



The DERAIL

The Official Monthly Publication of the San Jacinto Model Railroad Club, Inc

October 2012

Volume 43, Issue 10

President's Message

Bob Werre

If you've been paying attention or attended our last meeting, you now realize that we're into Railroad Season in Houston. The Galveston Museum is hosting a train show; the Division is holding their yearly membership meeting, meal and train-rides at Zube again this year. After that we've got our own Fall Tour starting, a Train-show is being scheduled for December at the Mall of the Mainland and I understand Hooter's will be bringing in guests from all over. That's all the events I can recall, but I've probably missed some. I hope most will be able to take in some of these activities, especially now since the weather has cooled a bit.

I suppose now I might also advise everyone to get some 'honey-do's' done before all this happens, just to clear your schedule!

Since this is a changing of the seasons it's also time for the changing of the guard in our club. Actually the changes seem to be somewhat minor as I will be only one to be replaced. At this time, if the membership approves, Gilbert would I remain as our Secretary/Treasurer, and Kelly Russell will remain as

Vice President. If I understand things correctly, I will replace Robert Ashcroft as a director. Therefore all we will need is a new President and one Director at Large.

I am hoping that our valued chairmen and workers will remain on the job—all of us doing their jobs are valuable to our successful club. If we share the work nobody will be overwhelmed with too much to do. This includes Bob Sabol (and Kathryn), DeRail; Jim Lemmond, Webmaster; Bob Barnett and his crew, Train show; Steve Sandifier, in Media Relations plus all those who have worked tables, maintained lists and lent a hand when needed.

So at this time, I will step aside and thank those who helped me to represent this club. I hope I have served well! We did accomplish a few things that I felt needed work: San Jac table display, new crossbucks for the home tours, membership retention rebate and recruiting program plus two updated membership booklets. Thanks for the opportunity and the good memories!

Thank You for your Service, Bob!



In order to work in railroading, or more specifically, train service, there are certain tools that are required to be used in the course of that work. I will stretch the definition of “tool” to include any kind of object that is used in the moving of trains and/or the switching of cars, or which facilitates to that end. I apologize for the mixed tenses used in this article. If I use present tense, that means it probably still applies to today's railroading. Past tense is for things that were done a certain way when I was on the MP, but may no longer be done today.

Airhose - The airhose is a very necessary ingredient involved in the moving of trains. Without the airhose, the brake system of a train would be inoperational. Keeping the brake system operating properly and safely is perhaps the single most important aspect of moving trains. A railroad car has an airhose connection (pipe, i.e., train line) at both ends. The train line passes the air to the car, and from car to car. An airhose is designed so that one end screws into the airhose connection, and the other end mates with another airhose by putting them together at a ninety degree angle, and then twisting them downward to lock into position. In especially cold weather, bending the airhoses to accomplish this task can be rather strenuous.

Airhose Gasket – The airhose gasket is a rubber circular seal that fits into the end of an airhose. This enables a tight almost leak-proof connection to be made between air hoses. Brakemen usually carry at least several of these on their person at all times, because you never know when you might come upon a leaking airhose gasket. An interesting aspect of the airhose gasket design is that, in the event no airhose gasket is available to replace a bad one with, the bad gasket can simply be removed; then the good gasket in the other airhose is also removed, placed between the two airhoses, and they are then connected normally. The bad aspect of this method, is that when the cars are uncoupled and the airhoses pull apart, the gasket falls out leaving two hoses without gaskets, so this use of a gasket is strictly as a last

resort.

Airhose Cut Lever – Just behind where the airhose gasket is screwed in, a lever is attached to a valve on the train line. This lever closes the train line. A train with air brakes will always have the lever closed on the trailing end of the last car in the train. Opening the airhose gasket to allow brake air into the train line is called “cutting in the air”. The brakeman/switchman always gives the air sign to the engineer before stepping in between the cars so the engineer will not move the cars. It can be a tricky operation. These valves have a tendency to suddenly open very easily right at the point when the air starts flowing. A rookie brakeman will often big-hole the air (throw the air brake system into emergency) by opening the valve too quickly at that point. The trick is to have your muscles working in consort so that some muscles in your arm and hand are opening the valve while others are keeping it from opening too fast. Stubborn valves require you to hit the handle with your fist or the heel of your hand (and you thought only feet have heels, you silly person you) while the other hand keeps it from opening too fast. Even an experienced brakeman will occasionally big-hole the train when cutting in the air. Engineers have been known on rare occasions, whether from dislike of a particularly cocky brakeman or as a practical joke, to big-hole the train from the engine cab so the brakeman thinks he did it.

