

THE SIDE TRACK

NEWS

from the Toy Train Operating Society
Sacramento Valley Division

SPRING

2021

About the only problem with success is that it does not teach you how to deal with failure.—Tommy Lasorda

Jerry Azzaro, editor

President's Message appears on Page 2

Meet Your 2021-22 TTOS Sacramento Valley Division Officers

Photo by Lisa Stanton



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President's Message

by Carl Madsen, SVD President

Hello and greetings, fellow TTOS members. I'll start by saying thank you to everyone, both board members and the general membership. I have pushed the board hard on many issues, the layout, meeting places, adhering to TTOS rules to the letter and enforcing them.

Not as a means to punish but to establish a firm baseline on the core objectives and processes of the TTOS. going forward if you are recieved this email you are a current member in good standing. If you know someone who didn't please ask them to contact our membership liaison **Barbera Rohrs**.

The intel so far on meeting places is that the hotel is the least expensive by 50% or more ... **BUT(!)** the club cannot sustain that kind of monthly expense and have any money left in a few short years. The Scottish Rite show is still up in the air as they have stated they may be a vaccination center during our meet. We will keep members posted. I have gotten some ideas from members on a new layout design (fewer than six members) but I truly appreciate the ones I received. Looks like the best way to explain it in one sentence is a ping pong table type setup.

Bryan Stanton has graciously offered his home for the April meeting. Please bring tables and chairs

if possible and note if rain is predicted on the meeting date of it will be cancelled. **Chuck Brasher** has offered his home as well for possibly the May meet. Also a reminder, both Bryan and Chuck have many nice trains for sale. I want to ask all members to bring at least one box of "stuff" (trains preferred) to all the meets to sell.

I'm sure every one of us has something we would like to get rid of. The more members we get to participate, the more engaging the club will become and it will prosper. Please feel free to ask the club to meet at your own home no matter what you think of your collection or your home I don't know of anyone in the club that would be judgmental. And I'm sure you are all proud of your possessions. Also for anyone planning to go to York they are moving forward for October. And the So. Cal group has pushed their meet back to May or June but it will be a parking lot event, one day for only 4 hours. Anyone looking for a particular item please use the new interchange listing we are sponsoring.

That's all for now. I look forward to seeing you at our next meeting.

Again thank you and Happy Easter.

Carl Madsen

Whither Goes Our Layout?

By John DeHaan, SVD Secretary

During the open discussion about the future of our big "Club" layout at the SVD Meeting on March 6th, one member posed a most compelling question: What is the PURPOSE of the layout? Is it for members to use? Is it public relations to encourage membership? Education of public viewers? Is it for the entertainment of all attendees? That forced everyone to pause and try to answer that question. It was originally built (early 1990's?) as a portable, easy-to-assemble layout with loops of three most common gauges - O, S, and Standard, to be set up at each monthly meeting for all members to play on. Especially for those without a layout of their own, one could test new trains or repaired trains or just show off their treasures to other members. The layout boss, Norman "Big Norm" LaClaire, would bring the tables in the back of his vintage pickup truck and volunteers would pull it out and set it up.

It became our display layout at local toy train shows to promote SVD and attract new members. It included a few operating accessories and buildings for interest. About 12 years ago, the club agreed we needed a new layout and a committee was formed to inspect and test various designs. The dedicated crew eventually produced a handsome and rugged modular layout that earned praise at small

and large public train shows and special events like the Toy Train Holiday at CSRM. Over the years, it became bloated, over-sized, and overweight, making transport and set-up physically more challenging. Even veteran crew members resigned.

