

Train Collectors Association – Northern California Division

Nor – Cal Express 2019-1

President's Message - Michael Andrews TCA #95-41371

Greetings to all. Usually this newsletter is out before the Cal-Stewart Meet but we have not had a newsletter editor. **Richard White** has retired, and **Bob Nichelini** was filling in sending out the Cal Stewart registration and Nor Cal dues notice. **Allan Feinstein** has volunteered to be the new editor. This will be his first of many, so I hope all will support him by sending some articles or photos of their trains or any other fascinating items. If you don't know Allan be sure to say hi and introduce yourself at the next meet. Also new is our webmaster **Jack Wittenmyer**, he has been working for a few months getting the website updated and current.

The summer meets have been scheduled except for the August date; we are working on a venue. The June meet will be in Cotati again this year thanks to **Michael Raymond**. Maybe I will get up there this year but usually I am off to San Luis Obispo picking up my twins from college. The July meet will be at the CTTOM train club in Crockett, so bring a train to run. See **Mark Boyd's** note below for more details.

The Cal-Stewart Meet was on Sunday March 3. It was well attended and had a steady crowd all day. I would like to thank Chairman **Bob Spivock** for another successful meet. We also could not have done it without all the volunteers that helped with all the various jobs throughout the day. On my shift at the front desk there were many kids of all ages coming through the door. Thanks to all.

Meetings – Mark Boyd

The next Nor-Cal Division meet is in Lafayette at the Veteran's hall on Saturday May 11th the second Saturday of May.

There will be no Show & Tell at this meeting.

Instead, **Richard Hofmeister** will be interviewing **Chuck Schaffer** after announcements.

Trading will begin sharply at 10 AM.

This will be the last Nor-Cal train meet in Lafayette until September.

Our June meeting will be in Cotati at the Veteran's Hall on June 8th.

The July meeting will be July 13th at the Carquinez Toy Train Operating Museum in Crocket.

From the Editor - Allan Feinstein TCA# 90-30688

As of this issue of the Nor-Cal Express I will be the editor of NOR-CAL Express, relieving **Richard White**. Richard did an amazing job of keeping the newsletter up to high quality since 2002, when he took over from **Bob Nichelini**. When I met Richard at his house for the handover, he passed on a two inch thick binder of Express newsletters, dating back to 2002. Until I got involved, I had no idea of the amount of work he did for Nor-Cal. Fortunately for us, Richard's wife, **Aase**, is a professional website designer. She designed, coded, and maintained the Nor-Cal website. We are also fortunate to have **Jack Wittenmyer** to keep the website going and provide us with web technology knowledge.

Talking with Richard, I was impressed with his varied background in model and toy trains. He started in his youth with Flyer S-Gauge, then went into H0. After a recess for college, and resuming H0, his next switch was triggered when he came into a large lot of toy trains. The Whites (no relation) at Lee's Train in Oakland, introduced him to TCA. He joined in 1970. He then sold off his collection in the early 2000s, went back into H0, building vintage kits. He has now sold off most of these. I asked if he had built O gauge kits, as I had in the 1950s. Yes indeed, he built Walthers kits. We all owe Richard and Aase gratitude and thanks.

Looking through that two inch binder, starting in 2002, my eye picked up the Presidents Message by of all folks, Michael Andrews. Mike wrote "Everything that happens in Nor-Cal is News, so make some and send it to Richard". Good advice, but please send it to me. Don't worry about the details of writing – just send the idea. I'll butcher it up anyway – and take the blame.

Things have changed a bit since 2002. Our President had just appointed a Sergeant of Arms and an Assistant Sergeant of Arms. Seventeen years ago we must have been a livelier group than I remember, needing two Sergeants of Arms.

Starting with this edition, you will notice a change in Express format. In 2002 most of us depended upon hard copy mailing for our information, so the format was much like news print. Now we are mostly adapted to internet pages, so I thought we might as well modernize. Please let me know how you feel about this change.

