



# The DERAIL



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## Thoughts From the President

By Chuck Lind MMR

By the time you read this, another successful San Jacinto Model Railroad club train show will be in the books. Hopefully, you were able to attend and found a few bargains at the vendor tables.

Steve Sandifer has arranged for someone to have his photo equipment set up in the foyer of the church at our March meeting. So, if you are not in our directory or just would like an updated photo for the directory, come to the meeting and get your photo taken.

This year's NMRA, Lone Star Region Convention will be held in Austin, Texas, June 18-21. If you have never attended a Region Convention, you need to put it on your list to attend. There will be a full schedule of clinics by some of the top modelers and prototype presenters in our Region. There will also be several layouts open for operating sessions as well as open house tours. They will have a contest room where you can have your model judged for the Achievement Program. For those of us that have attended several of these conventions, fellowship of other modelers gets us charged up and ready to work on the railroad when we return home. Will see you in Austin.

Thanks,

*Chuck*

## The Greater Houston Train Show Contest Room

By Kelly Russell MMR

Thanks to everyone who participated in the The Greater Houston train show Contest Room. There were seven participants (3 novice entrants) who entered a total of 11 models and 3 photographs this year. Thanks, Barry, for displaying your new Challenger - it drew a lot of foot traffic into the room. During the judging, we trained 2 additional judges as well. Contest Results:

Displays:

- 1st place - Chuck Lind - Burnt-out Building \*1 footer

Structures:

- 1st place - David Bartholomew - Rix Tool Company \*Merit Award
- 2nd place - David Bartholomew - Victoria Station
- 3rd place - Christoffel Terhaskel - Got-to-Go \*Novice

Freight Cars:

- 1st place - Bradford Greene - Wood Chip Boxcar \*Novice

Display Only:

- Barry Boggs - Northern Pacific Challenger
- Blake Boggs - Engine House
- Dan Stuetgen - MOW Car
- Dan Stuetgen - Passenger Car under construction

Photos (Model):

- 1st place - David Bartholomew - Southern Pacific SD7 at the Bridge

Thanks to the volunteers - Chuck Lind, Scott Parker, and Bill Wright for manning the room and helping with judging. Welcome, Greg Luegering and Bill Harris, as newly-trained judges.

# The Greater Houston Train Show Contest Room

By Kelly Russell MMR



*Challenger Locomotive and Rix Tools*



*Burnt-out Building*

Photos courtesy of Jay Cooper

# The Greater Houston Train Show

By Steve Sandifer



*Contest Models*



*Barry Bogs talks about his scratchbuilt engine with Diane Kopfensteiner of G&G model shop.*



*Judges hard at work, being taught by Kelly Russell and Bill Wright.*



*Clinics*



*Museum displays*

*Club switching layout led by Jeff Williams*



## The Greater Houston Train Show Contest Thank You Letter

By Steve Sandifer

Mr. Sandifer,

*I was absolutely shocked when I got the call I had won....I have been a model railroader since the age of 8 when I got my first train set and needless to say....I was hooked. My kids, as they were growing up, loved the train around the Christmas tree every year. Now I have 7 grandkids, and they are thrilled with the layout. Have already had 2 sessions with two of the boys. We look forward to many more. Thank you again for making an old guy feel like a kid again.*

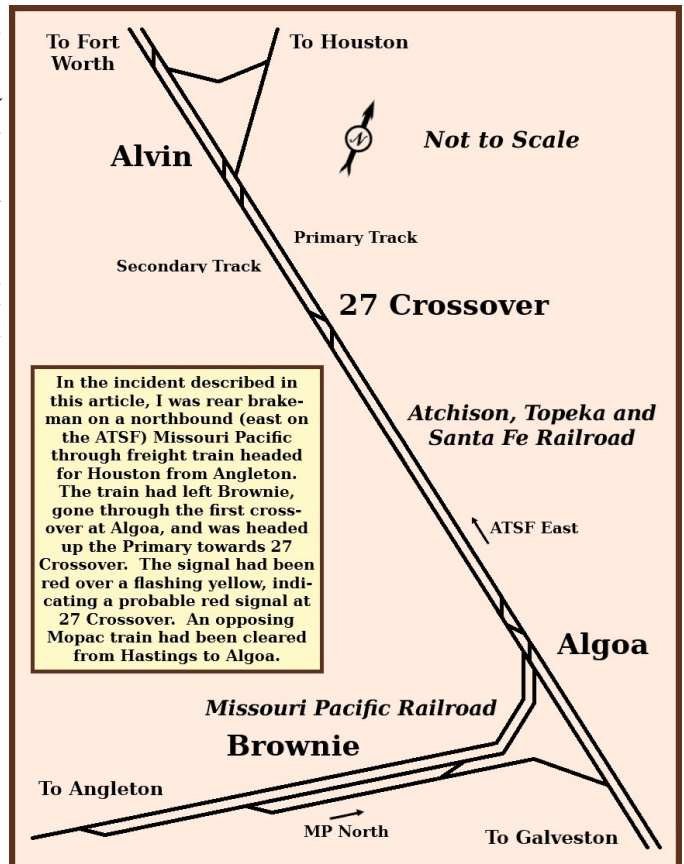
*Let me also say all the gentlemen from the club were so helpful and informative about the layout. What a class act all the way around. You have some great people in your organization.*

*Sincerely,  
James Austin*

# The Incident at 27 Crossover

By David N. Currey

This story relates an incident from my railroad days on the Kingsville Division of the Missouri Pacific Railroad, ex-St. Louis, Brownsville and Mexico Railway, where a train that I was rear brakeman on ran through a red signal at a location on the ATSF Railroad named 27 Crossover. Interestingly, 27 Crossover is not mentioned in the Mop's employee timetable, nor shown on the Kingsville Division's timetable page that has the mainline, siding, and junction diagram (schedule). I mentioned this incident in another article years ago, but this is an in-depth retelling of it.