Airhose Wrench – A special wrench is always found on cabooses and engines for the purpose of removing and installing airhoses. The wrench will handle two sizes of airhoses, including the smaller diameter engine hoses that only connect between locomotives. This wrench is a very heavy item, and one time as a joke, an engineer stuck one in my grip without me knowing it. He laughed when I got off the engine at our destination when I said, “This grip just seems to get heavier and heavier.” I didn't discover the wrench until after I had checked into my motel

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Guess the Layout!



Answer to last months' Guess the Layout: Denny McGonigle

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room. I decided that having an airhose wrench in my grip was a good idea, so I left it in the grip for the rest of my tenure on the railroad.

Release Valve – The release valve was found on both sides of a freight car. There were two kinds. The best and more modern kind only had to have its rod pulled and then immediately released in order to release the air from a car that was going to be switched without air, such as in a yard. An older kind was still around in the early 80s, and its rod had to be pulled and then continuously held out until all the air had bled off. Obviously, a line of cars with many of this older type took significantly longer to bleed off. Sometimes a release valve rod would be missing or malfunction, in which event, the brakeman had to crawl over to the other side of the train and release that valve. The older style had a lever with a ninety degree angle at the end of it. The newer style had a lever with a small loop at the end of it. Occasionally, the newer style would not release all the air properly, and you had to hold it open like the old style.

Air Line Cut Out Lever – I may have used the wrong term for this device. Occasionally, a car's air brakes would not be performing properly, and would seize up, causing the wheels' brake pads to smoke or the wheels to lock up and slide on the rails. If the cars brakes could not be caused to work properly by taking the train line air pressure down and back up, the car's brakes could be cut out using this lever. This in effect made the car free rolling. There were rules on how many cars in a train could have the brakes inoperative. I also think you could not have more than two in succession. Also, the last car *had* to have operating brakes. If it didn't and came uncoupled, you might have a runaway car on the mainline.

Train Line Air Gauge – There were one of these on both the engine and the caboose. The MP ran with 80 pounds of air pressure from the headend, with 65 being the minimum that the caboose gauge must read. On cold days, with many leaking air gaskets in a train, it might take a while to pump up the train to 65 pounds minimum.

Brake Wheel – Every freight and passenger car has a brake wheel, and a caboose has two brake wheels—one on each platform. When tightened, a car's brake shoes were manually forced against the wheels regardless of the status of the air brakes. A lever enables quick release of the brakes. Back in the 1980s, some older tank cars had a foot actuated lever which was difficult to use—you first had to tighten the brake, and then disengage the brake with your foot. The uninitiated are sometimes informed tongue-in-cheek that the brake wheel is used for steering the car down the track.

Switch Locks and Keys – These locks are found on track switches, phone boxes/booths, interlocking boxes, and waybill boxes. A brakeman and conductor always carries a set of these when on duty. On the Kingsville Division, I always carried an MP switch key, an ATSF switch key, and an SP switch key. In

addition, I carried what was called a “Mop Mainline Key”, which was used on switch locks down in the Valley. I was told the reason they had different locks down there was a disgruntled station agent glue-gunned a lot of these locks and they had to be replaced. Why they didn't just replace them with the same type of lock seems strange to me, as the new ones seemed like they wouldn't work too well if gravel or grit was accidentally kicked into them. This employee was also reported to have removed all the airhose gaskets from an entire train parked in a siding, and then *recoupled* all the airhoses. That guy was truly dedicated in his disgruntledness.

Caboose Locks and Keys – These locks were found on cabooses. They were seldom used, except in the instance when a crew had to leave a caboose, and the caboose was in an area that was likely to be frequented by vandals or other people who might steal your grip and other items. I never heard of anybody having stuff stolen from a caboose. Caboose keys were usually carried on the same ring as the switch keys.

Switch Key Ring – Most brakeman would carry a type of ring that usually consisted of two rings and could be purchased at a hardware store or a farm and ranch supply. One ring would be securely attached to a belt loop by a spring clip, and had a closed loop on the other end. The other ring had spring clips on both ends, and could be quickly unclipped from the other ring, and had a standard key ring in the end ring. Airhose gaskets would also often be carried on the switch key ring by many brakemen.

Knuckle – The knuckle was the moving part of a coupler. When opened, it enabled cars to be uncoupled. In order to uncouple two cars, normally only the knuckle on one car had to be opened. Sometimes on a curve you might have to open both knuckles. You usually did not know this until the train pulled ahead and pulled the car you were trying to uncouple off the spot. If that was a problem, you had to respot the car.

