

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

-3-

THANK YOU

Greetings,

The March Desert Division meet was well attended. There was brisk trading at the swap meet tables, and folks had a chance to buy Hudson Raffle tickets as well as Spring Raffle tickets. Several members spoke about their experiences with the National Convention and why it is important to attend. It is a great opportunity to meet TCA members from other divisions. Many of your fellow Desert Division members have already registered to attend, and have also signed up with Ralph Treichel (602-863-6985) to be volunteers. Attending a National Convention is fun, and being a part of the Convention as a volunteer is even more exciting! Please register to attend and to help out as a volunteer to help make this a great Convention!

The "Vest Sewing Bee" has been busily making the vests which will identify Convention volunteers. Want to help cut, press or sew? Call or e-mail me (623-580-6957 or kttrains@aol.com) for information on our next Bee.

April brings the Pizza Meetza, which is a Desert Division tradition with lots of pizza to eat and an auction following the meeting. Bring your appetite, bring some train lots to sell, and check out what other members are selling. One never knows what treasures will be in the auction. See Chet Henry at the Meet or call ahead (480-838-0783) to put some lots in the auction!

The City of Mesa is holding the 3-R event April 25 at Falcon Field Park. 3-R stands for Roads, Rails and Runways. The Desert Division will be running the module layout at this event. It is a fun way to run your trains and to talk trains to the public. Want to help? See Jonathan Peiffer or Dallas Dixon for more information on this event.

Looking forward to seeing you at your Desert Division meeting on April 11. There will be a General Convention Meeting at 7:30 AM as well.

Happy trains!

Frank Koenig has asked us to publicly thank everyone who sent him cards, called him, and wished him well during his recent hospitalization, recuperation, and physical therapy. In January he severely broke his femur, leaving him unable to walk for several weeks. After a stay in a rehab facility, ("No fun," he states.) he is finishing his recovery at home. He hopes we will all see him at a regular monthly meet some time soon.

RIO GRANDE CHAPTER TRAINS FOR KIDS PROJECT



DESERT DIVISION – TCA BOD

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Vice-President:	Jonathan Peiffer	602-561-4131
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	Greg Palmer	505-898-3840
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ELECTRONIC NEWSLETTER

Do you want to read the Dispatch in living color and save yourself some extra paper at the same time? You may opt to receive your monthly Desert Division Dispatch online instead of in the mail.

If you wish to receive the newsletter electronically, please fill out the bottom section of this page and return it to Christie M. Wilson, 16231 E. Ocotillo Drive, Fountain Hills, AZ 85268.

Name _____

TCA Number _____

E-Mail Address _____

BOARD MEETING

The next meeting of the Desert Division Board of Directors will be held on Wednesday, April 8, beginning at 7:30 PM at the office of Jonathan Peiffer. Members are welcome to attend. Please call 602-561-4131 to be sure there are enough chairs.

TCA RIO GRANDE CHAPTER NEWS

by Gregory Palmer TCA#94-39039

March 21 was a perfect day for a Chapter Meet. Unfortunately, due to the Rocky Mountain Division Auction, Nor-Cal, and member illnesses, the turnout was light. However, even though the turnout was a little light, we had fun as usual. Part of being a member of TCA, the Desert Division, and the Rio Grande Chapter is having fun being with people who love all types of Toy Trains, and Saturday was no exception. The education segment included Don Mantay who brought in photos of last year's Durango Colorado Railfest. Don told us of what happens at Railfest and the dates for this year's Durango Railfest - August 28, 29, and 30, 2009. He told us the Hotels go fast so reserve early. All types of Narrow Gauge equipment come to Durango for Railfest, including a Galloping Goose Railbus, the Casey Jones Railbus, and a Wood Burning Locomotive, plus all the regular Durango and Silverton Narrow Gauge trains. Sounds like fun. Thanks to Don for giving us this info. By the way Don has a summer home in Silverton Colorado, lucky guy. I brought a restored Ives 3253 Locomotive built in 1921. I restored it about 5 years ago. I also restored the motor so it operates and runs great. I am going to enter the Locomotive in the TCA Standards Committee Restoration Contest at the 2009TCA Convention in July.

