



# The DERAIL

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

June 2013

Volume 44, Issue 06

## In Memoriam... Mike Spoor

It is with sadness that I am reporting the passing of Mike Spoor.

As most of you know, Mike had a World Class HO model railroad based on the CB&Q Railroad out of Chicago in the early 50's. I had the dubious honor (grin) of operating on the railroad many times over the years, and it was quite an experience, especially if you drew the assignment to operate the "Zephyr Pit" in Chicago for an evening!! Whew!!!

I have been told that his work/operating group will remain intact and continue to build, maintain and operate the railroad, with Monika's blessing. Tom Palmer has been asked to be the custodian of the railroad.

I first met Mike in the early 80's when we were both members of the original Houston Society of Model Engineers (HSME) and we had our club railroad located on the second floor of Houston Union Station. I last saw him about a month ago when he was in Hospice before coming home for the last time. We visited for almost 3 hours. He couldn't get out of bed, but his voice and demeanor were as commanding as ever, a testament, I'm sure, to his days as an officer in the Marine Corps!

So, we lose yet another member of the model railroad community here in Houston. This sucks...

Marty Naul

Mike was kind enough to let me use his layout to shoot a cover for a book featuring some Rock Island passenger equipment. He feared that he would be teased for it, but took everything in good humor.

Yes, a great modeler!

Bob Werre



## In Memoriam... Mike Spoor

MICHAEL JOHN SPOOR MICHAEL JOHN SPOOR passed away on May 2, 2013 after a brief and valiant battle against melanoma. Mike was born in Chicago, Illinois, on June 23, 1948 to John and Dorothy Spoor, who preceded him in death. Mike was also predeceased by his sister, Martha Feng, and aunt, Jean Shesler.

Mike attended elementary school in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, high school in Jacksonville, Florida, and graduated from Washington & Lee University in Lexington, Virginia. Upon graduation he joined the United States Marine Corp and proudly served for 10 years on active duty and with the Organized Marine Corps Reserves, attaining the rank of Captain. Upon being released from active duty with the Marines, Mike began a banking career that spanned almost four decades, beginning in Florida in the mid-1970s, before establishing himself in Houston in 1980. He is best remembered for running Banc One Corp.'s loan workout operations, Bonnet Resources and Banc One Management and Consulting Corp., which were set up during the savings and loan crisis to manage and liquidate distressed assets.

After the bailout crisis ended, Mike moved over to Banc One's commercial mortgage origination unit, Banc One Loan Origination Corp. He left Banc One during the late 1990s and subsequently held lending posts with First Union Capital Markets and later GMAC Commercial Mortgage Corp., before launching M.J. Spoor & Company in 2002.

Mike formed M.J. Spoor & Company to provide commercial debt placement and business advisory services to commercial real estate developers and investors, as well as owners of commercial businesses. Mike, along with Laura Pattillo, his esteemed colleague and treasured friend, worked tirelessly to make the Company a success.

Mike earned professional degrees from the American Bankers' Association National Commercial Lending Graduate School at the University of Oklahoma and Southern Methodist University's Southwestern Graduate School of Banking. Mike was a longtime railroad enthusiast, railroad historian and author, and nationally known model railroader. He was a member of The Burlington Route Historical Society and served on the Board of Directors and as Editor of Burlington Route Historical Society publications for many years. He also authored five books on the Burlington and was working on a sixth volume at the time of his death. Mike's Chicago Burlington & Quincy Railroad Chicago & Aurora Divisions is regarded as one of the top model railroad layouts in the country. He was also an active participant in the nationally recognized Prototype Modelers and ProRail groups.

Mike was on Washington & Lee University's varsity tennis team for four years, represented the U.S. Marine Corps against the U.S. Army's Stan Smith (former world #1), and became very active in league tennis over the last 12 years, during which time his teams qualified for 15 state and four national championships. He was also a volunteer and Board member for the Houston Tennis Association.

