

SPLITSWITCH

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Home of the San Antonio & Northern Railroad

A Short Blast From The Headend

By any standard this years Summer Train Show has to be declared a success, primarily because of the efforts of the chairman Ralph Alexander. Ralph did a fantastic job of coordinating the venue with the Balcones Heights officials and practically dragging as many reluctant vendors as possible into the convention hall. His efforts caused a reversal in the trend of declining profits we had been seeing in our previous shows. A big SAMRA thank you to Ralph for a job well done.



A reminder to all members that visitors are always welcome to the museum; however, you are responsible for the folks you bring in. Stay with them and make sure they don't touch anything on the layout. Recently we have experienced damage to scenery and buildings, along with missing vehicles and rolling stock. Please make sure your visitors understand the "no touch" policy that is always in effect whenever visiting a model railroad.

While we're talking about the layout, there were some issues brought up at the last General Membership meeting over the operation of the Easy DCC system used on the museum layout. I have heard complaints like this since the system was installed, but they are always anecdotal and without the specifics required to do any serious troubleshooting. We have far too much invested in this system, that generally works well here and at other club layouts, to ever consider swapping it out. Relying on analysis and commentary from outside individuals, however well meaning, who have no real experience with our system, and who have never operated here is silly. As I understand it there are two specific problem areas. First - operational problems, such as loss of control, erratic operation, surging, etc. According to every manufacturer these problems generally stem from dirty wheels and dirty track. Second - decoder failure and loss of stored information. How many times have you heard the short alarm going on and on and on, while the locomotive creating the short takes spike after spike as the system tries to reset itself? Shorts need to be cleared immediately by moving the locomotive to a place where it can be safely placed back on the track. If it derailed on a turnout, drag it off to a spot where it no longer shorts and where it's easier to put it back on track. The longer that locomotive keeps shorting the higher the propensity for decoder damage. As for the erratic operation, you can do your part by cleaning your wheels. We have paper towels and alcohol for this purpose. To help out with Fun Runs or Operating Sessions you can also volunteer to run a track cleaning train around the layout. If you still believe the wiring is an issue we need limber folks to go under the layout and check the wiring. See me or Jim Ladd about this task, and please remember model railroading is fun.

Ron Nagel

San Antonio Model Railroad Association, Inc.

Items of Interest:

- Maintenance Crew #3 Workday Saturday, Sep 12th & 26th.
- Monday Morning Breakfast Group Meets at 8:00 am every Monday @ Denney's & 281 & Bitters
- Layout Management Committee will meet at 7:00 Sep 7th.
- Board of Directors Meeting will meet at 7:30 Sep 8th.
- General Membership Meeting WILL be held Friday, September 11th at 7:30 pm in the Museum
- LSR Planning meeting will be announced at the general meeting.

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Donations for August, 2009.

Flash Blackman

- 3-San Antonio Aerial Photo-Train Yards
- 1-DPM Gold-Woods Furniture Company
- 1-Walthers heavy duty overhead crane
- 1-pkg Calscale Nathan Schime Air horn
- 1-Paasche Air brush

Doyle Bond

- 350 Hard back books on Railroad, etc.
- Magazines 1970-2000
- 2- 4' x 6' Tables
- 1-6' ladder
- 2-book cases
- 1-bridge

John Talley

- 1 Beer car oldetime

Ralph Alexander

- Captain's chair for the office

Richard Schaefer

- Plans, pictures, drawings, maps
- 2-metal signs, Western Union & Visitor information

Jack Siegel

- 2 bags of cookies

Christian Science church

- 4- 4'x 8' -5/8" thick boards for raffle layouts

Mary Ann Annig

- HO scale model railroad equipment (locos,cars,track,power packs.Scenery construction materials
- Box of American Flyer S-gauge trains


Jason Wahl

- 40" x 60" layout with track
- 6 large bags of plastic structures and parts

Editor-Frank Houzvicka
Mailing-Jack Morgan
Photos: Frank Houzvicka & Flash Blackman

Maintenance Team # 3

RALPH ALEXANDER	656-9178
ALLEN ADAMS	599-3906
FLASH BLACKMAN	828-7245
DOYLE BOND	599-3334
CHUCK BOOTH	674-5123
SHELLA & COLTON BRITT	
JOHN & CANDIS CLOYD	767-1237
SEAN EMBRY	679-9338
HAROLD FLEISCHER	497-2532
BILL FORNSHELL	495-6692
W. KENNEDY GAUGER	573-1294
JUSTIN HODGE	659-1844
PARK LAWRENCE	821-5325
LARRY MARTIN	656-2931
BRIAN NEATHERY	490-9085
ORPHIE NEATHERY	349-0549
	830-624-
TROY & CAROL ROBIN	2651
SAMUEL SHRUM	658-7566
	830-226-
DAVID THRONDSOON	7045
BILL & WILLIAM WATKINS	408-2238
DAN WOLFER	945-2614
DAVID ZOCH	696-2064



"CANS"

Remember to bring your empty aluminum cans to SAMRA for recycling. The money made from recycling cans goes into the general fund to help pay for the needs of the club. This is an easy way to put some extra money into the treasury without digging into your pockets.

