



# The DERAIL

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

September 2012

Volume 43, Issue 09

## President's Message

Bob Werre

Greetings members! By the time you folks read this newsletter, your elected board will have met and hopefully we will have made a couple of decisions that will help your club continue a healthy existence into the future.

A big part of is effort, is a way of encouraging new members to give us a try and stick with us. This club more than any other has helped the model railroad hobby in the Houston area, as it's main mission. Since I've been privileged to attend, this club has worked to continuing and expansion of the Greater Houston Area Train show, the always better clinics and in fostering fellowship in our hobby. I've always admired the way members have stepped up to keep the show moving and having a lot of fun doing just that! As our hobby matures we might have to do a more thorough search for those folks. I think I started model rr'ing in the Houston area as a young man, Gilbert Freitag was in high school and Ken Caulking was running trains all night long! We can't go back to those days, but we can keep things running for a new generation of modelers providing we can round them up!

Of course, the other main part of making this club work is bringing on a new slate of candidates to take up the reins. I was surprised when Robert Ashcroft asked me to join the team two years ago, but I felt that I might be able to add just a little to the club's excellent history. As I've probably might have mentioned, I've never been president of anything in my past...

so that's now been put in my bucket list! I thank you!—now on to better things.

I do hope we have a report on the NMRA national from those who managed to find their way to and from Grand Rapids. I usually attend our national S meet, but I wasn't able to make it there either. The fact that it was held in Chattanooga this year didn't help...it's a neat railroad town and a must stop for Civil War historians. The guys in the National Association of S Gaugers are almost a fraternity in the way our club is. Most have known each other for years but it's super easy for new members to join the ranks.

In the next couple of weeks a couple of volunteers and myself will be putting together some RR crossbucks for those on the Fall Tour. You might recall I had brought this up last year, but none in the club seemed to need them. I then put out the call to others on the tour and the response was really good. So now we've got to build them.

With the Fall Tour in mind, please let Craig know if you will be open this year. If you're not going to show the progress on your layout, then save some gas money to visit the other fine layouts!



RailPictures.Net - Image Copyright © Chris Starnes



HIGH SPEED TEXAS RAIL

In 1991 the Texas High Speed Rail Authority awarded a 50-year high speed rail franchise to the Texas TGV Corporation - a consortium of Morrison Knudsen (USA), Bombardier (Canada), Alstom (France/UK), Crédit Lyonnais (France) and Merrill Lynch (USA). The plan was to connect Houston, Dallas, Austin and San Antonio with a privately financed high speed train system at an estimated cost of \$5.6 billion. The train would quickly take passengers from one city to the next at prices designed to compete with or beat other transport options - the same model Southwest Airlines used 20 years earlier to break in to the Texas market where it served the same three cities.

Despite that similarity however, and despite the fact that funding for the project was to come entirely from private sources (Texas did not allow the use of public money), Southwest immediately lobbied against the proposal. They claimed that the train would require government subsidies of close to \$100 per passenger, and since all of their fares between those cities were well below \$100, their claim was that with the same subsidy, they could fly everyone in those markets for nothing! So together with a group of lobbyists, they created legal barrier after legal barrier and prevented the consortium from moving forward, resulting in the entire project being scuttled in 1994.

Fast forward to April 2009. In an attempt to revive the economy, President Obama stated that "High-speed rail is long-overdue" and that "major new high-speed rail line(s) will gener-

ate many thousands of construction jobs over several years, as well as permanent jobs for rail employees and increased economic activity in the destinations these trains serve."

Texas was included in the national plan but this time however, Houston's portion of the high speed rail line did not include any other Texas cities – instead, it was labeled 'The Gulf Coast Corridor' and was to connect Houston with New Orleans, Mobile, Birmingham and Atlanta. Three years later, no progress has been made.