*This diagram I drew up shows the track configuration from Brownie on the Missouri Pacific through Alvin on the ATSF.*

One night, I was on the caboose with the conductor of a northbound Missouri Pacific Kingsville Division freight train at Brownie (the northern-most station, about 4 miles south of Alvin, as the grackle flies, and named after the nickname of the Division), adjacent to and just south of Algoa on the Missouri Pacific Railroad, where it branched off the Santa Fe Railroad. Algoa is a few miles southeast of Alvin on the ATSF Railroad, and is where our trackage rights over the ATSF began heading north.

*The Valley Eagle proceeds north around the wye at Brownie towards Algoa on the mainline. Our freight train was on the siding to the right of where the Eagle is. Jim McClellan (now deceased) graciously provided this photo to me, taken while on a trip by him to Corpus Christi by train.*



# The Incident at 27 Crossover

By David N. Currey

Prior to the incident, we had been stopped at a red signal at the north end of Brownie in the siding, but eventually the ATSF dispatcher turned us loose to run up the primary of the double track to Alvin. Heading north by timetable direction (east on the ATSF), the primary was the rightmost track. At Alvin, we would head right around the wye (now going west on the ATSF) and go through Hastings, Pearland, Mykawa, and on through T&NO Junction, which is where we got off the ATSF and onto the Houston Belt and Terminal Railroad. It was a normal night, except that we were running in a dense fog.

My conductor was experienced, and I had several years experience under my belt as a brakeman. The head brakeman was a bit senior to me (from a previous brakeman class), and hence had more experience than I did. The engineer was a young one, probably with a year or two of experience. Normally, the senior brakeman would ride the caboose, but as it was his choice and he was buddies with the engineer, he chose to ride the head end.

Upon leaving Brownie, and unbeknownst to us on the caboose, our head end crew had a misunderstanding about a certain signal indication they had received upon departing Brownie. It had been a red over a flashing yellow. On the Missouri Pacific, that signal indication is called Diverging Approach Medium, which means you will be going through a crossover or onto a diverging route at the prescribed speed through the turnout and reducing speed to 35 mph by the time you reach the next signal, which can be nothing more restrictive than yellow.

However (and this is a big however), we were running on the ATSF, and that signal has a differing definition (meaning) there. On the ATSF, a red over a flashing yellow is called Diverging Approach. Notice the lack of the word “Medium”. On the ATSF, that signal indication means you will be going through a crossover or onto a diverging route at the prescribed speed through the turnout and prepared to *stop* at the next signal, which will probably be red. See the difference? On the MP, the next signal will be at least permissive yellow, but on the ATSF, it will probably be absolute stop red.



*This aerial view from Google Earth shows 27 Crossover and its two crossovers.*

## The Incident at 27 Crossover

By David N. Currey

Our train went through the first crossover at Algoa onto the primary without incident. Once the caboose cleared the crossover, I informed the head end by radio, “Straight track,” and the engineer may have notched the speed up to or near the maximum of 45 mph on that stretch of track. I don't remember how fast it seemed we were going, but it was much faster than if the engineer had been searching for a red signal in the fog. Of course, at that point, we on the rear end did not yet realize anything was wrong. But, soon after leaving Brownie, the head brakeman questioned the engineer about the speed, the meaning of the signal, and the need to be able to stop at the next signal, which would probably be red. I believe the brakeman brought up the question, since if the engineer had brought it up, I doubt he would have been running as fast as we were going. They discussed it, and the engineer then decided to big-hole the train (apply the emergency brakes), since it was difficult to determine in the fog exactly where they were. 27 Crossover, which they were rapidly coming up on, was a set of two crossovers about two-thirds of the way from Algoa to Alvin. MP trains were often moved to or from the Primary (South track) and Secondary (North track) there, but our freight train had done that back at Algoa. I don't recall ever being on a train that took the Secondary between 27 Crossover and Alvin, though it probably may have happened, but for some reason, the ATSF did not like to run trains on that section of track. I seem to remember that that section of track was sort of reserved to store a train in temporarily, but I am not sure. I *do* recall at least once meeting a southbound train between Alvin and 27 Crossover that was on the Secondary.

On the caboose, the conductor and I heard the train go into emergency braking. Trainmen normally refer to the sound as “kachow”. I don't know what the conductor was thinking, but I immediately thought there must have been a problem with the signal at 27 Crossover. Perhaps it had turned red in the face of our head end crew. (I had that happen twice to me on other trains when I was head brakeman, and it is a scary, jarring experience.) My personal response, when on the caboose and a train went into emergency, was to slink down low in my seat and brace my feet against the footrest. I've done that twice on Amtrak as well, and it's not that easy to hear the emergency brakes while in a passenger train car, but I suppose my ears are tuned to that sort of thing. Both emergency braking incidents on Amtrak were from near grade crossing accidents—a car around North Carolina while I was bound for Newark on the *Silver Star*, and an 18-wheeler on the *Sunset Limited* while I was headed into Houston through Sugarland. After the *Sunset* incident, I walked up to the head end in the Houston Amtrak station as the engineer was climbing down. I asked him how close it had been, and he held up his hands a foot apart, and said, “My fireman was on the floor.”