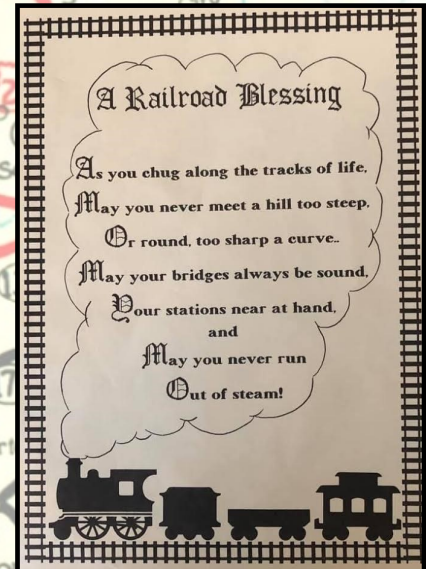
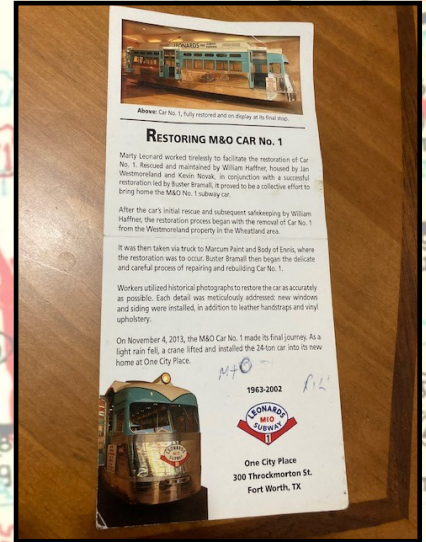
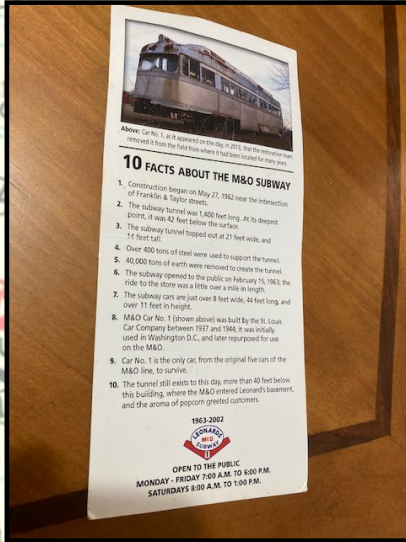
The SVD Board has decided a new approach is required and the input of ALL SVD members is needed NOW. First issue to be decided is the question in the first paragraph. What do YOU see as the purpose of the layout – including whether we NEED a layout at all? Is it to attract new people to the hobby, or to the club? Is it to entertain or educate the public about toy trains and real trains? Or offer track time for members? We are considering a number of options including dismantling all or some of the current modules to simplify transport and set-up, starting over with new, light-weight modules along the LCCA pattern with members creating their own, or bundling new 4x6 or 4x8 table-top layouts in different gauges, each with its own accessories and buildings – with the emphasis on fun. The Board will meet in early April to consider all your input (including the question in the first paragraph), So please send your ideas to **Carl Mad-sen** as soon as possible.



Member **Rich Kotowski** spent time in Texas recently, and managed to make nearly every day a “train day”. He sends these great photos.



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Jack asks the question: What's the point of owning an unbuilt kit?

Out of the Box and Down to the Yards!

By Boxcar Jack Ahearn

The year was '42, Bogart and Bergman were in Morocco, F.D.R. was in the White House and all U.S. railroads were high-balling Coast-to-Coast carrying Tanks, Canons, Jeeps, Duece & a halves and the 10-K's of G.I.'s that would fight with them! Lionel, Flyer and Marx were shut down except for war materials. However, Lionel did manage to get a couple of gems out to us kids.

Sooner or later, I knew I'd relent and go ahead and build it. Build what? That Lionel/Skyline two stall Engine Shed I wrote of in our recent Side Track. (Winter '20) For the last couple of months I chose not to build it for several reasons, I had no need or practical space for it on my layout and it looked too big. Lastly, the kit L.N. is in its original box complete with instructions and all parts. Most of all, it was one of those very few WW2 toy train offerings! Offered by Lionel, it was the forerunner of their annual Post-War Christmas "send-away-for". 25¢ plus a 3¢ stamp.

As I revealed in that story, the Scottish Rite Show vendor had two of those gems, each in almost

like-new condition, sooo I bought him out! That meant I could build one and still have one left for posterity! Alas, there went another reason for holding back construction. Now, I'll promise; **this is not a 'how I built it...tab A into slot B type story**. Rather it deals with my current home layout and two, rather daring or unusual standards, that I've set for it.



About ten years ago I enlarged my living room layout bench work (yeah, I'm single) to accommodate a foray into 1920's Lionel Standard gauge. In doing so, I granted myself an extra foot out from the wall to construct a full length mountain backdrop. While

planning it, my thoughts returned to my Scale days as I started to make a list for molding plaster, hydrocal, dry pigment colors and lots of paper towels. Fortunately, I didn't race to the hobby shop. Instead, I gave it some further thought and considered that a kid (a goat or any age human) in the nineteen twenties would never have made a mountain using 1950's and later practices! He/she would simply wrinkle up a bunch of paper bags and slap some crayon coloring on it. *Voilà!* His/her own home-made Rocky Mountains!

We've all seen the vintage picture of kids and a dog around a classic Lionel 1920's layout. In it, every Lionel accessory and top of the line train set came to life. Now, think of that picture and imagine it showing, instead of a TYPE 'A' "step-up" transformer, it had a 1948 ZW 275-watt transformer running those trains. How would you react to that sort of a pictured anachronism? I think I'd react like I was seeing a squadron of F-15's flying over the Normandy beachhead, complete with their quickly painted-on white invasion stripes!

When visiting so many other folks' layouts it occurred to me, although all are different and all have outstanding features, I was basically looking at the same items; in particular, accessories. Hey, that makes sense since we're all buying from the same catalogues, whether Lionel, Flyer or Marx!

For my latest layout, I've two innovative themes. The first and primary goal is challenging, but here it is: Separated theme exhibits on the operating layout will only contain *everything that nobody else has* or at least, aren't/ ain't been seen on any other layout.

