they've seen on various layouts. For those, my challenge is; show me another fence created like the one pictured here!



present goal is to have a layout like no other and that includes the just mentioned multi-numerous 1K. I didn't realize at the start of this project the amount of discipline such a project would demand. How or where does one find layout accessories that are either unique or, just a tad bit lesser?

Consider installing a simple safety barrier so folks strolling along a narrow brick lane of colorful tourist shops would not also stroll into an on-coming trolley car. (Trolley n: archaic: Light Rail car.) There are dozens of commercial fences or walls available that I could have acquired, however, rules are rules and accordingly; my fencing would have to be, at a minimum, not quite unique.

My reason for the double cable guard railing in a word is "Visibility". If a solid fence or a low stone wall was placed alongside the track, either one would have blocked the visual attractiveness of the scene. The relaxed look of the tree lined brick lane and the uniqueness of the accompanying colorful shops would not appear as pleasant.



Once the above considerations were considered, I tried a few ideas without much success. The problem I had with drilling holes through wood or metal post materials was alignment. Holes had to be perfectly spaced, vertically and horizontally, for which my hands and eyes are not well adept at. *Voilà*, within the next hour a likely solution for see thru fencing stared me in the eye!



The big breakthrough in meeting the accuracy requirement came when I remembered a left over length of aluminum cable which came from Home Depot for another project. Cable, wow, a couple of lengths anchored to posts would allow full view of the scene they protected. A second big break came while plowing thru my laundry/shop shed. I saw a long ago purchased section of 'O' gauge flexible wood tie track. I looked at the milled notches that secured each of the three rails and wondered and hoped that the cable would fit into the slits. Valhalla, they did! The triangulated notches



anchored the 1/16" cable perfectly. The cable could slide thru, but not out, of the ties. All that and with perfect alignment!

At this time, I've got a safe and viewer-friendly fence! Does anyone else?

Photos taken by Mike Schafer during SVD visit to Niles Canyon Railway and Repair Shop Yard facility on May 19th.



March Show and Tell

Photos and narrative by John DeHaan

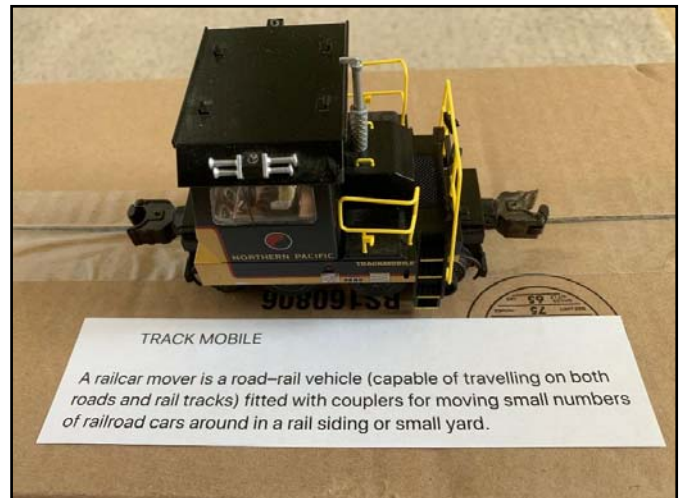
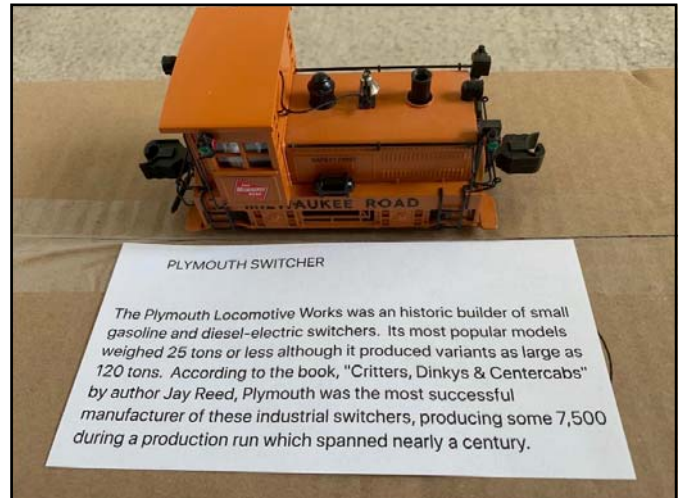
Here are the photos from the March show & tell "Dinner in the Diner". **Rick Kotowski** with his Plasticville Diners, **Lisa Stanton** with a Lionel diner and one of her great recipe and table layout books, **Joaquin Murphy** with a scale-size SP diner, a 1975 TCA Sac-Sierra meet car, and a couple of shots of CTTOM's new Lionel dealer display layout (ca. 1970??) (**Ed Guldner** seated and another man who recently joined CTTOM.)