*The Valley Eagle goes through the first (west) crossover at 27 Crossover, from the Secondary to the Primary. Our freight train should have stopped on the Primary behind the signal for this crossover (behind the camera).  
Photo courtesy of Jim McClellan.*

## The Incident at 27 Crossover

By David N. Currey

Once put into emergency, our freight train began gradually slowing down after about thirty seconds, but it was too close to 27 Crossover, and before it could stop, it ran past a red block signal, tearing up the following power switch in the process. When the train got stopped, my conductor was in immediate conversation with the head end after the engineer told us on the radio what had happened. (I can't remember for sure, but I believe our locomotives got stopped about six car lengths past the power switches.) My conductor immediately instructed the head brakeman to flag ahead (with fusees and torpedoes, of course), and then he hurried up to the head end about a mile away as fast as he safely could on foot. We didn't know it at the time, but a train headed against us had already been lined up by the ATSF dispatcher out of Hastings, through Alvin, and on through the destroyed switch our train was sitting on, hence the red signal at 27 Crossover, but it was still several signal blocks away, so no head-on collision occurred. The opposing train would have received a stop indication at the near end of the wye (west, towards Galveston) at Alvin, and a yellow at the Houston end of the wye.

If these railroad directions seem confusing to you, it was confusing to me in brakeman school as well. On the ATSF, if a train on any mainline is heading away from Chicago, it is going west. In southeast Texas, such a train heading to Galveston would eventually be going east-southeast, but that is still considered on the railroad to be west. Thus, a Mop train heading south out of New South Yard in Houston would be headed east on the Santa Fe, but when it went through the west leg of the wye at Alvin and headed east-southeast, it would then be headed west. The best way to remember it for Mop guys was, if you were going towards Alvin, you were going east—going away from Alvin, you were going west. That didn't work for ATSF guys heading around the wye to or from Temple and Fort Worth, but we Mop trainmen never headed to or came from that way.

While the conductor was off to the head end, I remained on the caboose. I never liked sitting motionless in a caboose in a dense fog, but the signal system was protecting me from behind, and the lack of train movement meant I could hear well. I recalled an engineer telling me about the time he was following a preceding train slowly in a fog on the ATSF towards Houston, and the rear brakeman of the train ahead was so nervous, he was out on the rear platform of his caboose, periodically dropping lit fusees on the track, even though the signal system afforded protection. Eventually, in my case, a limo (a Renzenberger passenger van) came and I was picked up and transported on to Houston with my crew. It was pretty darn quiet in that van. The rear end crew was not pulled out of service, and I continued to work until the investigation about a month later. I don't recall if the head end crew was pulled out of service, but I think not.



*Here is 27 crossover today on the BNSF Railroad (looking east) from Google Earth. It is called “MP 27 XOVERS” today, with the “MP” standing for “Milepost”.*

## The Incident at 27 Crossover

By David N. Currey

The investigation had officials from both railroads (including the ATSF dispatcher) and my train crew in attendance, and was held in an upstairs room in Houston Union Station. An investigation (as you may well know) is sort of like a legal trial with the purpose of uncovering the facts and placing the blame. I wasn't too worried, as we were on the caboose a mile back and certainly couldn't see the signals a mile ahead in a dense fog. I believe the head end crew was questioned first, but early on the ATSF dispatcher was questioned. The main thing I got out of that first part (I didn't know yet about the head end crew's discussion about the Diverging Approach, i.e., low flashing yellow signal out of Brownie.) was that after they went past the signal that was misunderstood, the engineer and head brakeman had their discussion. When the head end crew cleared the air on that, they realized they needed to be able to stop at the next signal. The engineer applied the emergency brakes before even seeing the red signal (remember, it was in a dense fog), but it was too late, and they went past the signal and through the power crossover switch lined against their movement, thereby tearing it up. Until that switch on the Primary was repaired, all trains would have to be run down the Secondary both directions between Algoa and Alvin.

Continuing the investigation proceedings, the presiding railroad official (a trainmaster from our railroad) started questioning the rear end crew (the conductor and myself), and it became obvious that he seemed to be trying to see if some of the blame should be applied to the rear end crew, especially concerning train speed, implying that we on the rear end should have asked the engineer to slow the train in the fog. But, our union local chairman representing us was as sharp as any high-priced lawyer. After several pertinent questions, he called the other railroad's dispatcher back to the stand (so to speak—there wasn't really a stand). He asked the dispatcher, "How many other trains were in the vicinity at the time of the accident?" The dispatcher consulted a green bar computer paper printout he had brought, and answered with a number that I have forgotten. (It may have been 5 or 7.) Then the local chairman asked him, "Did any of these trains request to be stopped and placed in sidings because it was too foggy to run trains safely?" The dispatcher answered, "No." And that ended the attempt to fix part of the blame on the rear end crew. Of course, in dense fog on ATC-protected track (for all practical purposes, the same as CTC-protected track), trains can run at authorized track speeds, though if visibility was restricted, engineers would play it safe and start braking before they normally would when approaching a red signal, or a signal that might be red.