Knuckle Pin – The knuckle pin is what held the pin in the knuckle. The ingenious design of the coupler enabled the knuckle to stay in when cars were coupled without a pin being in place. When the knuckle was opened with the pin missing, however, the knuckle would fall out. Trainmen were trained to never have their foot under a knuckle when opening it, as the 60 pound knuckle would break just about every bone in your foot if it landed on it.

Lantern – An entire article could be written on this tool. The railroad lantern is used for illumination, communication, and safety—normally only at night. The modern electric railroad lantern has two bulbs—a bulb that shines a beam of light like a flashlight, and a bulb that shines equally in all directions. All modern lanterns also have a place for carrying one or two spare bulbs. The handle of the lantern forms a loop which can be hooked over your arm when necessary. Some brakemen would carry air hose gaskets on the handle if it was removable. The railroad lantern uses a standard 6 volt lantern battery. This bat-

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tery actually consists of four cells that were once called F cells. These are the same diameter as D cells, but half again as long. A typical battery was designed to be used for two nights in a row, but that was pushing it. Many brakemen use a new battery every night. Modern lanterns use LEDs, which are more energy efficient, so these lanterns can probably use a battery for three or four nights. Originally, lanterns burned oil. These were much cheaper to use, but more difficult to use. The lantern could go out, and it might be many minutes before the brakeman could get it re-lit, especially on windy days, since oil lanterns did not carry a spare flame. This could obviously be dangerous under certain conditions. I would also not want to be standing next to a leaking butadiene tank car with a lantern that was burning something. Lantern batteries and bulbs were always free for the asking at the yard offices and depots. No train master wants tens of thousands of dollars in revenue being held up in a yard for lack of a dollar battery or a 25 cent bulb.

Fusee – The fusee was used in emergency situations to warn trains about a fouled track, or a train stopped on a track when it did not have authority, for instance derailed after its track-and-time had run out. Fusees could also be used to signal with, and stuck on the end of a short section of broom handle, big signals could be passed with fusees over long distances. The down side to signaling with fusees is that the hot liquid fusee material on fire would drip onto clothing and burn holes in it. And if it landed on your skin, OUCH!

Torpedo – A torpedo was used for warning other trains that a track was fouled. It was wrapped over the head of a rail. The torpedo would go off when a car or locomotive rolled over it. When such happened, the train had to immediately reduce speed. The speed depended on such things as visibility around curves and such. The only torpedoes a train I was on ever ran over were placed there by kids playing a joke, but we couldn't know that though we suspected it, so we had to treat it like a properly placed one.

Track Switch – A track switch is what some model railroaders call a “turnout”. (To me, a “turnout” is how many people show up at a concert or party.) A track switch has the purpose of routing a car onto another track, and sometimes for firing people when it's not handled properly. A peculiarity of power switches and “flop over” switches is that the throwing arm might not be in the proper position to throw the switch, in which case after throwing it, you had to return the lever to its original position to get the switch to throw. For this reason, dropping cars over a power switch was not allowed, and before dropping a car over a switch, the person had to know that the switch was working properly by testing it. I actually knew of a conductor who was fired for dropping a car over a power switch and derailling a car.

Deraill - Derails are placed in spots where it is exceedingly dangerous for a car to roll out of a track or past a certain point on a

track. There are two kinds: a one-way derail and a two-way derail. One will derail a car going in one direction. The other will derail a car going in either direction. You may remember an earlier story I wrote about jumping cabooses, where I was riding a handbrake on a caboose being dropped into a track at Blessing. The conductor had not removed the derail, which is his job in this situation. Fortunately, it was a one-way derail, and the caboose hit it going the wrong way. Due to weeds growing between the rails, I saw it on the track too late, gave a quick spin of the brake wheel, and then grabbed ahold for dear life. The caboose seemed to jump a foot in the air, and luckily came down on the rails.

Blue light or flag – A blue light or flag was used around engine terminals and car repair facilities to indicate that a track should not be entered under any circumstance. Blue light rules state that the light/flag can only be removed by the person who placed it there. The flag indicates that there are probably people working under the cars or locomotives in the track.

Radio – The radio is used in many circumstances, but principally for the following communications: between the members of a train crew, between a train crew and yardmasters or train masters, between a train crew and carmen, between a train crew and the dispatcher, between trains, between a train crew and a maintenance-of-way foreman, between a train crew and a bridge gang foreman, and just about any other kind of railroad personnel that might need to communicate with a train crew. MP radios on the Kingsville division had two channels. Some other divisions used as many as four channels.

