



THE SIDE TRACK

NEWS

from the Toy Train Operating Society
Sacramento Valley Division

Fall

2019

Luck is what happens when preparation meets opportunity - Seneca the Younger

Jerry Azzaro, editor

President's Message

by Mike Schafer, SVD President



A Significant Event

On Sunday, August 18th, five club members met in El Dorado Hills at Mike De La Pena's home to assemble the Club Layout in his driveway to troubleshoot and repair all the electrical problems with the layout accessory plug-in ports. This had never been done before but with Galt, Scottish Rite, the CSRM and the Cal Expo events approaching it was time to tackle the problems.

Everyone was there at 8AM to help unload the trailer. **Mike De La Pena, Tom Alger, Bob Orsich, Seth Parry** and **Mike Schafer** were there with their individual skills to fix everything. It took almost two hours to assemble the layout as four new sections never used before had to be integrated into the normal layout size used at Scottish Rite. Mike De La Pena and Bob Orsich worked on the S gauge portions that had missing sections on the new tables using a Dremel cutter to cut new pieces as needed. The standard gauge sections were also pieced in. Mike Schafer and Seth Parry started the electrical testing and found the accessories power ZW transformer had a broken stud on the ground post that caused an intermittent on and off power problem to the accessory port under the layout. Mike Schafer installed a replacement ZW that he'd brought to the repair location. Once stable power was achieved Seth was under the table with a volt meter checking all the inoperative ports under the layout. Most problems were fixed replacing the Scotch Tight suitcase connectors with butt joint connectors. That process took over four hours to repair all defective connectors as it took a while to find

a common cause. There were a couple of hot wires connected to ground also and a missing ground in another location. All ports are operational now. Spare plugs and receptacles are on hand if any problems require new port plugs. Since Galt is a slower paced operational situation, repairs can be performed on bad accessories that are found at Galt as the trains continue to run. As long as the accessories were never subject to an extreme over voltage situation most accessories should be operational now. Also accessory IR devices should be ready to control the crossing gates. In addition two engines using TMCC or DCS were operated successfully around the entire layout.

By 4:30, the layout was ready to be disassembled and loaded in the trailer, however; this would be the first time the four new sections would be in the trailer too. Previously the four new sections were stored separately from the trailer and had to be put in a pickup truck to move them. After putting in the new sections at the front of the four carts that carry the traditional portions of the layout, several measurements were taken to see if everything would fit. After a couple of false starts, a working arrangement of carts and new tables was accomplished. By 6:30 everyone was ready to call it a very successful day. For some it would be a 16 hour day before they were back home.

A special thank you to **Beverly De La Pena** for providing a nice a la carte lunch. Salads, meat, cheeses, fruit and other snacks along with bottled water were welcome as the day got hotter and all were ready for a lunch break.

A job well done for all with a can do attitude.

Mike Schafer
President, TTOS Sacramento Valley Division.

SVD Visit to Western Pacific Railroad Museum at Portola CA - June 22, 2019

Photos by Mike Schafer



Lots of interesting information on the snow blower. Still in serviceable condition.



This was a Milwaukee Road 40' ribbed car that was sent to the Western Pacific after a Western Pacific Car was destroyed in a Milwaukee Road train accident. The Western Pacific put a nine foot door on the car and it became a Hotpoint appliance car. One of a kind. Very hard to model as models only have 8' and 10' doors.



A rare Western Pacific 50' appliance box car with reinforced outside bracing.

**Portola visit
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More Portola photos and a summary by John DeHaan



Mike aboard the SD40XX, coming through the corridor amidships.



It was so long you couldn't capture it in a single photo.



Seth and Jenn inspecting the giant snow blower (sometimes loaned out to UP for big storms).



Joaquin and I inspected the snow plow

Portola has an amazing collection of engines and cars, many for lines other than WP. We had a great guided tour hosted by one of the senior volunteers. That was really valuable because few of the rolling stock are labeled. Some of our gang rode in the excursion cars around their one-mile loop. For \$250 or so, you can get to drive one of the big diesels around the loop for an hour.