Head end crews were not required to report signal indications to the rear end, though they sometimes did, usually for the benefit of the conductor's delay report. (Conductors were required to note on the Delay Report section of their time slip all delays of five minutes or longer.) Rear end crews, being situated on the rear end, often a mile or more behind the locomotives, are not in a position to be able to evaluate the situation on the head end regarding not only signals, but any other things that might affect movement of the train, including how foggy it is up there. And, was the conductor on the rear end supposed to evaluate the knowledge of the engineer and other particulars? If so, he would practically have to be on the radio most of the time asking things like, "Do you know what a red over flashing yellow signal indication means on the ATSF?" and "Do you know what '350 no opposing trains in the block' means?" and "Do you know how to 104C a switch?" and "What's your exact location?" and "What speed are you going?" ad nauseum.

I came away from the entire affair with a decent appreciation for the investigation process. That was the only investigation I ever participated in. In particular, I was impressed with the intelligence and sharpness of the union local chairman, who conducted himself during the investigation like a sharp well-schooled lawyer. Both members of the head end crew were fired, and I don't know if they ever returned to service. Some firings are for a certain amount of time, and some firings are permanent. Since there was damage, and a head-on collision could have been the result if the other train had been further along, the firings may have been permanent. Earlier, during training, the engineer would certainly have been instructed by other engineers about ATSF signal differences during their training road trips under the tutelage of a sitting engineer, and the brakeman would have been taught about them during brakeman school.

I found out fairly quickly who the engineer on the other train was, but I never thought to ask him about his thoughts on the matter. Probably, before the investigation, we were instructed not to discuss the incident with anybody. That engineer was one of the most experienced engineers on the division. I probably missed a round trip to Angleton or Vanderbilt because of the investigation, but don't remember how that missed pay was handled.

*Editor's Note: Please see the August 2024 Derail for detailed background on this series.*

Published: 1944

## Loading Spinach Into a Refrigerator Car

In every meal we eat, there is an interesting story of transportation - fresh vegetables and fruits that have come for hundreds or thousands of miles; bacon, ham, or sausage from the great packing enters, which draw their supplies from millions of American farms. And from where come the cereals, the cream, the bread, or the grain from which bread is made, the butter, the marmalade, the salt, the pepper, the sugar and other items on our breakfast table? Several thousand miles of transportation, reaching from a dozen or more states, far and near, and from distant lands, may be represented in the typical American breakfast.



Loading Spinach into a Refrigerator Car

In the above picture we see men unloading baskets of spinach from a farm truck and loading them into a refrigerator car. Spinach is one of numerous farm products which go to make up the more than 1.25 million carloads of fresh vegetables, fruits, fish, meats, butter and other perishable commodities which move by railroad each year. Large quantities of ice are used to keep the products in good condition.

The long distance transportation of highly perishable foods of this nature is distinctly a railroad achievement. At no previous period in the world's history was it possible for a people to enjoy such an abundance and variety of foods at all seasons of the year as we enjoy in America today.

The refrigerator car - America's "ice box on wheels"- makes this possible. Before refrigerator cars were widely introduced, perishable foods were marketed only in or near the areas of production, and the supply and variety of fresh foods were limited.

The first ice-cooled car designed to prevent shipments from spoiling in transit was introduced by a meat-packing firm in Chicago in 1857. The first shipments of fruits under refrigeration were from southern Illinois to Chicago in 1866. To Parker Earle, an enterprising fruit grower of Cobden, Ill., goes the credit for pioneering in this development. After several unsuccessful efforts to ship strawberries to Chicago without their spoiling on the way, Mr. Earle hit upon an idea. During the winter of 1865-66 he harvested a large quantity of ice, and

he packed the ice in sawdust in his barn so it would keep well into the summer. Then he built several large wooden chests with double linings. Each chest was fitted with two compartments. When the berry-picking season arrived, Mr. Earle packed one compartment of each chest with ice and the other compartment with strawberries. Then he shipped them by railroad to Chicago. The strawberries arrived in the Chicago market in perfect condition several days before local berries ripened - and Chicago housewives and hotels eagerly bought them for as high as \$1 a quart! Parker Earle reaped a handsome profit from his crop!

It was only a step from the iced chest to the iced box car, and Parker Earle was one of the pioneers in this venture also. By 1872, many carloads of strawberries and other fruits were being shipped from southern Illinois to Chicago under refrigeration. In 1885, berries from Virginia were shipped to New York under refrigeration. Three years later Florida oranges entered the New York market, and in 1889 New York received its first carload of deciduous fruit from California.

From these beginnings sprang the great refrigerator transportation industry which brought revolutionary changes in the production and distribution of fresh fruits and vegetables, meats, fish and other perishables.

Railway refrigerator service broke down the barriers of distance. Farming areas, remote from consuming centers, but especially adapted by soil and climate to the production of certain fruits or vegetables, could for the first time be developed commercially on a large scale, with the entire country for their market.

By thus increasing the opportunities of the farm population and making a wide variety of fresh foods available in all parts of the country at all seasons of the year, the railroads contributed to a higher standard of living, increased commercial activity and increased industrial production throughout the nation.

All sections of the country benefited from these developments. Because of refrigerator car service provided by the railroads, Pacific Coast states can and do produce lettuce, cabbage, carrots, celery, onions, asparagus, pears, grapefruit, cantaloupes, grapes, peaches, plums, oranges, apples, tomatoes, lemons and other fruits and vegetables for the people of distant New England and all other parts of the country, as well as the several provinces of Canada.