In October 2012, Mike began the match of his life, against melanoma, an impossibly tough opponent, to which Mike nevertheless refused to yield. To him it was "just another hill to climb." Displaying rugged determination and the spirit of a true Marine, Mike continually defied his prognosis, fighting the cancer for months longer than predicted. OORAH! Mike is survived by Monika, his wife of 33 years, and his son Michael, a Sergeant in the U.S. Army. He is also survived by his brother and sister-in-law, John and Lannie Spoor, and numerous nieces and nephews. Mike will be dearly missed by his many friends in the tennis and model railroad communities, and a whole host of friends, clients and the many people he met during his banking career.

There will be a memorial service at 10 a.m. on Thursday, May 16, 2013, at Chapelwood United Methodist Church (11140 Greenbay, Houston, Texas 77024). In lieu of flowers, donations may be made in memory of Mike to Community Certified Development Corporation Scholarship Fund, Inc., (8590 Highway 6 North, Houston, TX 77095, Attention: MJ Spoor Scholarship Fund), Houston Hospice, MD Anderson Cancer Center, or Wounded Warrior Project.

It is finally done. After a year of construction, the UP has double tracked the Sunset line along South Main from S. Post Oak Blvd. to Missouri City. It has been a very slow process, but interesting to watch.

The work began last summer with initial grading and extensive sub-roadbed work. The mix of aggregate and soils in the sub-roadbed was as good as any Interstate highway. It seemed to take forever. Next was the laying out of ties. The old main is laid on wooden ties, and the worn ones were replaced as this process continued. The new main is laid on concrete ties as are the crossovers that were added. The concrete ties were laid out beginning at S. Post Oak and rail placed on them. Then the street crossing at Chimney rock was cut in. The track looked funny suspended in the air. A set of crossovers were constructed as well as some panel track at S. Post Oak for later installation. This was repeated in sections over time. Ballast trains came by, including the Western Railroad conveyer belt train, to provide the depth of ballast required. Long straight stretches were completed, and then the sections were cut to install crossovers. The first part of this year also saw the replacement of the signal system for the entire length. The last thing to be done was to cut the track in at S. Post Oak and the east end of Missouri City siding.

There is now an extension of the double track that is the East Belt through West Junction and all the way to Missouri City. At Missouri City it becomes a single main to Hwy 6 where double tracks go to Grand Parkway, back to a single track over Grand Parkway and back to double track to Harlem. There are new crossovers at S. Post Oak and at Fondren.

Since I travel this road daily, I see a lot of trains stacked up. The BNSF comes in at West Junction from New South Yard paralleling Holmes Road. Trains are frequently stopped awaiting clearance at West Junction. UP and KCS trains can be seen stacked up coming and going anywhere along the line, but most frequently now between Missouri City and Fondren Road and between S. Post Oak and West Junction. With the crossovers, they can weave in and out using both tracks as the main line.

It took them a year to lay 3.8 miles of track. See, there is a prototype for everything.



One thing of great importance when I was on the railroad was the train, track, or switch list: a list of the cars in a train or in a track. If not for such lists, railroading would be a much more daunting endeavor. Can you imagine a switcher crew trying to switch a yard from memory of where each car was located? Can you imagine somebody in the appropriate department at company headquarters trying to remember where every car was located on the system? Let's not forget that in a real sense, data is stored in computers in list fashion, or at least there is an index in list order.

Thank goodness, then, for these lists. Whoever came up with the first list of anything deserves a heartfelt thanks of sincere gratitude from railroaders the world over. He or she is probably long forgotten. It might have been a caveman scratching lines in the sand with a stick: "get big rock", "get fish", "get home for supper", and "compliment wife on how slim she looks in that new goatskin".