Phone – A primitive communication device, that may no longer be in use. The phone enabled conversation with the dispatcher at places like interlockings, passing sidings, and junctions. Station clerks could talk on this phone as well. It was like a party line, and often you could hear other people talking to the dispatcher on the line, so you would have to wait until they were done. On the Kingsville Division, the phone was in a relatively small heavy duty plastic box about 2 1/2 feet tall, 2 feet wide, and 1 foot front to back. The door was hinged at the top and swung open from the bottom, and when propped open, would provide some shelter from the rain. During certain times of the year, the first thing to do after unlocking the phone box and slinging it open, was to jump back, because a swarm of wasps might quickly emerge. If wasps were in there, you would go back to the engine, grab a fusee, light it, stick it in the box, and then close it up. This would kill the wasps. The dispatcher could give you special permission sometimes to get by a red block, such as rules 350 (no opposing trains) and 104C (watch the power switch).

Rule Books – There was one main rule book, plus a brake book. The timetable also included special instructions.

Train Orders – These orders were issued to a train. There was one copy for each member of a crew. Two would be given to

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the headend, and two to the caboose. The orders in dark territory or ABS territory would contain a run order telling a train how far to run and when. There would also be orders in such territory about where to meet other trains. Slow orders gave speeds to reduce to over tracks between certain mileposts. Stop orders instructed a train to stop at a certain point before getting permission to pass over the restrictive track. Sometimes there would be an order advising about an unsafe condition, such as a damaged bridge railing, etc. During holiday periods, and order would instruct trains to travel 10 mph below the normally allowed maximum speed. Trains in CTC territory did not need a run order, as they were governed by signals. Of course, you would not leave your initial yard until the yardmaster verbally cleared you out of his yard, just like on a model railroad.

Timetable – By my time on the railroad, the timetable included few actual times. Only Amtrak trains had times listed. Mainly, the timetable had special instructions, a system map, and a diagram of the mainline of each division and/or subdivision. Such information as wyes, siding capacities, facilities at stations, etc., could be gleaned from the timetable. Speed limits on industrial spurs would be notated. Milepost locations of industries would be listed. Phone boxes containing wasps would be highlighted in yellow—okay, maybe not that last item.

Toilet – A toilet would be found on both the engines and the caboose. The engine toilet would be down in the nose of a locomotive—what I called the “hell hole”. In summer the temperature down in there would be over 100 degrees. The caboose had a more civilized affair, and was generally kept in better condition. These were chemical toilets, but often were in poor work-

ing condition.

Caboose Stove – Caboose stoves burned oil. They were large kind of square things, and put out a lot of heat. I recall getting on one caboose in winter that had been sitting in a siding for a while, and it must have been 150 degrees in that caboose. We had to open the doors and let it air out for a while before we could go in. Sometimes, the caboose would be out of oil. You could pick up coal or coke along the track sometimes and burn that in the stove in a pinch.

Water Supply – Drinking water was provided in either a metal 2 or 3 gallon jug, or in little 6 ounce plastic drinking bottles. Locomotives usually had a small refrigerator, so they had the bottles. Caboose did not have a good source of electricity, so they usually had the metal jugs. Caboose usually had a large ice box, and sometimes that would be filled with ice and the bottles.

Grip – The grip is a type of luggage. It is designed to be easy to carry with one hand, and was generally squat instead of tall like a suitcase. A typical grip would easily hold several changes of clothes, a shaving kit, a rain suit, a coat, gloves, all your rule books, snacks, some fusees, an airhose wrench, a Max Brand western, a small chess set, and just about anything else you might need. The lantern was usually affixed to the outside of the grip somehow, perhaps slipped over the handles.

Hope you enjoyed this article. I probably left out a few “tools”. Every time I proofread this article, I'd think up more tools to include in it. Time to tie up.



President Bob Werre called the meeting to order at 7:00PM and welcomed all.

Old Business: none

New Business:

With the VP out of town, President Bob were introduced this month's program "Treezilla" by Ray Byer and Jim Lemmond. This idea originated from a clinic by Mike Jobe from LSR Division 3. This is ground foam applicator to create spruces. The heart of the unit is a large clear plastic container commonly used for cheese balls. The parts/costs involved are: Giant jar of cheese balls - \$7, "Wall-wart" power supply - \$4-\$12, quick disconnect plug - \$2, 12 volt PC fan - \$7, misc bolting hardware, alligator clip, and a momentary push button. Should be able to build one for about \$25.

Step 1: Eat 2000 cheese balls

Step 2: Gain 15 pounds

Step 3: Workout to lose 15 pounds

Step 4: Clean container with goo-gone or alcohol to remove all oils

Step 5: Drill 4 holes in bottom of container to match fan pattern – keep small so air tight.