April Show and Tell

"I'm a Little Loco"

Mike Schafer's items and photos speak for themselves



— CHASING THE BIG BOY —

HUNTING FOR BIG GAME IN WYOMING By SVD President Mike Schafer

After a month of planning and using Google satellite images of the route of the Big Boy, I had narrowed the best locations in Wyoming down to Rawlins, Wyoming.

My chase would involve a 2,000 mile round trip to capture pictures and videos of the trip in celebration of the 150th anniversary of the driving the Golden Spike at Promontory, Utah on May 10, 1869. The end destination for the celebration would be Ogden, Utah.

I left Mokelumne Hill, CA at 3:30AM on May 2nd and 12 hours later arrived at Evanston, which is only 5 miles east of the Utah-Wyoming border on I-80. The Big Boy 2014, was in a lash up with the UP 4-8-4 #844, an SD70ACE that provided dynamic braking and eight passenger cars. Quite a sight that no one was prepared for that also had an auxiliary tender behind each steam engine for providing water between major stops.

The train left Cheyenne at a little after 10AM, May 4, 2019. The major stops before its scheduled arrival in Rawlins at 4:30PM, included Laramie and Medicine Bow. Those two stops were either over crowded for photos or too remote from I-80 to allow a chase to beat it to Rawlins.

I stayed in Evanston for two nights after checking the Evanston yard for photo opportunities. Very remote yard behind lots of buildings surprised me even after using satellite images. I left Evanston at 5:30AM on May 4th with stops at Green River, which is a major UP yard, and Rock Springs which was going to be an overnight stop for the Big Boy on May 5.

Rock Springs is an original UP town with Main Street facing the 3 main tracks that split the town in half joined by an overpass going over the tracks. To protect visitors from the trains there's an iron six foot fence that allows viewing but prohibits really good photos or videos. Better photos would be possible at some of the streets crossing the tracks before town.

I arrived at Rawlins about 10M, which is normally a three hour trip east of Evanston using I-80. Thousands of trucks use I-80 everyday outnumbering cars by about a 10 to 1 ratio. There are truck stops and truck parking locations everywhere as they try to minimize the drowsy driver problem associated with long haul truck drivers.



After exploring Rawlins I found the beautiful 1909 UP Station and an unbelievable gorgeous hotel a block from the depot. The station was a block long and across the street was a railroad park complete with a UP caboose donated to the park. The station was about eight miles east of Rawlins. The town of Rawlins has all the store fronts associated with early 1900's architecture that now has about 8,500 people and an elevation of 6,500 feet. The Rawlins Yard was nearly im-

possible to rail-fan because of the way it was situated between the narrow hillsides on both sides and no road on one side.

The yard was substantial and on the south side there was a siding that would be home for the Big Boy for the evening of the first day of the trip west. The crowd would be huge there but still had good sight lines for photos and videos. After exploring Rawlins and finding the Walmart, Mc Donald's and a grocery store I was ready to find the best possible photo location. I knew just about where I had to be from the earlier satellite research.

The Big Boy was completely rebuilt with so many new parts that the trip would be made at speeds below 45 mph to allow proper break-in of the new parts. That made the Big Boy late at all stops and made the arrival time in Rawlins difficult to predict. The 4:30PM scheduled time way off. That was significant as it made guessing the sun angles a challenge for the best location to get photos as it approached Rawlins.