In railroading, switch lists and train lists are of paramount importance. Switching a yard from memory would be dang near impossible. First off, you'd have to drag every track and commit to memory every car in it. Then you would have to have in your possession some kind of information on the cars so you'd know where every one was going, and this itself could not be in list form, or you'd just use that. Perhaps somebody with a photographic memory who can remember what he ate for breakfast on July 17, 1989 could switch a yard from memory, but everybody else would be up a track without a locomotive.

So thank goodness for the list. On the railroad, such lists are generally either train lists, or track lists. A switch list is usually a track list, but could conceivably just be a list of the cars to get out of a track that contains additional cars not on the list.

In 1967, to automate the making of train lists, the ill-fated bar coding system was developed, and every freight car contained a unique barcode on its side. While the barcode eventually became highly successful and is now found on virtually everything purchased, the railroad application proved unsuccessful

in the long run. While effective at first, eventually the barcodes got dirty or graffitied up so that the computer could not read some barcodes. Also, sometimes the car would be rocking or bouncing as it went by the readers and this messed up the scanners. This meant somebody had to go out and manually check the track or observe the cut of cars or train as it rolled by. We'll discount the barcode for the rest of this article, since it was so short-lived, and not really applicable to our hobby of model railroading. Who knows, though, perhaps Walthers will one day market an operating scale version of the barcode system. However, if we are to be prototypical, we should weather out the barcodes on some of our rolling stock so they can't be read.

In railroading, there were several methods of getting lists of the cars in a train or in a track. Whenever I worked the Sweeney Switcher, we met in the morning every day at 8:00 am (if I remember correctly) Monday through Saturday. We'd usually sit around for a few minutes waiting on instructions. Some of the time, I'd hear that the clerk was still out walking the tracks. That meant he was out manually making a list of the cars in the tracks. I think back then I thought he had to walk all three tracks in the small yard, and possibly others such as the Chemical Racks (which were usually empty), but perhaps if he had a way of knowing that a track had not changed its cars since the previous day, he did not have to walk all of them.

Eventually, within a few minutes, he'd be back at the depot with his lists. He'd then have to enter these numbers into the computer system, so there would be some more delay. Once entered, he could then print out lists of each track and provide these to our conductor. These would simply be a list of the cars in each track, and would not indicate anything about how we would switch them. To indicate that, the conductor and/or the clerk would mark up the lists with pen or pencil to indicate that. Once that was completed, we could get out and start switching. I wondered why they did not move our start time back to 8:30 am, since that was usually about the time we'd get started switching, but as fond as I am about work,

*(Continued on page 5)*



*(Continued from page 4)*

I've never been averse to getting paid for sitting on my duff.

I think one reason may have been that the railroad wanted us to get as early a start as possible, so that meant being sure we were on duty at the earliest possible time the switch lists might be ready. It also should be mentioned that the station clerk had other duties besides our list. He had to write up our train orders and copy them from the dispatcher verbally. Since the dispatcher had other duties besides administering to the Sweeney Switcher, there could easily be a delay getting the orders. The station agent might occasionally have to copy and pass up orders to a passing train. Also, a high priority freight might be heading our way, and the dispatcher may not have given us track and time yet. Remember, "Hurry up and wait" is the war cry of railroading.

Train lists were another matter. They were put together from track lists, which were usually originated by a method called "picling" (sic). I've brought up this term before, and I used to think it was an acronym for "put in computer list" or something like that, but J. D. Santucci at [www.railroad.net](http://www.railroad.net) states it means, "Perpetual Inventory and Car Location". After a number of switching moves in the yard, the conductor would take off to the depot where he'd give the results of his switching to a clerk. (Eventually, they put a crew shack at the south end of the yard, and the conductor could do it over the phone.) This picling would indicate what tracks he had put what cars. This might not necessarily agree with where he was supposed to put the cars. A track might get full, and he'd have to put cars in another track different from what the switch list had been marked up to do. There might be extra cars not on the list. Cars might be missing. Occasionally, I'd be in the depot and see a conductor picling to the clerk. He would do it orally, since the clerk might not be able to interpret his marked-up list correctly.