The regular part of the Meet started with a reminder to contact Art Triant in regards to volunteering for Convention Activities. I hope a lot of Chapter Members go to the 2009 Convention in Scottsdale. The 2009 Pumpkin Meet will be held on Sunday November 1st, 2009 at the Sheraton Uptown, beginning at 9:00AM. For those of you who are out of town, this also goes for our Arizona folks as well, the Sheraton Uptown Hotel has been totally revamped, and the rooms are great. We will try to have a special rate for TCA Members. We will be making a final decision on table fees, and public entrance fees as well. All Division members are welcome. The Trains for Kids Program is going great. Jon Spargo has sent me several photos of the project. Jon and the Rio Grande Chapter are really having an impact on the lives of these Special Needs students. Thanks Jon for all your hard work. The project at the New Mexico Wheels Museum went without a hitch. All of the Toy Trains have been inventoried. However the sets are incomplete and the Locomotives are in need of repairs. Jon Spargo, our Wheels contact member, will let the Rio Grande Chapter know of any further work which might be needed. The Chapter is looking into riding the New Mexico Railrunner Express Commuter Train to Santa Fe this Summer. Further details will be forth coming.

The next Chapter Meet will be in conjunction with the New Mexico Railfair which is May 16th at Expo New Mexico, in the School Arts Building. Please come to Trains West Hobby Shop and pick up a NM Railfair dollar off card. The Meeting portion of the May 16th Meet will be at 10:00AM. Like last year, please come at 9:00AM, so you can look at all the Toy Trains, and Railrodiana that is for sale at the NM Railfair. If you need tables, please call me and I will give you the phone number of the New Mexico Railfair contact person. My number is 505-898-3840. This year's Railfair will be larger than last year's due to the fact that the Fort Worth Texas Railfair was cancelled. The Texas folks will be coming here, so get your tables early. Finally we need volunteers for the 2009 Pumpkin Meet and next year's After Meet Visitations. Please contact me if you can help. Hope to see all of you at our next Rio Grande Chapter Meet at the New Mexico Railfair May 16th at Expo New Mexico School Arts Building, at 9:00AM.

Don Mantay with photos of Durango Railfest event.



Greg Palmer's Ives 3252 Loco



Secretary Scott Eckstein takes minutes at the Meet.



George Domeny and George Swajian



NOTE: For a picture of Jon Spargo's progress with the Trains for Kids layout at the Socorro Middle School, see page 3.

CHUCK BITTER - REMEMBERED

September 7, 1927 – March 23, 2009

by Tom Stange TCA #68-2347

Sadly, Chuck Bitter, a long time member of the Desert Division, passed away Monday afternoon, March 23, 2009. Since 1980, Chuck was an active participant in various activities within the Division. However, due to health issues over the last few years, his attendance at the meets had to be set aside.

There are four distinct memories I would like to share with you that I will always remember about Chuck.

Chuck enjoyed the toy train hobby. As a matter of fact, he still has his original train set given to him by his parents in early 1930s. His toy train layout has a number of various figures along with small toy cars and trucks on it. These items were the toys that he actually played with as child. I remember one day Chuck showing me some very early photos that his father took of him as he was playing with his trains and toys. Chuck would mention, "See this item in the picture, well here it is on the layout." I stood there in amazement as Chuck was showing me his original toys and looking at the old black and white photos. How many of us can say that we still have the toys we had when we were a child and to have the pictures to prove it.

When it came time for the November mall display at Chris Town Mall, Chuck would spend many hours during the 3-day event manning the TCA DD layout. There was one time when Chuck, my wife Beth, and I were trying to get the TCA Modules set-up on the Thursday night prior to the Friday morning opening. We spent until nearly midnight that evening to get the "O" gauge and Standard gauge tracks to operate properly without short circuits and without the trains slowing down in various sections of the track. The mall had long been closed, but the security people allowed us to continue to work on the layout until we were satisfied that it would survive the three-day event, which it did. The following morning as tired as we were, both Chuck and I were there to run trains for the mall spectators.

Back in the mid to late 1980s Chuck and I discussed filling a void here in the valley by providing toy train parts at the various train meets. We both decided to do it and we called our little business C&T Toy Trains Supplies. I maintained and kept track of the inventory and Chuck did all of the ordering. Even though our little business flourished, Chuck and I often kidded each other that neither of us will be able to retire on it. So instead we just had fun with it and enjoyed the fact that we were providing a service to our fellow train enthusiasts. For several years we continued C&T Toy Trains Supplies until we were offered a buy-out in the early 1990s, which we accepted.

As active as Chuck was with the toy train hobby, his family always came first. This was a quality that Chuck had that I most admired with him. Whether it was celebrating a family member's birthday or babysitting one of the grandchildren, those events always took precedence over the toy trains. To Chuck, the toy trains was a hobby. His first love was always his family.

Those of us that knew Chuck will miss his smile, his laughter, his wit, and his fellowship as a friend.