I found an overpass over the two track main line east of town. On the east side of the over pass I found a dirt road access that allowed the best possible sight line for the Big Boy approach photos. I've found that photos of a significant event are better than videos. Photos can be edited within the I Phone 10 Max. It also has two lenses to provide nearly perfect depth of field results. A video is very difficult to edit. If the train doesn't present a perfect location with the sun behind me the images may come out too dark especially with all black steam engines.

I finally got set up around 2PM. Apparently my location was the right place as I was shortly surrounded by about 100 other photographers looking for the best shots. Union Pacific provided a web site that allowed tracking the Big Boy across Wyoming in real time. Finally around 6:30PM, two hours late, the Big Boy's smoke came into sight followed by its bright headlight. The sun angle had changed so it

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was almost directly overhead which made using photos truly the best choice. As the train approached and the first good photo possibility was in the view finder and I started taking photos about every two seconds

until I just held the photo button down to take an image as fast as the shutter could move. You never know when you get the best photo until you look at every image.

I didn't have time to check as I had to get on I-80 and get to the Rawlins location that the Big Boy would use for its overnight stop. My reconnoitering allowed me to use the right exit and get to my spot without losing any time. As I got off the freeway I could see cars and hundreds of people where I needed to be. I quickly parked and walked to Big Boy's assigned siding. Just as I got into position the Big Boy started to come into sight. I used video for this location as the angle of the sun had changed in my favor at this new location. Lots of luck involved in chasing trains for photos.

After watching the Big Boy Train roll into Rawlins I could see several hundred fans move towards the engines. A sea of heads is what a lot of fans photographed.

It was very windy but no one seemed to notice as some people had been waiting all day to see this once in a lifetime visual experience. Seeing a double



headed steam set of engines wasn't the original plan as the 844 was supposed to leave a week earlier but the Big Boy needed more help getting ready so the 844 crew was held back.

What luck for all the fans.

After about 15 minutes the Union Pacific crew asked everyone to step back from the tracks as the train needed to move another 500' forward for a better spot.

So everyone got a second chance to see all the steam and hissing with whistles as the engines came to life to travel another 500'. Another lucky break for all the people taking videos. Most were using smart phones but there were a half dozen using a tripod. After the train movement was completed I hung around taking photos and videos from every position I could find without people in front of me. Many fans were really conscious of not walking in front of a photographer.

About 8PM the light started to fade so I went to a truck stop on the other side of the freeway from the Rawlins Big Boy stop. I was starved and tired from such a long day and all the walking. I grabbed a hot

polish sausage and a package of cookies and sat down a rested awhile. Finally about 9:30 I headed back to the car and moved it away from the building service center so I could get my two wool blankets, sleeping bag and pillow out of the trunk. It was going to get down to about 36 degrees overnight.

After folding the driver's seat to an almost horizontal position and putting a small pillow under my back, I spread the blankets around me and with my pillow under my head I got comfortable for the night. There were no hotel rooms left in the entire town. It didn't take long to go to sleep but after about two hours I woke up a little cold. I started the engine and cracked a window open about a half inch and turned the heater on to about 74 and quickly went back to sleep. When I woke up about an hour later and turned the engine off and went back to sleep. I repeated this procedure, on and off, until about 4AM.

I couldn't sleep any longer so I moved my car back to the side of the truck stop service center and restaurant and went in got some breakfast. About 5:30



I went back to the steam engines and about 6:15, there was enough daylight to take photos. It was a Sunday morning and most normal people we're probably going to go to church. But others were coming back to the spectacle of the Big Boy leaving at 8. I was very early and there were only the Union Pacific crews walking around getting things ready. There was a big fuel tanker truck refueling the Big Boy with diesel fuel. That took over two hours as it needed several thousand gallons.

Taking advantage of the deserted site and the sunrise I was able to get some fantastic pictures of the train set being lit up by the dawn sunshine. It made the black engines look shiny as the light illuminated their tops and sides. Taking train photos involves a lot of luck. So far I was getting every chance possible to get great photos and videos.