Your opinion wanted. From the editor

You will notice the change in format of the Nor-Cal Express. Since more of us read the Express on line, I felt it was appropriate to give our site a more modern look, along the lines of a typical Web page. After a bit of research I found that the multi column look was designed for a newspaper to catch the eye of a news stand purchaser, by exposing the reader to many topics. Those on crowded public transportation find convenience in reading a folded paper. However, when reading on a computer or phone one continuous item is easier to absorb. The last consideration is efficient use of space.

The Site Wizard goes into the pros and cons of newspaper layout :

<https://www.thesitewizard.com/webdesign/newspaper-layout-usability.shtml>

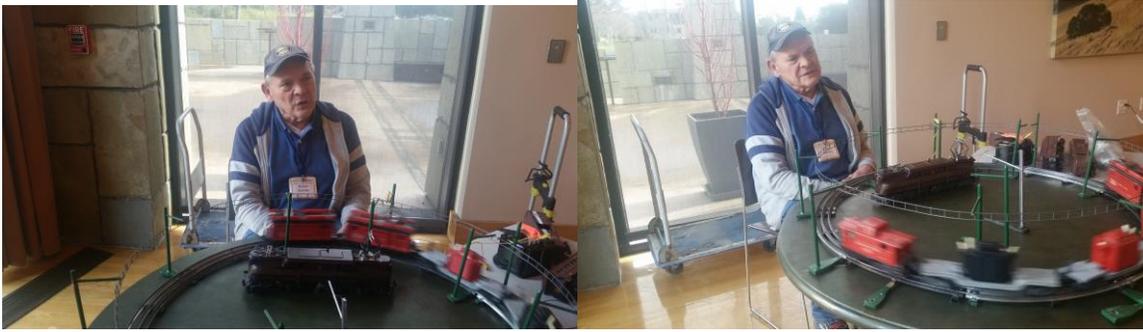
Another change – we are now going to three issues a year, end of April, end of August, and end of December.

Please let me know whether you agree or have ideas for improving the Express.

Allan Feinstein

Toy Train Operating

Toy trains were designed and sold to be operated. One of our members who takes this seriously is **Robert Remley**. Robert showed up at our February meeting with a cleverly executed layout complete with overhead catenary and several locomotives equipped to pick up power from the overhead. These include modified Lionel 520, from 1956. According to Greenberg's Guide to Lionel Trains 1945-1969, the 520 was a model of a GE 80 ton boxcab built for Chile Exploration Company. Additionally he had a somewhat modified GG1, also set up to get power from the catenary. Robert told us that he built the catenary system from hardware store fencing, grinding the wire for smooth operation.



Cal Stewart Meet

As our President has said, Cal Stewart was quite successful. Our Treasurer, **Richard Goslee**, tells us income from the meet was \$4,417, the facility cost \$5,400, promotion \$2740, for a net expense of \$3,722. The banquet expenses were \$1,262, of which \$412 was covered by the club. The net result to the club was an expense of \$4,135.

The swapping area was quite busy, as was the entry hall.



Holding down the admitting desk for this one hour shift were **Jack Wittenmyer** and **Richard White**. **Richard Goslee** organized shifts at the desk. Thanks to those who kept this all working smoothly.

Mike Raymond and **Richard Hofmeister** put on two educational clinics in the San Ramon Board Room.

Mike provided us with references to Lionel and MTH web sites. Among the subjects are parts, smoke units, and hooking up TMCC and Legacy He described features of the MTH DCS, including compatibility issues. Mike also spoke on layout power issues, especially on the use of older Lionel transformers. They will need faster acting, lower amperage circuit breakers to protect circuit boards.

Richard's talk was on how to be a train detective. As head of our Standards Committee, he has put together a list of techniques for determining authenticity. His rule #1 – Use your BRAIN, not your HEART to access the authenticity of a piece.

Also in the entry hall were several dynamic layouts. **Robert Remley** put together his waterfront layout for the Cal Stewart meet.. This setup keeps the kids and the grownup enthralled as he moves cars around various industries loading and unloading appropriate cargo. He uses a modified version of the 623 NW-2 switcher. One of his modifications is to use a homemade version of the whistle actuator circuit to control the couplers. This allows him to drop cars anywhere without requiring uncoupling tracks.



My experience with Model Trains

As the new TCA NORCAL Express editor, I'm writing this to share my experiences and encourage other TCA folk to share theirs.