SVD Visit to Niles Canyon Railway at Sunol CA - July 20, 2019

Photos by Mike Schafer



Inaugural run of German-built Krauss-Maffei Southern Pacific 9010. Only one left in existence after more than a decade of rebuilding.



Before and after photos of the 9010.

Rear view of the SP 9010.



A report from the TTOS Convention in Wichita, July 29 thru August 3

Phil Fravesi, TTOS National Secretary

The convention was held at the recently renovated Drury Hotel in Wichita co-hosted by the Sooner Division and the Wichita Toy Train Club. The accommodations could not have been better and the organization was excellent. There was a tour of the Eisenhower library and a steam train ride in Abilene. Day two took us to Hutchinson and the Cosmosphere space museum that specialized in the space race between the US and Russia and a trip down 650 feet to the Stratataca salt mine. There was a 16" gauge train from a city park installed in the mine for rides. The engine was converted to electric for mine operation. Day three we toured the Great Plains Transportation Museum and strolled the grounds of an arboretum. Friday night, I toured the Wichita Toy Train Club. They have a large permanent building with no less than six layouts and a kids play area. The photos highlight some of the convention activities. The trading hall was full and there seemed to be plenty of buyers roaming the isles. There was a live auction after the banquet, guess who the high bidder was on the banner.

Thursday evening, August 1, I attended the National Board meeting. Among the topics discussed was the future to TTOS. I can tell you that currently TTOS National is in good shape. We have cash in the bank and have NO outstanding bills. Our dues are the main source of income and currently, they are staying ahead of expenses. President J Keeley and Treasurer Randy Giroux **emphasized** the need for members to pay their dues when they receive their notice as it is expensive to send out second and third notices. Also, **we need to add new members** to stay ahead of our expenses. It was noted that National covers meet insurance for Divisions. Currently, National spends about \$10,000-15,000 annually to cover these insurance needs and is paid out of your dues money. Why was this discussed? The Treasurer has a fiduciary responsibility to oversee the funds and keep the organization informed as to our financial viability. We are doing OK now but we must not continue to loose members. This was also discussed at the General Membership meeting along with officer nominations for elections this year.

Phil's photos - next page





ATSF 3768



"Built for speed"
(the loco, not Phil)



Phil with his Live Auction prize



Wichita Toy Train Club



Emma in the salt mine



16" gauge 650 feet down



Abilene & Smoky Valley RR



Blow down (former ATSF 3415)

LET'S OPEN THE BOX!

By Jack Ahearn

Our own Boxcar Jack cobbles together a working Sky Tram for his 1940s era layout.



I'm currently working on my umpteenth layout since 1948. As I've shared with a few members, this is going to be different sort of layout - both scenic- and accessories-wise. Indeed, so different that my first thought was to refer to it as "Everything that Nobody Else Has!" However, "Words do have meaning". In this case, that phrase meant; I either had to find all the rolling stock, accessories and buildings that A, no one else had or B, no one else wanted! Sigh.

To my surprise, as I progressed with that search, I started to find items that actually met those criteria. Show after show, on or beneath table after table, I found items that bordered on being unique! Were any one-of-a-kind? After twenty years at the Railroad Museum, I learned there's really no such thing as an "only one". Somewhere, someone has at a minimum, the other one. The one exception I'd vouch for is the only surviving "Cab Forward" of the scrap pile. If there is another, it would be noticed.

A major project was to find a suitable building to install the power and pulley mechanisms for a cable car which would transport folks to a mountaintop castle. That building would conceal a Marx unwired locomotive motor with drive wheels and a MTH cam motor to power a drive wheel adapted to serve as a main pulley. A few Erector set parts were used to form a tower for other pulleys which would guide two cable systems. One overhead cable to support and the other to transport the cable car up or down its six-foot mountain journey.

