



# The DERAIL

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

December 2013

Volume 44, Issue 12

## President's Message

Richard Louvet

Happy Holidays

Time again for the holidays.

Time for the annual SJMRC Christmas dinner party at the Freitag's.

Time for memories of that first Lionel train set running around the base of the tree.

Time to share our love of the hobby with grandkids (and with much older kids at heart).

Time to see if all those hints resulted in a special present under the tree.

And maybe time to put it all in perspective. Although our model railroading creates a world apart from everyday life, it also adds new opportunities and lasting relationships to our real world as well.

May the Holiday Season find you happy, healthy and just as enthusiastic as you were with that first Lionel set under the tree.



Image Courtesy of Amazon

## Christmas Party

**2013 ANNUAL SJMRC CHRISTMAS DINNER PARTY**

**AT GIL & VIRGINIA FREITAG'S HOME**

**TUESDAY, DECEMBER 3 6PM**

If you didn't sign up to bring a food item at the November meeting, please call Virginia to see what is still needed. 713-926-2993 See you there for an evening of lots of fun.

ALSO: DON'T FORGET TO BRING AN EXCHANGE GIFT TO GET IN ON THE FUN!

RAILS: Put your name inside the wrapped gift and mark the scale on the Outside (approx. \$15 value)

NON-RAILS: Put your name inside the wrapped gift (approx \$15 value)

DIRECTIONS: I45 South to exit #42 (Wayside) or I45 Northbound to exit #41B (Wayside)

Southbound: turn LEFT onto Wayside or Northbound turn RIGHT onto Wayside

Proceed 0.7mi to LAWNSDALE Turn RIGHT onto LAWNSDALE

Proceed 0.7mi to ALTA VISTA ST. Turn LEFT onto ALTA VISTA ST.

Proceed 1 ½ blocks to 1835 (2 story on Right)

Of course, if you were on the clock, everything you did was technically work, because you were being paid. All work. However, a few things, while technically work, were not really work, and that is what this article is about.

Probably the first thing that comes to mind is meals. You were allowed one meal on a tour of duty. The agreement with the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers specified that the engineer could have a 1-hour sit-down-in-a-restaurant meal during a tour of duty. Since it made no sense to drop the engineer off at a restaurant, and the rest of the crew at a park picnic table to eat stale soggy sandwiches, the entire crew was allowed to eat at a restaurant. I think the UTU agreement with the railroad stated that the conductor and brakemen would eat where the engineer ate.

Rarely, there were exceptions. It could be that there was no restaurant open at a town somewhere in the middle of the night if a train was stuck there. On one occasion, an 8-car super hot freight train containing overdue cars for a plant down near Bloomington was routed over the division almost nonstop. They handed us up a bag of something as we sped through Angleton. I don't remember what it was. We weren't all that thrilled with the food, but we realized it was an extenuating circumstance, so we were okay with it, and besides, the food was free. I always carried something like a package of crackers, a Payday candy bar, some raisins, etc.--usually at least three items--something I could put together as a makeshift meal if I had to, because you might get stuck somewhere in the middle of nowhere at mealtime.

Probably even more common than the meal was the waiting. Waiting was the second part of "hurry up and wait", and seemed to take longer than the hurry up part. We waited for all kinds of reasons. We waited for the limo to come pick us up and take us to a restaurant. We waited for the trainmaster to get back to us and tell us what track to head into, or where to make our setout and pickup, or to tell us how long we'd be wait-

ing for the limo. Yeah, we sometimes waited to be told to wait. On yard jobs we often waited for the switch list to be handed to us, or printed out on the yard shack printer. On through freights, we sometimes waited for the yard switcher to get out of the way, or put our pickup on the train. Sometimes we waited for the bridge gang foreman to clear us over a bridge being rebuilt or repaired. Same thing for a track gang--wait for clearance. Sometimes we waited for a clear signal. (Kind of strange that a clear signal was green. I think the term "Clear signal" comes from the fact that you are "Cleared" to proceed.) We waited for the federal inspector to clear our train out of the yard on occasion, and once in a while he'd find something and we'd then wait for the yard switcher to clear out of the way so we could set the car out. We'd wait while the head brakeman went to talk on the phone to the dispatcher. Lots of waiting on the railroad. I remember a story about a Brownie crew that was dead-headed to Brownie (sic)--adjacent to Algoa--and placed on a train that had hoglaved there. Twelve hours later they were picked up by a limo after having waited for twelve hours, and never moved the train once. Yup. *Lots* of waiting on the railroad.