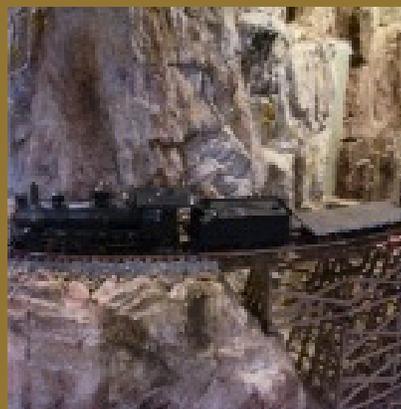
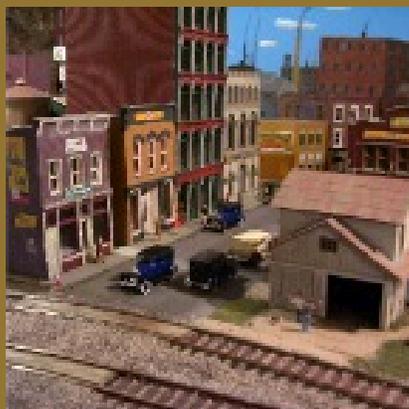
Fast forward again to April 2012. During an official congressional visit to Japan, South Korea and China Congress-woman Sheila Jackson Lee of Houston traveled between Osaka and Tokyo on Japan's world famous high speed rail system.



After her ride, Congress-woman Lee said "This is absolutely the right direction America should be moving toward. We should be looking at high-speed rail that can provide clean, safe and efficient transportation that can move people from one destination to another". She then went on to say that both Japan and

*(Continued on page 5)*

**Guess the Layout!**



Answer to Julys' Guess the Layout: Kevin Kohl

At the 2012 Lone Star Region Convention held in Houston a few weeks ago two Houston area members received these prestigious President’s Award, Loren Neufeld and Virginia Freitag. In the last month’s Derail an article by Jim Lemmond discussed Loren’s involvement in the LSR and his contributions. This month we’ll discuss some of Virginia Freitag’s contributions to the hobby of model railroading.

LSR president Bill McPherson proclaimed Virginia the “First Lady of the Lone Star Region” and few would argue with that. Virginia, Gil and their entire family have been fixtures on the Houston and Texas model railroading scene for decades. Virginia has served and the Lone Star Region Chairperson for Non-Rail activities and served as the Non-Rail Chair at the 2012 LSR Gulf Coast Limited. Virginia also served as Secretary-Treasurer for the San Jacinto Model Railroad Club for several terms. As impressive as these achievements sound, let’s review a little history:

Gil and Virginia joined the NMRA and LSR in 1965 and began work on the Stony Creek and Western in 1966. At the 2007 LSR Convention in Round Rock Gil presented a clinic entitled “Forty Years of Operation on the SC&W”. Let’s take a look at what that means in practical terms.

- Virginia has opened up her home to layout visitations for nearly 40 years. The SC&W was one of the first layouts to open on the San Jacinto Club November Layout Tours starting about 1973, and has been open for two days (and some years four days) since that first year. Before that the layout appeared on the LSR Layout Tours. The Freitags have several registration books filled with names of visitors to the SC&W. That is literally thousands of visitors over the years.
- Over a similar time frame the SC&W has been oper-

ated 12 to 20 times per year including operating sessions for “the locals” and special operating sessions arranged for out of town (and often out of state) visitors.

- And if having that many visitors was not enough, how about hosting a dinner party for 60 to 80 people once a year at Christmas time – most years within a week of the afore-mentioned open houses.

The events described above required hours of preparation and planning – for a hobby that many spouses would just as soon avoid.

Virginia is also the proud owner/operator of a G-Scale garden railroad in the back yard of their home. In case you have lost count, that is one of four Freitag railroads that have appeared on the layout tours in recent years: Gil and Virginia’s Stony Creek & Western, Virginia’s G-Scale garden railroad, son Gilbert’s HO scale Santa Fe railroad in Pearland and brother-in-law Gus Freitag’s Colorado- based railroad a few block to the north.