UPCOMING DIVISION ACTIVITIES

The Spring Picnic is April 4. It will be held in the Rotary Ramada (the same one as last year) at Scottsdale's McCormick-Stillman Railroad Park, beginning at 11 AM. Brad Martin is once again serving as our Chef Extraordinaire, and the menu includes hot dogs, chips, and sodas supplied by the clubs. Members are asked to bring either a side dish, a salad, or a dessert. What brings the Desert Division together? Food – check. Games – check. Raffles – check. Gorgeous weather – check. Everything has been ordered for a perfect day in the park. Save the date – April 4.

On April 11, there will be a General Convention Meeting at 7:30 AM. Plan to be at the Jaycees Hall early so that you can learn what's going on and take part in the discussions. The Convention is only two months away, and various things are being finalized every minute. If you haven't yet volunteered to help out, see Ralph Treichel. He's waiting to add your name to his list.

Our annual tradition of holding a Pizza Meetza in April continues this year at our regularly scheduled Meet. Beth Stange has promised a plentiful supply of Pizzas, Chet Henry is selling Auction Lots at \$5 each, and Christie Wilson has promised to bake one of her famous rhubarb pies. Any donated lots will be sold (no charge to the seller) for the benefit of the Convention. You know you don't want to miss this one.

Cell phones? If you still have any, bring them to the Meet on April 11. Ken Barnes has a shipment that is almost ready to go. All proceeds go to support the Convention.

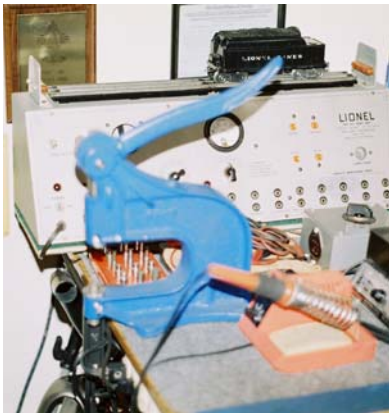
TOY TRAIN MEMORIES
by Gregory E. Palmer TCA#94-39039

I read the article, written by Gordon Wilson, about Lionel Service Stations from the past. It inspired me to write a short article on my experiences with a Lionel Service Station. I received my first Lionel Train set on Christmas Day 1956. It was outfit number 1561WS/710, which was a 2065 Locomotive set. We had just moved to Lancaster, California. Lancaster is about 65 miles North of Los Angeles in the Mojave Desert. Edwards Air Force Base is close by. My father worked at Edwards AFB for Convair-General Dynamics, at the Edwards AFB Missile Test Site. For Christmas 1956, when I was 5 years old, my parents went to LA, to the May Company Department Store. They purchased the Outfit, an LW Transformer, and 031 Track to upgrade the set. Christmas 1956 has always been one of my best Christmas memories. My parents always wanted my Lionel train set taken care of. The original shipping carton, Set Box, and all the component Boxes were always used, and kept in good order. For several years my 4X8 Lionel Layout was on a rugged pulley system over my bed. We pulled it down on top of the bed to operate all the accessories, and my 2065. How I loved that Loco! Since my father was working in the aircraft industry he had times when projects were completed and he had to change jobs and companies. We moved back, for a while, to Albuquerque, in 1962.

In 1963 my 2065 Locomotive quit working. Talk about worry. We found the Lionel Service Station in Albuquerque. Francis Denton was the Service Station. In the '40's, '50's and '60's a lot of the Service Stations were in private homes, Radio or TV Repair Shops, or Appliance Repair Shops. Mr. Denton was in a private home workshop. My father and I took my 2065 Locomotive to Mr. Denton's Lionel Service Station. I watched him take the loco apart. He asked if we wanted to wait. It would take him about an hour. I asked my father to please let me wait and watch. He agreed. Mr. Denton took the wheels off the locomotive. He told me that one of the spur gears had a couple of broken teeth. He had to replace it, but he had the parts. I learned as I watched Mr. Denton work his Lionel magic. He finally put the gears on and he pressed the wheels on with a big blue tool. My father paid Mr. Denton and I took my Lionel 2065 home. I put it on my layout and powered it up. It ran like it was new. I knew then that I wanted to repair Lionel trains, and would like to have that special blue tool Mr. Denton used on my 2065. Many years have gone by, and another back and forth trip to Southern California. We moved back to Albuquerque, New Mexico for good in 1973. I checked, at that time, to see if Mr. Denton was still a Service Station. He was and continued until around 1997. He retired, when he was 90 years old, and sold all of his Lionel Service Station tools. It is a very small world, because last year I was able to purchase, from another TCA collector in Albuquerque, Mr. Denton's Lionel ST-350 Wheel Press, that he had used in the repair of my Lionel 2065 in 1963. It even included the same wheel cups he used. I guess I am sentimental, but I love that wheel press just as much as I love my Lionel Outfit 1561WS/710 with that 2065 Locomotive.