Oranges, grapefruit, tangerines, limes, lemons, peaches, strawberries, watermelons, celery, spinach and tomatoes and other vegetables produced in Florida, Louisiana, Texas, and other Southern states are marketed in nearly every state in the Union as well as in Canada. Potatoes from Maine and Idaho find their markets at points as far distant as Florida and Texas.

In order to reach the consumer, potatoes travel an average distance of 741 miles; peaches, 843 miles; cabbage, 970 miles. Even greater travelers are the watermelons that come to our tables, their average journey being 1,084 miles, and apples, which travel 1,162 miles on the average. And the berry family travels 1,200 miles, on the average; tomatoes, 1,894 miles; oranges and grapefruit, 2,126 miles; and cantaloupe and melons come 2,434 miles - about as far as from Los Angeles to Cincinnati. But the record-holder among domestic fruits is the grape. This little fellow journeys 2,597 miles to reach our tables!

Large cities, such as New York, Boston, Philadelphia and Chicago, are almost wholly dependent on distant points for their food supplies. Fifty per cent of fresh fruits and vegetables consumed in New York City come from points 1,000 miles or more away. Of more than 35,600 carloads of fresh fruits and vegetables received in Boston in 1942, 11,584, or 33 per cent, came from California; 6,936 carloads, or 20 per cent, came from Florida, and 2,844 carloads, or 8 per cent, came from Texas. Thus, approximately two out of every three carloads came from these three distant states.

The widespread distribution of perishable products by rail is shown by a study of receipts of fruits and vegetables at 25 principal marketing centers in the United States. The study shows that 18 of these markets received peaches from Georgia, 19 received celery from Florida, 12 received grapes from Arkansas or Arizona, 17 received tomatoes from Mississippi and 17 received strawberries from Louisiana.

Of 35,679 carloads of fruits and vegetables unloaded in Philadelphia in a recent year, 12,531 came from California, 9,545 came from Florida, 2,558 came from Texas, 2,087 came from Maine, 1,285 came from Arizona, 1,148 came from New York State, 930 came from South Carolina, 780 came from Washington State, 522 came from Idaho, 508 came from Georgia, 391 came from North Carolina, and the remaining 3,394 carloads came from 26 other states. Thus, 37 out of 48 states in the Union contributed to Philadelphia's supply of fruits and vegetables.

Reports of the United States Department of Agriculture show that Boston draws carload shipments of fruits and vegetables from 39 states; New York City from 43 states; Cleveland from 44 states; Cincinnati from 42 states; Chicago from 46 states; St. Louis from 43 states; New Orleans from 42 states; Dallas from 39 states; Oklahoma City from 30 states; Denver from 33 states; Minneapolis from 40 states; and San Francisco from 18 states.

In a recent year, the railroads of the United States transported 368,000 carloads of fruits, 505,000 carloads of vegetables, 32,000 carloads of melons, and 510,000 carloads of dairy and packing-house products. Many of these commodities move under refrigeration; some move in specially heated cars to prevent freezing; some move under controlled temperatures without ice or heat.

The American people also consume large quantities of frozen fruits, vegetables, meats, poultry, and fish. More than 347,000,000 pounds of frozen fruits and vegetables alone were packed in 1942. Great quantities of these frozen foods move from the packing centers to consuming areas in refrigerator cars, generally at much lower temperatures than is required for ordinary refrigerator car shipments.

To provide the American people with year-round, nation-wide service in transportation of perishable products, the railroads operate a fleet of 145,000 refrigerator cars. Assembled in a single train, these cars would reach 1,194 miles across the country.

Many refrigerator cars are owned by private car companies. In cooperation with the railroads, these companies make advanced studies of the transportation needs of the fruit - and vegetable - producing regions and assure that a sufficient number of empty refrigerator cars are at the numerous loading points when they are needed.

Solid trainloads of fruits and vegetables are frequently shipped from the producing areas at the height of the harvest season. These trains move on fast schedules. For instance, under normal conditions, strawberries from the Carolinas reach New York for second morning delivery; peaches from Georgia arrive in New York for third morning delivery; and strawberries from Louisiana arrive in Chicago for second morning delivery. Trainloads of perishables from Florida, Texas, Pacific Coast points, and other areas are timed for delivery in Eastern cities at a definite hour.

The refrigerator car is a long-distance traveler among freight cars. Trips from California to Boston; from Florida to Minnesota or Montana; or from South Texas to New York are not uncommon. And as soon as it has been emptied, it hurries back to the producing region, usually empty, for another load.

## Bananas Come By Ship and Rail

The spread and growth of the banana trade constitute one of the fascinating romances of modern commerce. In grandfather's boyhood, few Americans had ever seen or tasted this yellow tropical fruit. Today - thanks largely to railway transportation - the banana is an exceedingly popular food in cities and towns throughout America, rivaling in plentifulness and cheapness many of our home-grown fruits.

In normal times, the people of the United States import from seven to nearly ten billion bananas, and each year the railroads of the United States handle from 80,000 to 90,000 carloads of the fruit - nearly all in refrigerator cars - for distances ranging from a few miles to more than 2,000 miles per car.