The layouts listed above do not include Gil and Virginia’s very active involvement in the Houston Area Live Steamers’ Cypress Creek and Southern Railroad in Zube Park. They were particularly active in the construction of Phase 3 and Phase 4 of that railroad.

I think the members of the San Jacinto Model Railroad Club would agree that Bill McPherson was correct in his assessment of Virginia Freitag being the “First lady of the LSR”.

**Congratulations Virginia, for an award**

**WELL DESERVED!!**



During my working years as well as the subsequent years of retirement I took many trips to many places. Most of these trips were by plane and the travel time, including overseas trips, were usually measured in hours. I recently found some photographs from a trip taken in 1956 that was by ship and train which took over a week to complete and 56 years later I can still recall some of the details.

The story began in the summer of 1954. At that time I had completed two years of junior college in California plus two more years at the University of North Dakota working toward a degree in engineering. Since I had attended college for four years, I was fair game for the draft during the summer. I was drafted and passed my physical and took my basic training at Fort Ord in California. I applied for Officer Candidate School but later changed my mind which caused me to be separated from my training unit.

When my orders came through they directed me to travel by air to Camp Kilmer, New Jersey to await the next troop ship to Germany. After about a week of waiting, I sailed to Bremerhaven, a port in northern Germany. From Bremerhaven I traveled by troop train to an army base near Zweibrucken in southern Germany for classification and assignment. I was assigned to the 77<sup>th</sup> Armored Infantry, a security company in Bremerhaven and was sent north with about a dozen other replacements.

As I found out later, our group was an unusual one in that each of us had multiple years of college. We were selected because the commander of the 77<sup>th</sup> had complained that the average education of the men in his company was below the sixth grade and the average took a jump when we reported there. In my case it turned out well. Bremerhaven was an enclave in the British occupied zone of West Germany under control of the US Army and I liked being in a small unit in a large city as opposed to serving in a large unit in the countryside.

The base had units from the Army, Air Force and Navy but was much smaller than it had been in the years just after WW2. About six months after reporting for duty, I obtained keys to a defunct model railroad club on the base. The club had never completed the layout and while it had bench work and track, there were no rolling stock or control components. I purchased a German HO gauge train set and operated it in the clubhouse when I was able. The train ran smoothly and was far superior the American HO layout I had tried to build about six years earlier.

I learned that the Army had a three month early release program that would allow me to re-enter college in the fall. I applied and was accepted. When my papers came through, I started sailing home a few days later. In troop ships, the cabin space is

reserved for officers and those traveling with dependents. My group, traveling to Fort Ord in California traveled below deck as seen below. I am at the right.



After a rough trip during which we had to spend our time in our crowded quarters, we eventually docked at the Brooklyn Military Terminal. Our assigned bus took us to the CNJ railroad terminal in Jersey City which I remember as being a dark and dingy place. Waiting for us were many old heavyweight coaches. We found our way into our assigned cars and settled in for our trip not knowing where we were headed or when we would leave. We arrived later in the day in Washington, DC

The station in Washington was clean and modern and a sharp contrast to the one in Jersey City. It was a short walk to the Capitol, however, we were not allowed to leave the station and most of us hung around the bar. I saw a friend across the room and picked up my beer to join him. I was stopped and told that carrying a drink was not permitted and that I would have to have a waitress move it, which I did. To this day, this was the only place I have ever encountered this rule.

We were notified that our cars were attached to a B & O passen-

*(Continued on page 7)*

*(Continued from page 2)*

South Korea are interested in helping Texas build a high-speed rail line between Houston and Dallas.

Congress-woman Lee said that she had fought to secure \$15 million in initial funding from the U.S. Department of Transportation for the Texas high-speed rail line between Houston and Dallas that will include only one or two stops in-between. She said she hoped to press the Obama administration to support the Texas line and that she would oppose any authorities attempting to invoke the power of eminent domain.