After several futile searches for a hollow building which had to measure 8" L, 5" W,

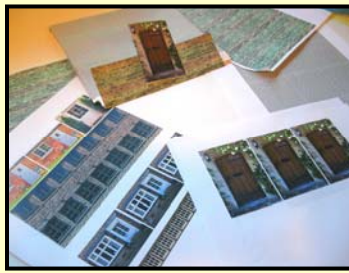
and 10" H. I soon realized - there ain't no such. I would have to revert back to the scratch building talents of my long ago scale modeling days. Alas, in that interim quarter century, my eyes and fingers didn't cotton very well to the task. But, I did choose to meet the challenge. Relentless onward!

First thing I remembered was to start with a tape measure which was the last chore I accomplished quickly. After scrounging around, fate was kind; I found an old small appliance box I no longer had a need for. A little custom trimming and the box fitted over the power mechanisms perfectly. I was on my way! It took a bit of imagineering before I finally adapted the motor drive and pulleys to act in harmonious unison. The pulleys, overhead support and reversible wire drive cables all worked in unison. They performed like an airborne ballet! The only thing that ceased functioning properly during the perplexing process was my patience and unguarded language.

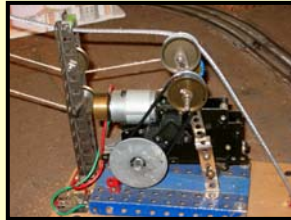
As the building took shape, I had to create its communal role for being and make it more than just a ride up a mountain to see a castle. I decided to use its neighboring models of historic British village curio shops and restaurants to feature it as a cultural attraction. Aha! I'd transform the castle into a Shakespearean sort of theatre with a lighter touch of English Plays. Hence, a forgotten box became the attractive ticket offices and operations base of the "Theatre Under the Stars". The accompanying photos tell the story as well as I could write it.

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This is the box that becomes the base of operations for the Theatre Under the Stars. Its transformation begins with exterior materials selected from the computer.



The hardware mechanism is formed and the fine tuning begins. Erector set parts were used for the tower structure. Erector's wide rimmed wheel, with a washer positioned on its outer side, served as a pulley. . The Marx loco's drive wheel was filed down so the rim was flat and the drive rod screw nib flattened. That was to accommodate the large washer which was soldered to the rim which forms the main drive pulley. Note the blue tape used to add a rough surface to the pulleys groove. After continued slippage, 1/16" stranded wire cable was substituted and it resolved the problem. The larger cable seen is the main cable that guides the suspended tram. It is taut and strongly anchored at both ends of its six foot length. The tram nearing the mountain top shows the salvaged Quaker Oats box which houses a similar pulley tower as used below.



When all the mechanical concerns were resolved and the tram ran perfectly, the old discarded box started its face lift. I had one rule about this and the next step of landscaping. That was, and it pertains to my entire layout: Keep it Toy! Because of my prior scale modeling style of realism, I still find it difficult not to weather and otherwise bring buildings and scenes to life by aging them. For example, I found it difficult to use a plain green paper sheet for the roof. I left off skylights and exhaust vents etc. Also, the building is tall enough as is. The green stair and platform was bashed from a double track walk bridge.

Within the accompanying photo-story, I've credited the smooth operation and performance of the Sky Tram to its innovative mechanical and electrical system. I'll now direct proper credit to the person who thought up that System.

I gratefully thank **Phil Fravesi** for not only conceiving such a successful system but also for donating the time, hardware and electrical components to make it all work. Thanks again, Phil!

And, while I'm in it, I'll also extend kudos to **Jane Howard**. With her years of museum level exhibit and display experience, Jane took a handful of plastic model bridge parts and tunefully "Built a Stairway to The Stars." Thanks Jane!

Down the track

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

September 14: SVD Layout at Galt 150th Anniversary Celebration**

September 21: SVD Layout at Colfax Railroad Days**

September 28: SVD River City meet, Scottish Rite Center**

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

October 12-13: CTTOM Fall Train Show (Open House), Crockett CA

November 2: SVD meeting at Holiday Inn Express, Elk Grove*

December 7: Potluck holiday luncheon - Holiday Inn Express, Elk Grove*

December 7-8: CTTOM Holiday Train Show, Crockett CA

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

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

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.