We all need to keep our memories close as we get older. It makes all of us young again. Each time I look at that Lionel ST-350 Wheel Press, I remember that good feeling of renewal and fun I had as a 12 year old.

Lionel ST-350 Wheel Press



Some of Greg Palmer's Service Station Signs



Greg's Catalog Stand



GOOD? Or LUCKY?

by Gordon Wilson, TCA 76-12033

There is a philosophy which goes like this: “Sometimes it is better to be lucky than to be good.” My favorite place to live and play is right here in the Valley of the Sun. Despite my allegiance to the World Champion Philadelphia Phillies, my second most favorite spot in the USA is Northern California.

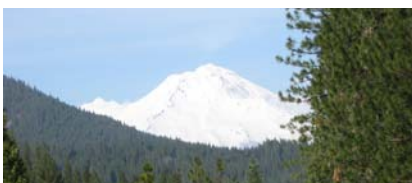
Each year around the same time in March, the Nor-Cal Division of TCA hosts the northern portion of the legendary Cal-Stewart Meets. Because it coincides with the college Spring Break (Christie teaches math at Scottsdale Community College), we drive to this area, via the world famous Tehachapi Loop near Mohave, California, and spend the night in Buttonwillow, CA, after feasting on a Basque style meal at Benji’s, a restaurant in Bakersfield. In the past we’ve explored both wine valleys, Napa and Sonoma, while riding on the Wine Train half a dozen times. We found California’s “Old Faithful” geyser just north of Napa – it erupts every 5-6 minutes. We’ve chased down the grave sites of baseball Hall-of-Famer Joe DiMaggio and Wild West legend, Wyatt Earp. They both have final resting places in the same South San Francisco cemetery.

This year we, long with a long time friend, rode on a special St. Patrick’s Day luncheon train out of Woodland, California, called the Sacramento River Train. Just everything about this ride was superb, from the service and “Irish” oriented luncheon food to the ride and scenery. It was first class, all the way!

Further north, adjacent to Interstate 5 and close to the Oregon border is the Dunsmuir Railroad Park, with its 28 motel rooms, formerly Bay Window or Extended Vision Caboosees from California railroad lines. We were in Caboose #28. Don’t think that it is like the “Red Caboose Motel” of Strasburg, Pennsylvania – these are huge, with king size beds and enormous bathrooms. A Southern Pacific pair of Dining Cars provides some absolutely sumptuous food. The best thing about this “caboose” village? The scenery. The most beautiful mountain in the world (my opinion) is just around the corner. Mt. Shasta is the most dominating 14,000 foot rock in Northern California!

However, it was the day after returning to our friend’s home that the “luck” streak began. We started out for Santa Clara and the train meet, only to be stopped cold in our tracks. My Brougham had lost its power steering. It could have happened up north near Mt. Shasta, but it waited until we were back in the Bay Area, where I could get it fixed. This was the first “better lucky than good”

On the Sunday of the meet in Santa Clara, I was doing one final walk through of the tables and was on the last row when my eye caught an item I hadn’t previously seen. It was a dinner plate with a familiar cartoon character, Mickey Mouse, in the center and a familiar name under it. “I been workin’ on the Railroad! (signed by) Ward Kimball.” I asked the lady at the table if it was for sale. She said she didn’t know, but I could speak with her husband. He, almost magically, appeared and told me the story of the plate and that he’d sell it for \$100. Needless to say, my wallet opened in a matter of seconds and the plate was mine. Ken Burling, who was about 10 feet behind me, came up to me and indicated that if I hadn’t purchased it, he would have. So, one way or the other, that Ward Kimball bit of memorabilia was destined to wind up in Fountain Hills. It is now secured in a plate holder above a door leading to my large-screen TV room. I almost hadn’t walked down that last row of tables because it 1) looked so bare, and 2) my hip hurt, badly. All this goes to prove that sometimes it pays to be lucky, rather than good.



Mt. Shasta dominates the skyline.