“When people see the value of high speed rail – the efficiency, the capital it brings in, the jobs it creates – they will be impressed,” Congress-woman Lee said.

Anyone expect to see Texas High Speed Rail in our life-time?



Lolita, Texas was important in my life for two reasons. It was where I did my last year of band directing at the Industrial Junior High School. And it was where the Point Comfort and Northern connected with the Missouri Pacific's Kingsville Division.

Lolita did not have a passing siding, but did have three interchange tracks. Missouri Pacific trains northbound and southbound would stop there to set out and/or pick up cars. The tracks were on the south side of the mainline. From the lead on the south end, the PC&N curved southward towards Point Comfort.

Most of the pickups were made going northward. Conversely, most of the setouts were done going southward.

Lolita was also the origin of a unit train of aluminum sulfate headed up towards Rockdale or someplace near there. It usually numbered about 40 to 45 cars, and ran three days a week. When times were slack and the cars numbered less than maybe 35 or so, they'd only run two trains a week to get the trains back up to around 40 to 45 cars.

At first, the unit train ran with a full 4-man crew just like the other trains. During my last several years, the railroad made an agreement with the union to use a 3-man crew. The agreement included a train length agreement, and I think that was something like no more than about 40 cars. If I remember correctly, they also got rid of the cabooses in about 1983 or 84, and the unit train was the first cabooseless through train on the Kingsville Division. Of course, most of the traveling switchers had already been working without cabooses for many years.

Dropping the caboose was probably a good idea from one viewpoint—the rear brakeman's. When you boarded a northbound aluminum sulfate train at Lolita, the first thing the rear brakeman did was batten down the hatches, i.e., shut all the doors and windows. Before the train got up to track speed, there'd be a veritable cloud of aluminum sulfate dust blowing off the cars. If the windows were open, it'd be on everything including all flat horizontal surfaces and down your shirt collar. Within 2 miles, though, it would all be blown off, and you could open the windows again.

When picking up northbound, the conductor would usually ride the headend out of Vanderbilt to help with the pickup. He'd have to pick up waybills from the PC&N box, and work with a switch list. I recall one night we were easing northward down the mainline alongside the Lolita PC&N tracks doing about 5 mph. I was shining my Conger lantern at the freight car numbers while the conductor was making a list of what was in track 1. The rear brakeman might have walked up to help out after we stopped. I can't remember.

I heard a story back then about a crew a number of years before making a pickup at Lolita headed north. When they got their pickups together, and shoved back on the mainline to couple onto their train, it wasn't there. They kept shoving back down the track and found that it had rolled and bottomed out at the La Salle River bridge.

Another time on a southbound train, we were to set out at Lolita. I was rear brakeman on the caboose. The conductor told me there wasn't much to set out, so I could just stay on the caboose. When the train came to a stop, the caboose was smack dab in the middle of the grade crossing at the north end of Lolita. Unfortunately, the radio was not working, so I couldn't inform the headend to pull up. Then the brakes went kachow, and I knew they were proceeding with the setout.

Pickup truck headlights were soon illuminating the caboose. What could I do? If I walked to the headend to inform them to clear the crossing, by the time I got there, they would probably be done with the work. Also, by doing that, I ran the risk of getting left behind if I was only partway to the headend when they completed the work and left town. They would expect me to be on the caboose—not trudging up along the ballast. I stuck it out on the caboose, but tried to hide away from the windows. Fortunately, no constable showed up to haul me off to jail.

I recently went on Google Maps to peruse the tracks of the PC&N and was amazed to see dozens and dozens of tracks down along their lines. Yards here and there and all over the place. I conservatively estimated at least 1800 freight cars up and down along that line. I can't be sure, but there seems to be another railroad down there that comes almost up against the PC&N from the east, and looks like it might have connected at one time. This line comes off the UP (MP) a mile or two further north. Not sure if it is a UP branch, or part of the PC&N. Some but not most of those 1800 cars were on that line.