We were often times transported to where our train was by limo. Riding in a limo isn't really work. I usually took the opportunity to catch up on my rest while riding in a limo. A deadhead all the way to Vanderbilt was nice because that took at least two hours, so I could get quite a nap on the way down there, and be fully rested for work.

On the subject of sleep and rest, when we stayed over at Vanderbilt, we were in a railroad motel on railroad property, so in effect "on the railroad". So the sleeping we did there was definitely not work. Also, rarely, a derailment or something could curtail the work trip. The railroad could put you up in a motel for a minimum of four hours of rest. You stayed on the clock, but when done with your rest, you still had the remaining amount of time to work that you had

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when you started your rest. Sleeping on the company clock. Sweet!

Getting back to the waiting part—waiting always offered an opportunity to do something while you waited. I usually had a book to read, a crossword puzzle, and a portable chess set in my grip. Lots of locomotive engineers, seemingly more so than conductors, were willing to try their skills in a game of chess. Maybe because as engineers, they don't have to make complex switching move decisions all day, so their brains aren't tired. At Brownie (adjacent to Algoa), I would practice my rock pitching on the telephone poles. Hitting the pole was a strike. Waiting allowed time to partake of a snack, down some plastic water bottle water, or visit the water closet and hopefully not become one with the chemical toilet.

Of course, waiting also offered the opportunity to shoot the bull. Nobody can shoot the bull like a railroad man.

Most trainmen had a train order string in their grips knotted into a small ball on one end. We'd sometimes "do the string", where you tried to tie a knot in the string with one hand. The technique involved holding the unknotted end in your hand, and then when the ball was practically stationary, pulling it upward moderately fast (not too jerky), and then looping down with your hand and slinging the part of the string about one inch below where you were holding it into the string about one inch above the ball. If done properly, this would cause the string to loop around the ball as it fell back down due to gravity. An overhand knot was usually the result when successful. On extremely rare occasions, a figure eight knot would result. I've got one of these in my disc golf bag made from small rope and a rubber ball. I can do it about nine out of ten times when I'm in practice, and have a video on my YouTube page of the feat. [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wAdu7\\_VMxKM](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wAdu7_VMxKM)

Well, that's about all I could come up with for non-work on the railroad. Since the last topic was the string, it's fitting to now tie it up. Let's make it 11:09 am, readers.

## Calling all Train Enthusiasts

Bob Sabol

The Derail is looking for a few additional authors to enhance our publication. The San-Jac Model Railroad Club is blessed with most members being very knowledgeable in a wide range of topics having to do with trains. Wouldn't you like to share your train knowledge with others?

I have heard that since this is a model railroad club, all articles should relate to model trains. In the 5 years I have been a member most of our monthly clinics did not cover modeling. Each clinic presented seemed to be enjoyed by many. When you think about it, you can get almost all the construction tips you need from national train publications and on-line.

Many of the articles submitted to the Derail also cover a wide range of subjects and they seem to be well received. If you feel writing something monthly is a bit much, why don't you think about doing 3-4 articles per year? If you are interested in being a more active part of the Derail, please let me know. The deadline for articles is the 15<sup>th</sup> of the month with most articles used the following month. Let me know if interested.

Thanks,  
Bob Sabol  
Editor



Meeting minutes November 5, 2013

President Dick Louvet called the meeting to order at 7:05PM and welcomed all current members and guests.

Virginia Freitag opened by passing around a sign-up sheet for what food you plan to bring to the annual Christmas party. Call her at 713 926 2993 if you did not get a chance to sign up at the meeting.

World's Greatest Hobby Show, GRB, Houston, Jan. 11 and 12, 2014.

We will need volunteers to man the San Jac club table at this event. A sign-up sheet was passed around. See wghshow.com for details.

Vice president Rex Ritz introduced this month's program by Phil Stewart:

Louisiana Sugar Cane Plantation Railroads, 1895 - 1970.

Phil opened by stating that The Antiquarium, an antique print and map gallery was a good source of information to his research.

As early as 1750, Jesuit priest started growing sugar cane in LA and then began selling it. Inventions such as the steam engine by James Watt and Robert Fulton's steam ships made processing and transportation of sugar cane possible in the south.