PLEASE HELP!



NMRA / LSR SIDING



What goes on elsewhere?

In last month's column I talked a little about aspects of the Division 6 Director's job that impact on SAMRA. SAMRA is in pretty good shape, all things considered. It has excellent facilities, and it's dues structure at about \$6 a month is WAY below the average of most clubs throughout the U.S. It represents one of the best values around. So what are the things that I do, elsewhere, that don't have (much) impact on you all directly?

I try to keep my eyes out for ways the NMRA can help other clubs as well as SAMRA. Quite often people will come in to Hobbytown while I'm there who are new to model railroading. In the process, I often refer them to SANTRAK (if they are considering N-scale), to SAMRA and AMRE (likewise for HO), Hill Country Outlaws (if they like On30), TTM and the local Train Collectors Association (if they are into O-scale tin-plate), and SAGRES (if they are interested in Large Scale). In the past 6 months I've probably referred at least 30-40 people in this way. Beginners in particular often don't have any idea of "where to go" for more information. Referring them to a club is good for them, it's good for the club, and it's good for the hobby.

Until I had a double detached retina, I used to spend part of each Saturday as a "volunteer" at Hobbytown, working on some sort of kitbashing or scratchbuilding project at a table next to the train department counter. I got lots of people who would come by and ask "what are you doing?" From discussing the project the conversation would turn to their interests, and then to encouragement to find out clubs, people, organizations, and information sources that could help them. Sometimes those conversations will go on for several hours, time the Hobbytown staff often feels pressure from on a busy Saturday. I tell people up front "I don't work here", and I encourage to take all the time they need; they're not "wasting my time."

I get lots of inquiries from NMRA members coming to San Antonio on business or vacation who want to see some of the model railroading activities in the area. I usually send one or more personal e-mails to them, find out in what they are interested, and refer them to the right clubs, layouts, hobby shops, and the like. Often I'll escort them myself. There's a gentleman and his wife from Connecticut who will be vacationing in their time-share condo on the Riverwalk in September for whom I've already set up some contacts. Most of you know about my Mexican connections.

Last spring, the Gulf Western Modular RR Club (Corpus Christi) was bringing their layout to the SAMRA show, and then two weeks later would have to bring it back from Corpus to SA for the WGH show. I approached both TTM and SANTRAK about letting them store their loaded trailer for two weeks between shows; we finally worked it out where they stored it in the SANTRAK warehouse-clubhouse, with much gratitude. It wasn't hard to facilitate this, since I'm a member of all three organizations and live a short driving distance to all but the Gulf Western group.

More later. 'Till next time, happy railroading! (and stay cool!).
Fred Bock, MMR, Director, Division 6 (South Texas)





YAAK from KAAK

I want to thank Jack Siegel, the new Assistant Museum Director, Gary and Lynn Brown, Scott Priegel and Annaliese Alexander, Mary Dodson, and all the rest of the Clinicians who helped up front at the Admissions Desk, the Company Store, and selling Raffle tickets at our recent Summer Train Show.

Our Clinics were well received by all. Ralph Alexander needs to be congratulated for “taking the bull by the horns” and running a great Balcones Heights Summer Show. Also Wayne Hammelman and his crew worked hard setting up the tables (and taking them down) and helping with the Exhibitors. Our net proceeds were the largest ever for our Summer Show. Thanks to everyone who helped out. It all contributes to making our Museum a success.

Jack Siegel is working on “Samra Cars” on the layout- adding proper weights, cleaning wheel sets and installing non magnetic wheels. Our goal is to have 75 cars ready this year.

Doyle Bond has donated over 300 hard back Railroad books, plus 2 book shelves and a ladder. Gary and Lynn Brown are now in the process of cataloging all of these books on the computer for our Library. Lynn Brown is now our Librarian and we thank you for all you are doing, Lynn.

The Hondo Library has accepted over 75 years of our Model Railroad and Model Craftsman magazines. We want to thank Harold Bryant for handling this donation.

NEW MEMBER(S)

Daniel Ward

Spouse: Jennifer Lynn
 Years in Hobby: 20
 Layout: Yes
 Scale: HO



Sunday Fun Runs Back On!!

Paul Dawson would like everyone to know that the Sunday fun runs are back on from 1:00 to 4:00 PM and during the Crossroads Show.

HOME LAYOUT TOUR

No information on any home layout tours for the Month of September.