For the rare and/or possibly unique Pieces on my layout, I've added a secondary standard. That being: The pieces featured on the layout are to be displayed with accessories

and scenery consistent within a narrow time line of those pieces.

Come to think of it; the engine shed seen here would meet both standards. A: I believe it's safe to say that a cardboard structure built and offered to kids in the early 1940's, would still be around in 2081. A mid-teen receiving that model back then would be nearing a hundred today! As for B: Vintage scenery; when's the last time you saw wooden trees like mine? Also, I had that same make metal garage on my Christmas layouts when I was six and thru to my mid-eighties!

After my first couple of years of meeting these acquisition standards, I've found and bought almost unbelievable finds and the results are truly serendipitous! Not only have I found some items to be *not around anymore* (my euphemism for unique) but others, after fifty or more years, if they still exist, are in the attic and long forgotten. Adding to that loss is another loss; that of our culture of Family hand-me-downs. [Sigh]

This is my current and what will likely be my swan song layout. At ease, it's a long, long range project! It may even take until the end of time.

Oh, I just said that. Never mind!

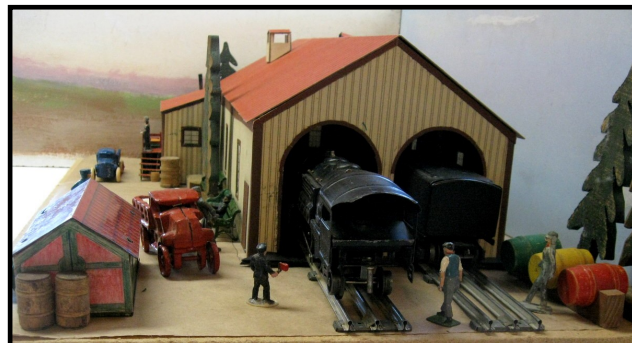
Following pages: Denizens of Jack's 1940s layout get accustomed to the new structure.



Looking at the full office side of the 2 track Engine Shed you'll see some early birds arriving for a full day's work.



Walking toward the front Shed area, you'll see where the real action is happening. A crew, after a long nights R & M work, is getting an engine out and back onto the high iron!



The loco is halfway out and waiting for the track gang to do their thing. Surely, they'll think of something. Well, this is a Short Line railroad.

Wow, that was quick. Looks like that move caught the crew off guard and now they're trying to figure out what happened and how they can make it unhappen!



Their taking a closer look and considering the old five-finger switching maneuver. Ah, that's the great thing about toy trains. Their toys!



While that cheating switch move is taking place, we'll move back to the side of the Shed and see what's happening there.



Not much going on. Looks like a couple of guys, outside the office, are on mid-morn break chatting. One of them is probably the driver of that 1930's truck.



Hmmm, several more of the crew on Break. As they say, heck of a way to run a railroad.



It wouldn't be a rail yard without some of the 'Knights' resting before maybe catching a 'side-door pullman' to Britt, Iowa for the annual National Hobo's Convention. Note: see the Side Track archive 'Hobo' issue of Fall, 2014.

Taking the Monorail to see the doctor

By Phil Fravesi

While operating my Leland Detroit monorail recently, it suddenly came to an abrupt halt. The interior lights were lit but no action. I retrieved the power unit and while handling it, something fell into my palm. Low and behold, it was a commutator segment. I immediately knew this was not going to be a home repair. This item was gifted to me by fellow member/collector **Jim Groth**. It's on the rare side and about 90 years old. For those reasons, I felt it my responsibility to see it restored to operating condition.

The Motor Doctor came to mind as I have used his services in the past to rewind armatures, replace commuta-

tors and even convert a MTH Wide gauge to a canned motor for operation at a well known museum.

I contacted Al to see if he could help with the repair and soon it was in the mail. The motor was returned with a new commutator and once installed, returned the monorail to its glory. If you have an old piece that needs serious motor repair, I

recommend contacting The Motor Doctor

at motordoc@themotordoctor.com

After all, these old toys were meant to be run.

Here's a website:

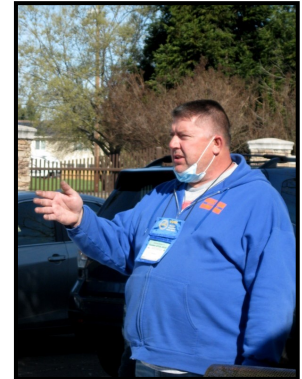
www.themotordoctor.com



March 6th meeting at Carl Madsen's home

Due to the pandemic, it was the first in-person meeting of 2021

Photos by John DeHaan and Jack Ahearn



Down the track

Due to the ongoing pandemic and changing COVID-19 restrictions there are no set dates or locations for future events. Members will be notified by Email as each event is scheduled.

Contact us:

**Club business: Carl Madsen, president - (916) 204-8217 laststoptrain@aol.com
Membership questions: Barbara Rohrs - (916) 730-1415 tjbrr@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.