To reach our tables, bananas are shipped first over little "banana railroads" from inland plantations in Honduras, Guatemala, Costa Rica, Panama, Mexico, Colombia, Venezuela, Jamaica, and other Latin American countries to *their* seaports; then by steamship to *our* seaports; and then again by rail to marketing and consuming centers in all parts of the United States.

The entire journey - of from two to four thousand miles - is made in an amazingly short time-and is timed and regulated with clock-like precision, so that the green bunches ripen en route and arrive at fruit stores throughout the country in perfect condition.

Many of the bananas which reach our tables were green and unpicked on the plants of remote tropical plantations from ten days to three weeks before.

Bananas normally enter the United States chiefly through the ports of New Orleans, New York, Philadelphia, Mobile, Baltimore, Galveston, Boston, Charleston, Jacksonville, Los Angeles, and San Francisco.

Unlike most other fruits, bananas are harvested and shipped from the plantations every month of the year. Our imports are usually heaviest from April through August. At this season of the year, scarcely a day passes at some of the leading seaports that at least one "banana boat" does not arrive from the tropics.

The railroad does not wait for a banana boat to arrive before making preparations to receive its perishable cargo. As soon as the ship sails from the tropics, its departure and its contents are radioed to the port to which it is destined. While the ship is steaming toward our shores agents of the railroad are getting everything in readiness.

There must be a sufficient number of refrigerator cars on hand to handle the cargo, and these cars must be in good condition. It is important to know the size of the cargo. If 10,000 bunches of bananas are on board the ship, and they are all to move from the port by rail, about 19 cars will be needed. If the cargo consists of 50,000 bunches, then as many as 95 cars will be necessary. If a sufficient number of refrigerator cars are not on hand at the port, they must be located elsewhere and dispatched to the port promptly enough so that there will be no delay in unloading the vessel when it arrives. Every car must be given a thorough cleaning. If repairs are needed, they must be made. When the car passes final inspection, it is switched to a nearby siding and placed in readiness for quick loading.

As soon as the ship arrives and is tied up at the wharf, its hatches are opened and mechanical conveyors are put in place. Several refrigerator cars are placed on nearby wharf tracks or on car floats or lighters in the harbor. In the hold of the vessel, experienced workers, known as banana handlers, carry the bananas on their shoulders to the mechanical conveyor, which operates on the same principle as an escalator. Thus bananas are kept moving in a steady stream from the hold of the ship to the wharf or car floats. At the other end, banana handlers, under the direction of foremen - inspectors, remove the bunches from the conveyor and carry them on their shoulders into the cars.



Bananas Come by Ship and Rail

The picture shows refrigerator cars on car floats or lighters ready to be loaded with bananas from the steamship.

This method of transferring bananas and other commodities from ship to rail is used when it is not possible or practicable for a ship to dock at a pier which is served directly by a railroad or by the particular railroad over which some of its cargo is moved.

For instance, a banana ship may dock at a pier on the New York City side of the Hudson River and unload part of its cargo for delivery in New York and part of its cargo for delivery to one of the railroads having terminals in Jersey City, on the opposite side of the river. The latter railroad may load its part of the cargo into cars on lighters, as shown in the picture, and ferry the loaded cars across the river to its Jersey City terminal. There the lighters are connected with the railway tracks in the same way a ferry slip is operated, and the cars are "switched" from the lighter to the terminal yard and started on their way to destination. In some ports, the practice of lightering freight in cars from ship to shore, or from shore to ship, is extensively employed.

The inset picture shows bananas being removed from the conveyors and loaded directly into refrigerator cars on the steamship pier. This method is commonly employed at most ports in transferring bananas from ships to railway cars. As each husky banana handler approaches, the inspector taps a bunch and points his stick to the car in which it is to be loaded. The size of a bunch of bananas is determined by the number of "hands" or clusters in it. A good-sized bunch has eight or nine "hands". Some have twelve or more.

Bunches of similar size and degree of ripeness (and only an expert can tell how ripe they are) are placed in one car; those of another size and degree of ripeness are placed in another car; and so on.

The bunches are placed on racks within the car so that the air can circulate around and through them. Bananas keep and ripen best at a temperature of about 60 degrees, and the interiors of the cars are kept as near that temperature as possible, winter and summer. When the weather is warm, ice is stored in the compartments, known as "bunkers," at the ends of each car, to keep the temperature cool. In cold weather, small stoves are used to warm the cars before loading and are removed as soon as the cars are loaded. If heat is required to maintain the proper temperature en route, this is supplied by placing stoves in the bunkers. Sometimes, in cold weather, straw is used on the floors of the cars.

As fast as the cars are loaded, switch engines haul them away to a freight yard. Here they are carefully weighed, since bananas are usually sold wholesale by weight.

About 11 tons of bananas, or 530 bunches, averaging about 155 bananas to the bunch, constitute an average carload. As soon as sufficient cars are loaded and assembled in the yard, a banana train is made up and sent on its way, usually on a fast schedule. On the average, bananas travel about 700 miles from shipside to market.

An interesting feature of this movement is that many carloads of bananas leave the ports before the fruit is sold and without anybody knowing what the final destination of the shipments will be. While the train is speeding along, however, sales are consummated and orders are telegraphed to agents of the railroad at certain terminal points directing where each car is to be sent. Gradually, the train is reduced in length as cars are diverted to other routes or dropped off at cities along the way.