These lists were kept in a running fashion, hence the "perpetual" word in the acronym above, so if a car got out of place, it might not be in the track it was supposed to be. Also, the cars might not have been

put into the track in the order he thought he'd put them in there. So such lists were sometimes only approximations. They'd usually have the correct cars, but not necessarily in the correct order. Indeed, it was quite common for a train list generated from these track or switch lists to have cars out of order, missing, or extra. A particularly common occurrence was for a block of cars to be in the right place, but in the wrong order within itself. This was one of the things a train or switcher crew had to keep their eyes out for.

For example, the head brakeman pulling pins would have a list with all the blocks of cars going into which tracks marked in ink. However, when the locomotive dragged a track out of the yard to classify it, the conductor would double-check the list to make sure it was correct. Sometimes, there might be a car in a cut out of place, so it might have to be handled separately or something. The head brakeman had to be paying attention for this sort of thing when kicking cars, and notice when the conductor might signal him not to pull a pin where the switch list was marked, but to pull the pin so as to be able to place the errant car either where it belonged or temporarily out of the way. If an extra car not on the list showed up, but the conductor could tell it was, say, an Amoco car, he might go ahead and make an educated guess and switch it to the track with the Amocos.

Sometimes, the conductor might decide to switch a few cars differently from the way he had marked up the list. If the head brakeman saw him give the "no" hand signal, that would usually be followed by a number hand signal indicating the new number of cars to pull the pin on and let roll. The conductor might also notice that the last car to kick was going to the same destination as the first car in the next track to switch. No use kicking each car separately, so in that case the conductor might signal the "no" signal, and then the "drag track so-and-so" signal, and the two cars would be kicked together. Or perhaps the next track to be dragged and switched was the same track the last car was going into. No use kicking the car if you're just going to have to recouple into it.

*(Continued on page 6)*

(Continued from page 5)

Another method of getting a list would be a “roll-by”. In this case I do not mean a “roll-by inspection”. Roll-by inspections were done at 20 mph. I would imagine the engineer would do a roll-by for a list at about 10 mph. Often times, a train going into Angleton would be instructed to go by slowly so just such a list could be made. If from the north, there'd be a clerk out on the platform with pen and pad jotting down the car numbers. If from the south, the clerk would be out at the south end of the yard in the carry-all making his list. This might also be done on trains leaving the yard.

Another thing complicating the making and keeping of accurate train lists was, of course, human error. Getting one digit wrong would probably cause an issue in the computer system. The computer might indicate that the car was supposedly in Knoxville, Tennessee, not Angleton. The switcher crew would then be notified to keep their eye out for a car that might not be on the list, or whose number might be wrong.

In Angleton one time, before I was on the railroad, a train was entering the yard. A train was also simultaneously entering the yard from the opposite direction. The trainmaster, thinking he'd save time, pulled the seemingly slick move (to him anyway) of telling both crews they were shoving a clear track (but it was the same track). The computer, based on the train lists, indicated the track would hold both cuts of cars from both trains. Unbeknownst to the slick trainmaster, one train actually had about 25 cars in it that were not on the list. He'd increased his coefficient of slickness by informing the two crews of the “clear track” instruction on different radio channels, so they wouldn't know of this skirting of the rules. (If a crew is informed they are shoving a clear track, they aren't required to have a brakeman ride the point, thus the move can be done much faster, and there is also no brakeman who has to spend time walking back a half mile from the middle of the yard.) As you can imagine, when the trains were shoving their setouts into the “clear” track, the cuts met with unplanned for results: jackknifed, damaged, and piled cars where the twain (sic) had met.