Among my first memories were watching a Lionel Train run in circles in the dark. Exciting! My folks bought the train for my first birthday, early 1942 – kind of pushing it. I believe the trains were set 1096W. We lived in Chicago Ill, where lots of trains ran. I remember my dad taking me out to look at trains so he must have found them interesting.

We soon moved to Los Angeles, as WWII came to an end. My folks bought a house on the West Side of LA, near the Pacific Electric Santa Monica Air Line. I soon developed interest in Lionel trains and the Pacific Electric. At that time, the PE ran freight trains powered by small electric locomotives and provided passenger service on interurban style cars. The PE didn't seem like a real railroad, as compared with what I saw in books, but it was the best available. As I found out later, the Air Line was quite a historical piece of trackage, running from downtown Los Angeles out to the Pacific Ocean. It was built in 1875 as the Los Angeles and Independence Railroad. The LA & I was originally a steam line, later converted to electric power, eventually part of the Pacific Electric, and part of the Southern Pacific..

As I got older, I found friends who were also interested in trains. We would ride our bicycles along the rail line to see what there was to see. Nearby was a small industrial yard, called Home Junction. As time went on, the electric locomotives were replaced with Southern Pacific diesel switchers. Now and again the train crew would let us ride a short distance in the cab.

I still enjoyed running my electric trains until one day the engine stopped running. My dad arraigned to ship the locomotive out to Madison Hardware in New York for repair. The suspense waiting for it to come had me checking on the daily mail. Finally it came and would run under its own power.

We discovered a local hobby shop, in West Los Angeles, Allied Models. Allied models became a regular hang out. My folks knew Lionel Trains were my game. Whenever a gift giving event occurred, my folks bought me a few cars and track switches. Eventually we took over half of the garage and built a train table. By this time, I was reading about model trains. Ellison's Delta lines fascinated me. At the time, the available books described outside third rail as a more realistic track. I bought rail, ties, third rail supports and spikes, and laid track. I built a few switches and crossings. As I earned a few dollars, I was able to buy a Lionel Santa Fe NW1, 630, which I converted to outside third rail. I also bought a few O gauge kits from Walthers and built them up.

The prospect of graduating High school loomed ahead, along with going to college, so I mostly gave up my train interest. After I studied engineering at UCLA, my wonderful bride, **Sue**, and I moved to St Louis Mo. We both worked in computer technology. As we both missed California, after a few years we moved to the East Bay.

My career became more solid, the interest in trains came back. I picked up a sad but cheap Texas Special locomotive and a bit of track. The opportunity occurred to travel a bit for my profession. My first trip as a newly returned Californian was to Washington DC. This assignment was to provide data processing support to a project evaluating the newly

acquired government run railroad. I had lots of fun looking at the railroads in the Washington. Later, I had opportunities to make business trips to New York. A trip to Madison Hardware was worked into each of my New York visits.

I slowly started adding pieces to my collection. Those were the days when there were several train shops in the San Francisco area. My next move was to join TCA, which opened up many more possibilities.

To be continued in future Newsletters. Please submit your experiences.

Golden Train

At the time of this project, my grandson was 4 years old, and enjoyed browsing the Lionel catalog. He was taken by the photograph of a brass colored locomotive. He asked if he could get a “gold train”. I looked around to see what I could do for him. My eye fell on an old, beat up 027 Texas Special. I had bought it many years ago at charity shop in San Francisco. My next stop was to see if I could find a spray can of paint that would pass for gold. My local hardware store accommodated me. As I was checking out, the helpful clerk asked if I was an artist. I wondered whether a civilian was allowed to buy gold paint or on the other hand, maybe I would get a discount. Turns out she was trying to warn me that this paint was not very durable. Anyway, I did some masking; then sprayed the locomotive. Then I realized my granddaughter (2 years old at the time) might like something too. An old SP style Lionel caboose, of unknown parentage, got the same treatment. Here they are:



Grandson was enthralled for a short time. Granddaughter not so much.

TRAIN REPAIRS, PARTS & SALES



Mike Raymond
 2575 Knolls Drive
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 707-578-1198 after 6pm

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