On its way from seaport to destination, a carload of bananas may encounter drastic changes in the weather, from warm to extreme cold. For this reason, special banana messengers frequently ride the banana trains to check the temperatures of the cars at intervals. Otherwise, agents of the railroad or of the shipper inspect the cars at stations along the route. Ventilators are opened or closed and ice is added or heat is supplied as required. Constant care is thus provided to keep the inside temperature of the car at the proper level.

On reaching its destination, the banana car is unloaded at a fruit terminal or at a warehouse from which the fruit is distributed to retail dealers. Fruit warehouses are usually air-conditioned or refrigerated so that the bananas can be kept from becoming overripe before they are distributed to retail stores. Where such storage facilities are not available, the bananas may be kept in the cars under refrigeration for several days.

The banana trade helps us to understand (1) the close commercial relations that exist between the people of the United States and our neighbor republics to the South, (2) the important part which transportation plays in fostering these relations, and (3) the interdependency of ships and railroads in carrying on our commerce with other lands.

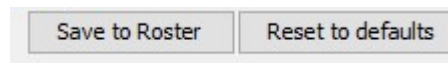
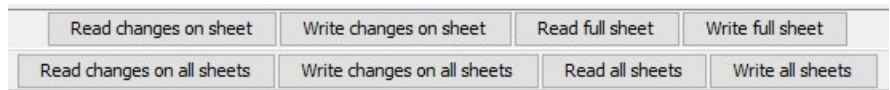
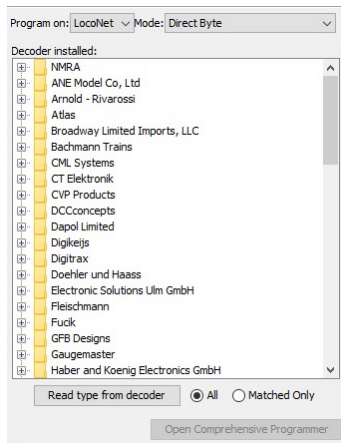
In Honduras, Nicaragua, and certain other countries of Latin America, the production of bananas is a leading industry. It provides employment to many thousands of workers. Revenue from bananas in these countries helps to support many of their communities, to maintain their public schools and to support their governments. The United States is by far their largest customer for bananas.

Without the good transportation service, by water and by rail, that joins them with our markets - transportation that is especially adapted to the exacting needs of the banana trade - these countries would be deprived of their chief market and we would be deprived of this popular fruit.

The coordination of steamship and railway service in developing and carrying on the extensive banana trade, and the fast and dependable service provided by the railroads, make it possible for every American home to enjoy this delicious and healthy tropical fruit at all seasons of the year.

## Changing the Programming on a Factory-Programmed Engine

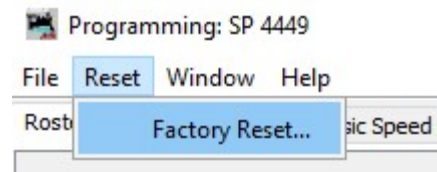
Before changing **ANYTHING** on a **factory programmed** decoder, select “Read Type” from the decoder listings. You should get at least a decoder manufacturer selected and possibly a list of potential decoders. Open the Comprehensive Programmer then select “Read All Sheets”. This selection may take a few minutes but loads AND preserves the factory programming into the appropriate decoder selection for your model. “Save To Roster” BEFORE doing anything else. Now you will have a good starting point for making changes to your Configuration Variables (CVs). Don't lose the factory programming by saving an empty sheet to a programmed decoder!



Sometimes DecoderPro DOES NOT work quite as it should. Occasionally, when you make a change on one of the sheets, other changes that do not have anything to do with what you did are made. I was working on a Broadway Limited Steam Engine and had programmed the address, lights, bell, and whistle and was making changes to the speed table. On testing the start speed, I noticed the front headlight no longer worked! I had to reset the entire decoder to get the headlight to work! After going through the same thing AGAIN, it did it AGAIN! Something in the programming of the speed table messed up the forward headlight. I have heard other complaints about DecoderPro programming errors but this one was recent and definitely duplicated. One view I heard is that several manufacturers do not fully follow the NMRA standards and recommended practices, resulting in this type of problem.

DecoderPro is not quite up to task on ESU LoKSound decoders either. These decoders are excellent but complicated and have twice the number of CVs of US-made decoders. They automatically sense European command control systems you have not even heard of! I have had to go to the special ESU LOK programmers to get these properly programmed.

When using DecoderPro for a factory-programmed engine, AFTER YOU HAVE SAVED the factory programming, make changes, try out your changes, and see if you like them. As long as you do not Save your changes, nothing is lost or changed in the saved program. You may have loaded changes into the CVs of the engine, but the original data programmed at the factory is still saved on the roster listing in DecoderPro on your computer. If you Save Changes, your factory settings have been updated to the last changes you made to the CVs. If all else fails, do a Factory Reset to get back to the original starting point on the decoder!



*Next Month – Programming a New Decoder*

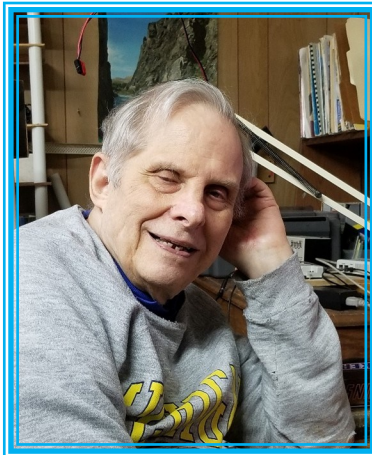


# Happy March Birthdays!



## Tom Wayburn

Tom will be 92 years young.