In the big metropolis of Houston town, railroading was at a higher level of technology than out on our Kingsville Division. At several places there were actually bright lights and cameras set up so a clerk could make a train list remotely without having to stand out by the tracks. I would imagine now there is probably computer software that can get the numbers off of cars as they roll by the cameras. Of course, as we all know, a computer system is nothing more than an accident waiting to happen. (That's why we have two backups, you know. If you only have one backup, you're asking for trouble.) So even nowadays, I would expect that the accuracy of train, track, and switch lists has probably increased somewhat, but not all that much.

One night heading north from Vanderbilt, the town we facetiously called “The Bright Lights”, but not because it had such lights as described in the previous paragraph, we had a pickup to do at Lolita. For some reason, we had not gotten a list or something from the PC&N, so we had to creep down the mainline at Lolita while the conductor made a list of track #1. To aid his endeavor, I was searching out each car's reporting marks and shining my lantern beam on the number.

I can imagine there might be other ways of getting such lists, but this probably sums up the most common methods. So when I'm operating on somebody's model railroad, and a train goes by with two cars reversed from the order they're supposed to be in, while I might occasionally poke some good-natured fun at the yardmaster (probably not—depends on whether he's ribbed me about something), it mainly just strikes me as being a little bit more realistic, another instance where the modeling world and the real world of railroading find common ground—but hopefully not *on* the ground.

Let's tie this thing up before I decide to make a list of list-making methods to make sure I've covered them all. I'd probably get it out of order and leave one method out anyway.

Meeting minutes May 7, 2013

President Dick Louvet called the meeting to order at 7:00PM and welcomed all current members and guests. We had no visitors.

Vice President Kelly Russell announced this month's program:

Photography on a Shoestring Budget by Steve Sandifer

The minimum requirements to take good quality shots is:

- manual control of shutter speed, f/stop, and ISO.
- control of flash and an off camera flash
- at least a 10 MEG sensor

There are several exposure variables you need to control:

1) light through the lens – f/stop

the larger the number, the greater the depth of field

A f/stop of 20 or 22 works good for most model photos.

As your depth of field improves, your sharpness decreases.

2) shutter speed – the time that the media or sensor is exposed to the incoming light. The faster the shutter speed the better the camera can stop motion and prevent blurr. Rest the camera on a tripod or beanbag to help this or buy a camera with an image stabilization feature.

3) media sensitivity – ASA now ISO

100-6400 and above ranges

The higher the number, the greater the sensitivity and grain/noise in the photo, and the higher the contrast.

Summary:

Use a faster shutter speed to stop motion.

High f/stop for good depth of field.

And A low ISO for less grain/noise.

Steve then performed a live demonstration with a camera connected to a video projector to show us real time what happens to your end photo and you change many of these parameters. He moved light sources to show how to control shadows and dark spots as well.

It was a good overall description of what it takes to

make good photos. A little overwhelming, but Steve assured us, with practice, we can all make good photos. Steve also reminded us of the delete function for bad shots. Film is “free” in today's digital era and you see the results immediately so you can make adjustments and retake the shot with the wait and cost of “real” film processing.

Next month will be program will be by Tom Palmer.

Tom Bailey presented a set of rules for future use of the SanJac sales table at shows:

- 1) A maximum of 12 items per person will be displayed at one time. As items sell during the day, you can enter more, up to you 12 limit.
- 2) Handwriting on forms must be legible.
- 3) You must use the club form/log sheet – nothing else. These are available before and at the show.
- 4) Be sure you item labels on the log sheet and all the entries match.
- 5) Security – none – Items are displayed at your own risk. You are welcome to stay at the sales table and help with transactions while monitoring your items.
- 6) Pricing and bidding will be done in minimum increments of \$0.50
- 7) Please – NO JUNK

The minutes from last month were approved as published in the Derail.

Treasurer's report, Gilbert Freitag:

Expenses:

\$2,200 2014 Train show deposit

Income:

none

\$7,551.81 Ending balance

2014 Train Show:

Bob Barnett: Deposit being made now for next years show.

The Operations round-table last month was successful. We are going to have one on control and wiring next. Contact Dick Louvet if you want to be on the panel.