Lolita had a nice cafe right by the tracks that was noted for its pies. Alas, with no passing siding, trains were seldom parked there during a meal period, especially since it was only 5 miles from Vanderbilt, the crew change point. However, I remember eating there at least once with a train crew. It could have been a work train or something. We might have been limoed from further north—maybe Laward—to eat there, or maybe we ran the engine light down to Lolita.

On the highway from Lolita to the coast, several miles from town, the old depot had been relocated to somebody's farm. That was about the smallest combination depot I ever saw. It was a wood frame building with eaves (not a hip roof), and probably measured no larger than about 24 by 16'.

From Lolita to Laward was another 5 miles. About halfway was a curve, and infringing on the right-of-way by about 5' was a pumping oil well. We had an engineer boomer off the Rock Island, or maybe the Milwaukee Road, who came down to work on our division. He just couldn't get over the fact that the railroad would allow an oil well on the right-of-way.

As a side note, I was looking at Google maps and found my old junior high school in Lolita. I found the building that was my old band hall, but something was strange. No cars were parked there. Maybe they photographed it on a Sunday, I thought. Yet the football field had no yard lines and had soccer goals set up! I remember the coaches had had trouble with gophers on that field. Curiosity got the better of me and I went to the Industrial I.S.D. website and found the answer. The old junior high school facility was closed down and a new one built—probably in Vanderbilt.

Google Maps is a real boon for railroad research. That oil well on company property is no longer there, and the branch line to the nuclear power plant south of Bay City, built when I was on the line, is already abandoned. I guess if they need to move something large into or out of that facility, they'll have to truck it or rebuild the track, which still seems to exist in most places, but no longer goes across some roads, and has concrete road barricades in other places.

If anybody ever drops by Lolita, bring me a piece of pie.

*(Continued from page 4)*

ger train and we could board. I remember that our cars were locked out from the civilian cars forward and, also, that the route was quite scenic. The next day we rolled into downtown Chicago. Based on what I have since learned, we were in the former Grand Central Terminal, which was far from impressive. Along with a few others, I went forward to look at the streamlined diesel engine that had brought us to Chicago and also talk to the crew. They said that it took a lot of seniority to run these engines which explains why both of them looked to be in their sixties

The stop in Chicago was a long one and we found a place to eat and then went to a bar near the station to await our departure. While were in the bar a group of men loudly stated that the military was highly paid compared to when they served. We went over to them and explained that we were draftee's headed home plus what we were actually paid. They changed their tune and bought us a round of beers and we returned the favor. At the designated hour we staggered aboard our home on wheels.

The next day found us rolling through the Rocky Mountains along the route of the Union Pacific. The photograph below was taken in Green River, Wyoming .



We made one more hook up in Utah, however, I'm not sure if it was to a Union Pacific or to a Western Pacific passenger train. The main thing was that we were allowed into the rest of the train. The photograph below shows me having a cool one in the dome lounge.

The train ride ended in Oakland, California where we were boarded buses for the final leg to Fort Ord. Fort Ord had a railroad station but it had not been used as such when I first went there. When I arrived as a recruit, we were pulled off the train in Salinas in the middle of the night and driven to the base in 2 ½ ton trucks. On my return to civilian life, I left Fort Ord by bus in daylight which is also the name of the train I rode from Salinas back to Los Angeles.

Richard B Setterlund

June 26, 2012

Meeting minutes August 7, 2012

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

Old Business:

none

New Business:

Vice President Kelly Russell announced the evening program, a double header.

First up was Blake Boggs reporting on his recent Colorado trip. A Power Point slide show beginning with shots of railroad equipment and structures in Amarillo. Then off to shots around SanteFe, Chama, Antonito, Alamosa, Monte Vista, Durango, Rockwood, Silverton, Ridgeway (home of the galloping geese – Blake's favorite), Ophir, Gunnison, Creede, Georgetown Loop, and Central City. Then it was off to Blake's favorite point of the trip, Goose Fest at the Colorado RR Museum. Six geese were there, what a sight. Finally off to Colorado Springs, and Chama before returning home. Blake pointed out many pieces of equipment that “and man, if you have a million dollars” you could get this restored. This was a good slide show, with lots of narrow gauge steam shots too.