Around 7:15, the site started to come alive with fans along with their phones and cameras to capture the departure event. It was cold and windy as the wind seems to never stop as it blows across Wyoming. 8AM was the scheduled departure time but so far the departure times had never been met. So we waited. After about five minutes we could see the engineer crawl up in to Big Boy 5014. After several steam tests and cylinder blow outs things seem to be getting close to a departure. They blow steam out of the cylinders to purge water that's settled in the bottom of the each cylinder.

Finally, we heard the train sound the massive whistle

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three times with the 844 repeating the whistles to confirm the three blasts. It was about time as it was now about 8:15. About five minutes later and they repeated the three blasts of the whistles. I looked

around and told everyone that three blasts normally means a signal to back up. There were now over one hundred people with their cars in the parking lot, with license plates from just about every state in the country plus Canada, ready to capture this massive steam train get under way as it departed Rawlins. Then finally it started to move. However, the entire train was traveling backwards! You could almost hear hundreds of people let out a sigh of frustration as the train was backing out of the siding to get back on the main to start its continued journey west to Rock Springs, Evanston and onto Ogden. There's always luck in chasing trains and this was not another good luck event. Everyone reluctantly started towards their cars to find another location to take photos or go back home.

Many of the fans had chased the Big Boy from Cheyenne and Laramie and now they were headed back to wherever their home was. Pennsylvania, Florida, Virginia, British Columbia Washington, Texas, etc. However, I along with at least 40 others were going to continue to chase the show west.

The next scheduled stop was Wamsutter, Wyoming. That's about 40 miles further west. But there were at least two locations before that where there was a state highway overpass over the tracks that would give excellent opportunities for more photos of the train headed west on the two track main below. So a convoy headed out of Rawlins to grab the next spot.

As I got to the overpass there were at least 40 cars on each side of the overpass parked off the shoulder in the grass. Everything was still wet so the cars didn't present a fire problem with their catalytic converters. No one was on the overpass, but instead many had walked down to a wire fence ready to get their photos. Lots of tripods here. One fellow from England had two 35 mm cameras hanging from his neck with their massive lenses. We all waited in the cold morning wind. We all marveled at the nearby I-80 freeway choked with trucks almost absent of any cars. As we monitored the Union Pacific web site with live locations of the Big Boy we could see all were about 20 miles away.

Just then with blue and red lights flashing two Wyoming State Patrol cars descended upon our 50 some cars and crowd stopping on each side of the overpass. They were professional but abrupt as they ordered everyone

to move their cars because we were on the highway "right of way". They pointed to wire fences about 30' on each side of the highway. They announced those fences were the border of the right a way. Those fences were really the highway's easement that marked the states property that enabled unencumbered future highway widening or grade changes. But no one wanted to go to jail arguing with an enforcement officer. So we all moved our cars. Some found another parking location that involved about a 10 minute walk back to the overpass. I chose to go in to Wamsutter. Chasing trains for photos involves luck.

I moved onto Wamsutter and there was a crowd of about 100 when I got there. Most were locals that lived nearby as this was just going to be a 15 minute stop. It was fairly easy to get a position for a video and photos as the Big Boy arrived.



As the train arrived it slowed and sounded it whistle several times to warn people to stay clear of the tracks. Once the entire train stopped the Big Boy sounded one long whistle and then the 844 did the same to announce all stop. It didn't take long for the Big Boy to become almost invisible behind the crowd. You could still see the upper part of the engine but the drivers, rods and leading and trailing wheels were impossible to see any longer.

I stayed until the whole show departed Wamsutter and then headed for I-80, about 10 minutes away at about 10AM. After reaching I-80, I turned westbound for my 950 mile trip back to Mokolumne Hill, getting home at midnight. Eighty mph most of the way - except Donner Pass - really melted the miles away at one mile every 45 seconds. A 2,000 mile round trip to witness the steam event of my lifetime. Plus the best photos I've ever taken and a couple of great videos too.



If you want to see some pretty good photos go to YouTube and just enter Big Boy May 2019. There's no shortage of images. However, trust me, the real thing can't be truly captured unless you see it in person. The Big Boy is supposed to run all summer and fall all over the UP's lines for a total of over 5,000 miles. The first trip out was a total of 1,000 miles. Perhaps we'll see it in Roseville.