Since there are no home layout tours currently scheduled, why not visit the *SAMRA Special Interest Group's* HO modular layout at the Quarry Mall!!

This HO layout is 48 ft x 16 ft.

Hours of operation are:

Fridays: 5:00 PM to 8:00 PM
Saturdays: 10:00 AM to 6:00 PM
Sundays: 12:00 PM to 6:00 PM

Come be an Operator!

You don't have to be experienced in Operations to operate. We have all kinds of trains to run from simple Unit trains which do no switching to local freights that take an hour to get over the layout. And then there are the city switching assignments where you never leave the town but marshal cars for trains to pick up and set out cars at specific industries from the trains that have drop offs in your town. Clarke Center and Ft Worth Industrial are the two towns on the layout that require a local switcher. It's a fun assignment if you like to switch and plan ahead! Come and join us at one of the sessions!

The Ops Group



CHANGES IN CONTACT INFORMATION

If you change an address, e-mail, phone #, etc., please let us know.

If you don't tell us, we don't know!

SAMRA General Membership Meeting, August 14th, 2009

President Nagel called the meeting to order at 7:30 p.m.

There were no minutes from the previous meeting.

The Treasurer's Report was read and approved.

New member Daniel Ward was announced. Guest Lyndon Woodall was introduced.

R. Alexander provided a summary of the Summer show. The show was a financial success with \$4184 being made. Ralph thanked all those who participated. Ralph also reported that preparations are underway for the Jamboree. More information will be provided as we get closer to the scheduled date. We will attempt to get the mailing list from WGH to expand our attendance.

P. Steves reported progress on preparations for the LSR convention. He asked for members to assist in preparing the museum layout as well as offering their home layouts for tours. Alamo-Rails.org is the convention website. A reduced fee, six month NMRA membership will be available for SAMRA members who wish to participate in the LSR convention and are not currently NMRA members.

P. Mackin announced a tentative late October date for the next railroading merit badge clinic.

Jack Siegle has been appointed museum assistant director. Lynn Brown has been appointed as the librarian.

At a 5 August meeting, City of Live Oak officials were receptive to providing city funds in support of museum projects. There will be additional discussions with these officials, and a thorough cleanup of the museum will be required before hosting them. President Nagel asked for better participation on the regular cleanup crews. He also asked for additional ideas on projects that the city could support. There will be continuing discussions on this subject.

Any SAMRA member interested in working with model railroaders in hospice care were urged to place their name on the signup list provided.

W. Hammelman discussed plans to produce a custom PS-1 San Antonio & Northern railcar for the LSR convention. Accurail will make the car. The car may be sold at a discount to LSR participants. The members passed a motion to order 200 cars at \$11.68 per car plus shipping. The cars will be ordered by September 1. They will probably be sold at about \$20 apiece. Each car will be provided with decals from which the cars can be numbered by the purchaser. Members were urged to pay early to ensure they get one of the cars.

There was discussion on whether Easy DCC is a reliable system for the museum layout. Some members presented their opinions and experiences that there are an unusual number of decoder burnouts with Easy DCC. Al Boos noted that a focused effort is needed to investigate and find the facts related to the problem. P. Steves was given the lead to work through the LMC to investigate this problem. Operators were also asked to document their problems on SAMRA Work Orders and place them on the clip board on E. Kaak's desk.

John Green noted that GC Laser, which advertises in the Walthers Catalog, will give SAMRA members a 25% discount. SAMRA will provide the necessary information for GC Laser to establish an account.

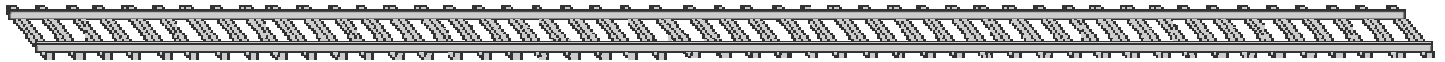
Members were reminded that the Disney Christmas Train would be at Sunset Station through the weekend.

After the regular meeting, a presentation was made on the proposed trip to Temple on Amtrak.

President Nagel adjourned the meeting at 8:15.

Pat Mackin - Secretary





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SAMRA Clinics

Harold Bryant conducted the August Clinic on 'AMTRAK and how to ride it'. Following the general information on how and where to get information on general AMTRAK trips and schedules, Harold focused on a specific opportunity for an AMTRAK trip to the Temple Train Show on September 19th. If you haven't contacted Harold by now it is too late!

The September clinic will be conducted by John Lowrance and Orphie Neathery on ROCKS!



The Splitswitch
San Antonio Model Railroad Association, Inc.
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FIRST CLASS MAIL



27th Annual Temple Model Train Show
Frank Mayborn Convention Center
Temple, TX
September 19th and 20th, 2009
Sat: 10-5. Sun: 11-5