## Cindy Finnegan

(March 4) wife of John. Photo taken at Willis Tower in Chicago.



## Ken Luebeck

(March 7)



## Greg Slutz

(March 5) Greg drinking Gluhwein (warm wine) at a Christmas Market on a Danube Cruise.



### Happy Anniversary!

## Greg and Margaret Slutz

Happy 46th Anniversary, Greg & Margaret!  
Taken at Moab, Utah at the end of the Rocky Mountaineer-Denver to Moab train trip.  
(March 15)



NOTE: To share your birthdays, anniversaries, weddings, retirements, and other celebrations with your San Jac family, please email [d.gatohogno@gmail.com](mailto:d.gatohogno@gmail.com) before the 9th of the month to be included in the next Derail edition.

## Cash Flow - Last month

1/1/2026 through 1/31/2026

### Category

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#### OUTFLOWS

Don Bozman Funeral	144.44
Frost CD Interst	-41.26
Christmas Party Tickets	-520.00
Meeting Rental	200.00
Adobe Acrobat Substcription	21.64
Train Show Expense	
Liability Insurance	100.00
Setup	1,200.00
Table Refund	80.00
TOTAL Train Show Expense	1,380.00
<b>TOTAL OUTFLOWS</b>	<b>1,184.82</b>
<b>OVERALL TOTAL</b>	<b>-1,184.82</b>

#### Account Balances - As of 12/31/2025

#### Account Balances - As of 1/31/2026

Account	Balance	Account	Balance
<b>Bank Accounts</b>		<b>Bank Accounts</b>	
Chase Checking	9,108.21	Chase Checking	7,882.13
Frost CD	5,541.05	Frost CD	5,582.31
<b>TOTAL Bank Accounts</b>	<b>14,649.26</b>	<b>TOTAL Bank Accounts</b>	<b>13,464.44</b>
<b>OVERALL TOTAL</b>	<b>14,649.26</b>	<b>OVERALL TOTAL</b>	<b>13,464.44</b>

The presentation was a panel discussion on “Miniature Wonderland in Hamburg, Germany” by Geoff Hogno. We had problems with the projector and online participation, so we did the business meeting first before the presentation.

Chuck Lind called the business meeting to order at 7:17.

51 members were present with no one online because of our technical difficulties.

Two first time visitors were present:

- Dan Cleveland, a friend of Dave Bartholemew
- Drew Maramba, Davina’s nephew

Chuck announced that Cliff Cheeseman had knee replacement surgery.

Bob Barnett announced the LSR election is March 1-31. Positions up for election are directors for regions 2, 4, 6 and 8, as well as Vice President, Secretary and the At Large Director.

The LSR convention is in Austin in June. Signup is happening now. There are good layout tours at this convention.

Bob Sabol had nothing new for The Derail but said there were a lot of good articles last month.

Steve Sandifer will take your photo for the San Jac Directory if you need him to.

Beginner operating sessions occur the weekend of March 21 & 22. Robert Ashcraft, Bill Wright, Chris Roehl and Gordon Bliss will host these sessions. Tom Bailey is leading this effort and will send around a sign-up sheet with layout details. **IF YOU HAVE NOT PARTICIPATED IN AN OPERATING SESSION BEFORE AND WOULD LIKE TO, PLEASE SIGN UP!!!** This is your chance to learn what it is about and how it all works and have more confidence in attending an operating session. These session are tailored for first time operators.

Three clinic spots remain open for our Tuesday San Jacinto meetings in 2026, so please sign up if you have a topic you would like to share. No one has signed up to bring cookies in June, so that spot is still open as well.

The business meeting adjourned at 7:43. Next meeting is March 3, 2026.



## San Jac Officers

**President:** Chuck Lind MMR  
 president@sanjacmodeltrains.org  
**Vice President:** Bob Barnett MMR  
 vice-president@sanjacmodeltrains.org  
**Secretary:** David Paul  
 dbpaul32@yahoo.com  
**Treasurer:** Richard (Dick) Louvet  
 secretary@sanjacmodeltrains.org  
**Past President:** Kelly Russell MMR  
 krussl@yahoo.com



## Division 8 Texas Gulf Division Officers

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**Secretary/ Treasury:** Tom Marsh  
 txtr7@yahoo.com

## Derail Staff

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**Brakemen:**  
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 Richard Louvet  
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 Kelly Russell MMR  
 krussl@yahoo.com  
 Steve Sandifer MMR  
 steve.sandifer@sbcglobal.net

San Jac RR Club Meetings take place the first Tuesday of each month at 7pm

Now In-Person and ONLINE

Southwest Central Church of Christ  
 4011 W. Bellfort, Houston, TX 77025

Visitors are always welcome!

www.sanjacmodeltrains.org  
 Webmaster: Brian Jansky



## Next Meeting

**TUESDAY, MARCH 3RD**

**AT 7:00PM**

HYBRID MEETING: ONLINE AND IN-PERSON

# ‘THE T&NO - SP AUSTIN DIVISION’

BY AL PARTLOW



Refreshments:

Greg Slutz



## Video Corner



Great American Model Railroads - UTAH BELT and BNSF Fall River Division in HO