When the Civil War occurred, all crops, except for a few large plantations, were destroyed. In 1894 the Baldwin 0-4-0 tank engine replaced horses to pull cane cars on steel rails. By 1910 over 200 steam locomotives were operating in LA. The Porter was the most popular.

1922-1926 was a time of bad crops and poor yield, then a period of floods came, then the depression, all resulting in a drop in the demand for sugar cane products. WWII comes along and most locomotives and such were scrapped for the war effort metal drive,

however a few were hidden and survived. Trucks replaced trains as a more flexible method of transporting crops, virtually eliminating the railroads by 1959.

Phil then went through a presentation on how sugar cane is cut, transported to the mills, juice extraction, and refining into white granulated sugar. Byproducts included bagasse, syrup, and molasses. Sugar was stored in massive piles in warehouses until later bagged and shipped to end users.

Phil then discussed his plans on construction of a model railroad representation of the sugar cane empire. Phil had many guidelines he wants to follow:

- must be along a major waterway
- must be portable
- each plantation should be a self contained scene
- each plantation can have a different gauge and even different scale to add depth of field
- mirrors and painted backdrops can add depth
- staging yards can be hidden by scenery
- water transportation is important
- plantations must have a mill
- plantations must be connected to a railroad
- several different kinds of rolling stock will be used

Phil then showed maps of areas he wants to model followed by scenes to model.

Phil illustrated his module concept on construction. Phil showed how large many of the plantation home were. Rosters of the railroad equipment present on various plantations were shown. Phil concluded with an operations theory for a sugar cane based model railroad.

Next month's meeting will be the annual Xmas party at Gil & Virginia Freitag's home.

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

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Treasurer's report, Gilbert Freitag:

Expenses:

\$85.63 website software

\$240.00 club brochure printing

Income:

\$485.00 Train show table sales

\$8,770.00 Ending balance

Club Brochures: Brochures and display boxes were available for distribution to fall layout tour hosts to display at their open houses.

Annual Christmas party will begin at 6PM on Dec 3 at the Gil & Virginia Freitag's home, 1835 Alta Vista, Houston TX 77023. Please sign up for a food item and check the next derail for details.

Website:  
no report

LSR:  
no report

Division 8:  
no report

Derail: Bob Sabol

Bob asked to keep the articles coming and for people to take pictures at the Xmas party and send them in to the Derail.

Yahoo Group:

<http://groups.yahoo.com/groups/SJMRRC>

NMRA:

no report

Fall layout Tours: Craig Brantley

Always check the website for last minute changes and cancellations before heading out each weekend. Robert Ashcraft reported over 60 visitors last weekend.

Greater Houston Train Show, Feb 15th, 2015

Bob Barnett reported 108 sales tables sold as of today. Layouts are getting booked.

Refreshments were thanks to Richard Bartlett and Virginia Freitag.

Meeting adjourned at 8:35 PM

General comments:

-Respectfully submitted,  
Gilbert Freitag,  
Secretary / Treasurer

## Announcements

HobbyTown USA will be opening a new store at Westheimer & Highway 6 in the Best Buy shopping center.

Pre open date is Friday, November 29th. at 10 AM, Grand open date is Saturday, December 14th. at 10 AM.

In addition to adding another hobby shop in town, they are hiring (20-35 hours a week).

You can call John Pena @ [210-995-2824](tel:210-995-2824) with any questions.

**Click to see the 2013 Holiday Express Schedule**

<http://www.kcsouthern.com/en-us/AboutKCS/Pages/2013HolidayExpressSchedule.aspx>





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

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## Next Meeting

**TUESDAY, DECEMBER 3**

**2013 ANNUAL SJMRC**

**CHRISTMAS DINNER PARTY**

**AT GIL & VIRGINIA FREITAG'S HOME**

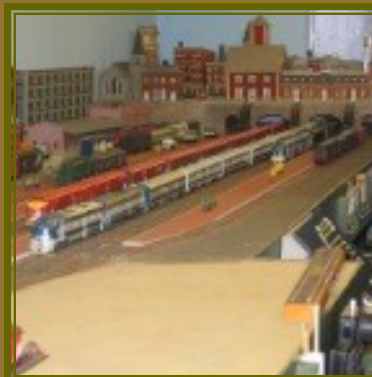
**AT 6:00PM**

## Video Corner

**Christmas Train Village – 2011  
(Livingston, TX)**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9Vn4UykkZ90>

## Guess the Layout!



**Answer to November's Guess the Layout: Dennis Grigassy**