I bought a fair amount of things at this meet, but nothing can compare to my last purchase. As always, it was a fun meet with a really great Saturday night banquet, filled with many silent auction prizes, of which I won two. Perhaps now that the Turkey Meet is going to be a two-day affair, we might be able to consider a banquet after the Saturday meet. Just a thought . . . Once upon a time it was a “thought” with Nor-Cal and now it is a successful reality.



Sacramento River Dinner Train



Caboose #28 in Dunsmuir



My last acquisition at the Cal-Stewart Meet, a Ward Kimball drawing on a dinner plate.

CONVENTION PROGRESS

The Convention is only three months away, and we all need to pitch in to make it a success. First of all, have you registered yet? If not, do so. This is a Desert Division project and we appreciate your support. Second of all, did you sign up for any of the activities? A table in the trading pits will bring new faces to see the items you have for sale. This could be your opportunity to turn a profit on items which you wish to sell. Third of all, have you purchased any of our fund-raiser items? We have tote bags, shirts, patches, and other items which will be available at the meets and at the Convention. Fourth, have you signed up for any of the trips? We know you are locals, but this time you will ride the train with other TCA members, enjoy Pink Jeeps with folks from other parts of the country, see wild animals cavort with trainers while enjoying the company of people from your birth state, enjoy food that you won't get anywhere else. (Might I suggest the Corona Ranch Western Night Out on July 2?) It will be spectacular.) The Welcome Party will be like no other, with silent auction items galore. The Banquet will be out of this world, with food prepared by resort chefs.

So who IS pushing this Convention? All of our Convention Chairs, including Angelo Lautazi, web master and Banquet Chairman; Marty Wik, Convention Cars; Bob Johnston, Auctions; Brad and Diane Martin, Convention Store; Tony Saulina, Trading Pits; Art Triant; Security; Peter Atonna, Fund-Raisers; Wayne Ross; Donations; Thomas Plies and Jonathan Peiffer, Kids Club Activities; Chris Allen, Registration Chairman; Paul Wassermann, Displays; Ed Micale, East Coast Convention Chair; Bill Mack, West Coast Convention Chair; Gordon and Christie Wilson, Publicity and Tours. Gordon and Christie can be seen at train meets in California and Pennsylvania, with tables laden with brochures and sales items. Support them. Support the Convention. Call or e-mail Chris Allen today to secure your place in the Convention.



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To continue the Union Pacific's recent tradition of repainting locomotives into predecessor railroad "heritage" schemes, UP has elected to honor the hobby of model railroading through special recognition of the application of the TCA logo on the side of GP38-2 number 2009. It can be found switching cars throughout the Metro-Phoenix area. The TCA standards committee has commented that this locomotive has not been properly identified as a repaint or a restoration.

* Desert Division's ** Spring Raffle 2009 *



1st Prize

TCA Bicentennial Special

- No. 1976 "Spirit of 76" Lionel Diesel
- No. 1975 Pullman car AMERICAN EAGLE
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- No. 1973 Observation car FREEDOM BELL

2nd Prize

Lionel 6-12915
#164 - Log Loader



3rd Prize

Lionel 6-52105
TCA 1997 Desert Division
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REPAIRS - Pat Eiff, 28 years of toy train repair experience, does train repairs in his home. Also trains for sale. Call him at 480-816-9624 or visit his website <http://www.toysthruetime.com>.

FOR SALE – Out of print Greenberg books: Lionel, American Flyer, Marx, etc. Please call Bruce Greenberg at 703-461-6991 (9-5 Eastern Daylight) or visit his web site, www.sykesvillehistory.us, for a current list.

FOR SALE – Lionel 227 0-6-0 (C-7) w/Tender (relettered) and the semi-scale 2954, 2955, 2956, 2957 (C-7/8) - \$3200. Presidential Passenger Cars 2521, 2522, 2523 (C-10) – Boxed \$775. 2363 Ill. Central F-3's (C-7) \$850. Following are all Mint/Boxed - Nickel Plate FF#6 Set – 18505, 17612, 19602, 19318, 19527, 19411, 19235 - \$550. 18304 Lackawanna M. U. Commuter Set (1991) - \$400. 11733 Feather River SSS (1992) - \$325. 19138 S. F. Roomette \$100. 19128 S. F. Full Vista Dome - \$175. 18115 S. F. “B” Unit - \$150. Tony Griskowitz 928-717-1206.

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FOR SALE – Painted 4x8 HO layout board with electronic control board - \$35.00 – track already in place with some switches – no landscaping – will need some work to finish. Contact Phil Webster evenings 623-877-0754 or e-mail pwebs10319@aol.com.

This page is provided as a service to our members for trading among themselves.
Please contact them for items you may have, want, or need.