Mike Schafer
President, TTOS-SVD



A Challenging Restoration

By John DeHaan, SVD Secretary

Those members who know me well know that I have assembled quite a collection of vintage cars of many types (muscle cars, sports cars, race cars, tourers) and many vintages (1923-1968) through 50 years of collecting and restoring. Most of them came home as an empty body shell and a pile of parts, requiring extensive searching, repair, restoration, and assembly. On the toy train front, I managed to focus on running equipment in good to excellent original condition (but in a wide variety of gauges, ages, and manufacturers). Over the last few years I had found a pretty complete set of Dorfan wide-gauge freight cars. Dorfan was based in New Jersey from 1924-1934 and made high quality toy trains in both O-gauge and Wide Gauge. Their highly detailed lithography and quality manufacturing were their hallmarks. They pioneered die cast locomotives that were beautifully engineered (with ball bearings on axles and engine parts). Unfortunately, the die cast material suffered from the same deterioration as we know from pre-war Flyer and Lionel pieces. This caused wheels to swell and bodies to crack and distort. Very few examples of running Dorfan locos are in existence today. After long searching, I was offered a deal on a 4-4-4 type Wide Gauge loco, which included a parts donor and a complete body whose two “halves” still fit together, with original paint and decals. There were only a few smaller parts missing. Photo 1 shows the two body casting “halves”, with the driver axles in place. Photo 2 shows the “parts engine” that upon close inspection is seen to be warped and extensively cracked, but with three 4-wheel trucks, motor parts, pick-ups, and miscellaneous wires. Photo 3 shows the underside of the “donor” loco showing the distortion so common.

When I brought my new treasure home, I realized it was in the same state as the last six of my cars! Just missing a few parts, easy to find. Weeks lat-

er, after talking to every pre-war train collector in Northern California, I found this was not a simple process. Clyde E and Chuck B. offered replacement wheels for the tracks, cast from pewter. Not suitable for extensive operation, but they would turn and look pretty nice. I finally found a vendor on eBay that offered a collection of Dorfan parts. Some of them looked like the parts I needed, so I ended up buying the lot at nearly the asking price. On arrival I discovered that nearly all of them were for O-gauge locos, unsuitable for Wide gauge. I did get one headlight and one drive gear usable on my loco, but I now hold the nation’s supply of Dorfan parts, at a steep per-part cost!

I rebuilt two of the trucks and carefully groomed the edges of the body halves to discover, that I could put them together and they would be supported by the drivers... progress. Figuring out the placement of forward/reverse and the associated wiring was a real challenge in the absence of any assembly guide for Wide Gauge Dorfan locos. I then turned to **George Caravas**, a professional train mechanic (George was a primary at the Tin Plate Junction in Oakland). George was able to fabricate a missing intermediate drive gear, but upon attempting to assemble the field coil and armature into their designated positions in the die cast loco halves, discovered a fatal flaw – there was sufficient distortion in the castings that the armature would no longer clear the open coil. Even with George’s great skill, as fragile as the castings were, there was no way to machine clearances or realign the pieces. So, I now have to pose a very nice-looking, but inoperable, shelf queen next to my beautiful freight cars. Overcoming my disappointment, I have renewed my quest. If you come across anyone who has a Dorfan wide-gauge loco for sale (that is or can be made to be operable), let me know!

John DeHaan



Photo #1 - two body halves



Photo #2 - the parts engine



Photo #3 - the usual warpage

Down the track

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

June 1: SVD meeting at Holiday Inn Express, Elk Grove*

July: No SVD meeting

July 30 - August 3: TTOS National Convention - Wichita KS

August 3 :SVD meeting at Holiday Inn Express, Elk Grove*

September 7: SVD meeting at Holiday Inn Express, Elk Grove*

September 28: SVD River City meet, Scottish Rite Center

October 5: SVD meeting at Holiday Inn Express, Elk Grove*

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

BRING YOUR SVD and TTOS NATIONAL MEMBERSHIP CARDS

Contact us:

Club business: Mike Schafer, president - (253) 219-9402 lineswest@hotmail.com

Membership questions: Barbara Rohrs - (916) 730-1415 tjbr@hotmail.com

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.