Step 6: Drill 2 holes for the power plug and the push button.

Step 7: Mount the fan in the bottom of the jar, blowing down, about 3/4" off the floor.

Step 8: Fabricate and install 4 fins about 1" x 5" running vertically up the walls, spaced 90 degrees apart. The is to make the air flow more turbulent.

Step 9: Mount the alligator clip to a bolt and knob to the jar lid so you can turn the clip from outside the lid.

Use any "cheap" hairspray for glue. Use the tree armature of you choice, such as Mckenzie Brother's products. Use Scenic Express of Woodland Scenes fine foam. Put a small amount of foam in the jar, spray the armature with hairspray, mount to the lip clip, put the lid on the jar with the tree hanging upside down in the jar. Pulse the pushbutton to create a foam wind storm. Done – the tree is now flocked. Remove, let dry, and install on your layout.

Information on this clinic will be posted on the SanJac website soon.

Rebate Program:

A board meeting was held to discuss a NMRA rebate program for members. The plan is to have SanJac members pre-pay their NMRA dues and then get reimbursed by the club for any amount of around \$20, depending on the success of the train show and health of the treasury. A motion was made by Jim Long to: Have the club partially reimburse San Jac member's NMRA dues based on the club's board of directors recommendations. This passed by voice vote. Details to be worked out in the coming months.

Election of officers:

With no "official" slate of nominees for officers; Gilbert Freitag has volunteered for one more term as Sec/Treas and Kelly Russel for Vice President. The office of President is still open. Bob Werre will cover for one more month, but we need a "volunteer" to step forward ASAP.

Jim Long mentioned that Don Bozman is going to have cataract surgery next week. We wish him well.

Website: Jim Lemmond

Check website for updates, including info on tonight's clinic.

Derail: Bob Sabol, No Report

LSR: No Report

NMRA:

Ron Burns: 2012 NMRA Convention

Ron attended a lot of layout tours and some clinics. He mainly focused on clinics on the history of railroads in the Michigan area. They started with wagons pulled by oxen on wooden rails. The convention hotel was nice and all activities were in the hotel proper, except the trade show. The trade shoe did not seem to be as crowded as normal, it had a lot of layouts, hobby shops, and manufacturers set up. Food was close by and reasonably priced. \$8.00/day parking was a good deal too. The contest room had "light" participation and not many big displays. The White Creek live steam layout was first class and very worth going to. Ron attended a murder mystery train ride on his way back home in southern Michigan, which was good. There were a lot of casinos in Michigan for those who like that.

Division 8:

Jim Lemmond announced the Division 8 picnic at Zube Park on October 13th from 10AM on. The Division will provide bread, meat, and drinks, members please bring a desert. Election of officers will take place at the picnic.

It was brought up that the roles of club foremen are not active at this time. A call for a vote to contribute \$500 towards HAL's bridge fund was brought up.

Fall Layout Tours:

Email Craig at sanjactour@sbcglobal.net to get on the list.

30 sets of crossbucks were made for fall layout tour home owners thanks to Bob Werre, Steve Sandifer, and Bob Barnett.

Refreshments were thanks to Don and Bettye Bozman and Virginia Freitag.

Bob Barnett volunteered to bring the snacks next month.

Treasurer's report, Gilbert Freitag:

Expenses: \$143.80 Home Layout Crossbuck supplies

Income: none

\$5052.14 Ending balance

Anyone needing a name tag, email Gilbert at gilbertfreitag@att.net

He will try to run another batch soon, and has Bob Werre & Eddie Moore so far.

Meeting adjourned at 8:55 PM

-Respectfully submitted, Gilbert Freitag, Secretary / Treasurer



San Jac RR Club Meetings take place
the first Tuesday of each month

Bayland Community Center

6400 Bissonnet St. Houston, Tx

[Click here for directions](#)

Visitors are always welcome!



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Do Not Use www.

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Next Meeting

TUESDAY

OCT 2

See You There!

Division 8 Picnic at Zube Park

October 13, 2012 10am-3pm

Cold cuts, hot dogs, and drinks furnished by Division 8, with train rides courtesy of Houston Live Steamers!

Division 8 members: please bring salads, beans, chips/dip, desserts

Take 290W past the outlet mall and exit Roberts Rd. Follow Roberts Rd to Zube Park, and park in the large lot next to the Live Steamers engine house.

Meeting agenda includes election of officers; contact Jim Lemmond at jimlem@verizon.net if you're interested!



Vintage postcard for steam rail passengers