Next up was Leslie Bodak with recent photos of rail fanning with the Bodak's.

Many shots of railroad equipment, mostly locomotives from: Hearn, Galveston, Houston, Flatonia, Lake Charles, Brownwood, Temple, Mumford, Bryan, Cleburn, Sealy, Jefferson, Marshall, and others were shown.

Next month's program will be by Ray Byer and Jim Lemmond.

Bob Werre stated that on first weekend in October there will be a show at the Galveston RR museum.

Website: Jim Lemmond

No report

Derail: Bob Sabol asked for layout briefs and articles to keep the Derail interesting.

LSR:

Leslie Bodak announced Lindsay Bodak's award for First Place in Diesel and the Youth Award and the Linda Little Award and is currently working on her golden spike award. Ray Byer Presented the Linda Little Award at the meeting.

NMRA:

no report

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.

Train Show:

Bob Barnett questioned booking our train show for Feb 16th, 2013. The Train Expo scheduled 1 week before our show, again, frustrating. Was this intentional, we don't know, but so far it has not hurt our attendance. A hand vote was passed to keep our date and hope we still get good vendor and public support. Bob Werre brought up a discussion of possibly going to a two day show.

Fall Layout Tours:

Craig Brantley has sent out emails to see who is interested on being on this year's tours. Areas have been designated for each weekend. Discussions were made on what should or should not be included in the tour guide. Email Craig at sanjac-tour@sbcglobal.net to get on the list.

Refreshments were thanks to Angie and Dianne Caulking and Virginia Freitag.

Betty Bozman volunteered to bring the snacks next month.

Treasurer's report, Gilbert Freitag:

Expenses:

\$2200 Stafford Centre Deposit

\$389.70 Freitag Award Bowls

\$1800 2nd Stafford deposit

Income:

none

\$5195.94 Ending balance

NOTE:

Anyone needing a name tag, email Gilbert @ gilbert-freitag@att.net

He will try to run another batch soon.

Have Bob Werre & Eddie Moore so far.

Meeting adjourned at 8:50 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!



## Officers

**President:** Bob Werre

*Bob@BobWphoto.com*

**Vice-President:** Kelly Russell

*krussl@yahoo.com*

**Secretary/Treasurer:** Gilbert Freitag

*gilbertfreitag@att.net*

**Director:** Tom Cobb

**Division 8 Rep:** Tracy Mitchell, MMR

*traymit@comcast.net*

## Derail Staff

**Editor:** Bob Sabol

*bsabol@stillmeadow.com*

**Production:** Kathryn Monds

*kmonds@stillmeadow.com*

**Regular Contributors:**

Henri Morris

*morris-hou@att.net*

Peter Bryan

*peterb@pdq.net*

David Currey

*texasandlouisiana@msn.com*

**[sanjac.leoslair.com](http://sanjac.leoslair.com)**

Do Not Use www.

**Webmaster: Jim Lemmond**

## Next Meeting

**TUESDAY**

**SEPT 4**

**See You There!**



## San Jac Fall Layout Tour 2012 Dates

October 20-21 **East** (Kingwood, Crosby)

October 27-28 **South** (Friendswood, Dickenson, Galveston, Pearland)

November 2-3 **HOOTERS** Operating Weekend  
**No Layouts Open**

November 10-11 **North** (Spring, Conroe, Tomball, Bryan/College Station)

November 17-18 **West** (Katy, Richmond)

November 24-25 Layouts traditionally open on Thanksgiving weekend, Baytown

December 1-2 **No Layouts Open**

Thank you for participating in the World's BEST Hobby!