We need volunteers to be on the club officer nominating committee. Contact Dick Louvet if you want to be on the committee.

Club Directory: Photo updates were taken by Bob Werre, before the meeting and at the break.

Mike Spoor passed away Thursday. Services will be on May 16th at 10AM at ChapelWood Methodist Church on 11140 Greenbay St in Houston. He will be greatly missed by all.

Flyers to the Greeley Freight Station Museum/model railroad in Colorado were handed out by Chuck Lind. This is a first class layout with over 16,000 visitors a year.

Peter Bryan stated the club shirt order will be placed soon. Shirts should be in by June.

Peter also recapped the fun had by all that attended the Spring Fling in Comanche. Gil Freitag could be found running Ed Rain's locomotive most of the day...what a comeback and great sight to see.

Website: Chris Whitehead  
Check website for updates.

Derail: Bob Sabol  
Please submit photos/articles soon to add quality/

information for our Derail readers. Remember the deadline for submissions if the 15th. We have 2 loyal authors but we need more contributors/authors and more towards modeling.

LSR:

Upcoming convention details on the LSR website. The cutoff for discounted rates has been extended to May 15th. Laurie Lind reminded us to make sure you forward non-rail email information to your spouse.

NMRA:

No report

Division 8: Mike Bodak:

Clinics will start on May 11th @ the Bayland center on Saturdays at 10AM.

Refreshments were thanks to Ron and Monetta Burns and Virginia Freitag.

Next month will be by Steve Sandifer.

Meeting adjourned at 8:35 PM

General comments:

-Respectfully submitted, Gilbert Freitag, Secretary / Treasurer

## LMRA Railroad Club News

Thank you for being a past supporter of the LMRA Railroad Club Annual October Train Show.

This notice is to let you know that there WILL NOT be a 31st Annual Train Show this year.

Lockheed-Martin has stopped all support of the Recreation Center beginning January 2014.

The Association Board put 80% of the property up for sale and has a current buyer (you may have seen the news in the Star-Telegram). While the Center is keeping the Health-Fitness Center, a ball diamond and a sand volleyball court, everything south of the main entrance has been sold and will be demolished. This includes the building that has the club's layout in, the pool, picnic area, etc. We have been told that even with modifications to the remaining building, there will be no room for the RR club to have a layout!

We are searching for a new off-site location for the club and layout. If one can be found with reasonable space at an affordable rent/lease, we will be moving the layout later this year. If not.....who knows! We will also be renaming the future club and will not have a restricted membership as was the case under LMRA.

Again, thank you for your past support. The only train show in the Fort Worth side of town this year will be the Holiday Train Show in November at the Amon Carter complex.

Please wish us luck in finding a new home.

LMRA Railroad Club





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:** Richard Louvet  
rlouvet@att.net

**Vice-President:** Kelly Russell  
krussl@yahoo.com

**Secretary/Treasurer:** Gilbert Freitag  
gilbertfreitag@att.net

**Director:** Tracy Mitchell, MMR  
traymit@comcast.net

## Next Meeting

**TUESDAY, JUNE 4**

“Katy Railroad in the Post War (WWII) Period before the  
Deramus Era” by Tom Palmer

## Derail Staff

**Editor:** Bob Sabol  
bsabol@stillmeadow.com

**Production:** Terri Brogoitti  
tbrogioitti@stillmeadow.com

**Regular Contributors:**

Henri Morris

morris-hou@att.net

Peter Bryan

peterb@pdq.net

David Currey

texasandlouisiana@msn.com

## Video Corner

In lieu of a video this month (we need submissions),  
please enjoy this slide show of abandoned train stations.

<http://www.weather.com/travel/abandoned-train-stations-photos-20130506>

**sanjac.leoslair.com**

Do Not Use www.

**Webmaster: Chris Whitehead**

## Guess the Layout!



**Answer to May's Guess the Layout: Al Hague**