



# Western Division Newsletter



Volume 59, No. 1

<http://www.tcawestern.org>

January 2013

## Upcoming Meet Notices

Western Division's first train meet for 2013 will take place on Saturday, January 26<sup>th</sup> in the Arcadia Senior Center, located at 405 S. Santa Anita Avenue in Arcadia, California.

To get to the meet, exit the 210 Freeway at Santa Anita Avenue. Drive south about half a mile and turn right into the Arcadia Park Parking lot. The hall is located next to the lawn bowling area. Look for the Western Division sign.

The hall doors open at 10AM for setup and trading. Please visit the Western Division website, at <http://www.tcawestern.org> for more information and a map.

The display theme for January will be **'Your Newest Purchase'**. Show off an item and facilitate the transfer of knowledge on collecting toy trains with your fellow members.

Western Division's 2013 schedule of meets and display themes is as follows: January 26<sup>th</sup> - Newest Purchase, February 23<sup>rd</sup> - Train I Love, March 23<sup>rd</sup> - Flatcars, April 27<sup>th</sup> - Wrecks & Unusual Trains, June 1<sup>st</sup> - Pennsylvania RR, July 27<sup>th</sup> - Red White & Blue & Military Trains, August 24<sup>th</sup> - Passenger Trains, September 28<sup>th</sup> - Trolleys (No Cable Cars!), October 26<sup>th</sup> - Halloween, and December 14<sup>th</sup> - Holiday Accessories.

## President's Message

*By Manny Gonzalez, WD President*

During the summer I had occasion to travel across the country from California to Georgia; and although not seashore-to-seashore (Santa Monica to Jekyll Island) it was in fact from coast to coast. So while the direct flight out of Ontario to Atlanta took less than four hours, and covered just short of 2,000 miles - the trip back by train took the better part of 3 days and 2 nights, and covered quite a few miles more. It was a great experience and, given the right circumstances, would do it again in a heart-beat. Well, except maybe for the flying - but that's an entirely different story.

Since then, as I think back and reflect on various aspects of that journey, there continues to emerge an uncanny metaphor for how life can and often does work. When you fly, once you're in the air it's pretty much a straight shot to your destination; but when you travel by train, maybe not so much. There are so many things that can hinder a train's progress, especially for extended distances, that if your timetable is critical, you may have to seriously rethink other modes of travel. Even the seemingly trivial and unrelated can have a big impact. As long as it touches on some aspect of the train's travel, even indirectly, it can have an adverse effect. The result can range from a minor annoyance/delay to being stranded for a period of time - eventually having to complete your journey by some other means, if not abandoning it altogether.

Organizations can be very much like that. Most often things are simple and straightforward. But on occasion, it apparently doesn't take very much to bring things to a screeching halt. Like the proverbial "weakest link" - it then really makes no difference how strong the 'rest' of the chain might be, it can all seem to come crashing down. I think that is why many of us look forward to this time of year. It's a chance for new beginnings, a time to "reset" to

a better starting point and move forward. Not that anything might be really different - except maybe in our minds, and hence attitude and possibly our approach, our commitment, our ... well I think you get the picture.

So here's to New Beginnings in 2013, whatever you may need them to be.

## December Holiday Meet Recap

*By Robert Caplan, WD Recording Secretary*



*December Holiday Meet Layout*

December's WD meet was a fantastic ending to a great year of toy train collecting in Western Division. The meet included an outstanding display and a scrumptious lunch that satisfied everyone's palate. The display theme for the December meet was **'Holiday Trains'**.



*Bob Spellmire and his Holiday Train*

*Dave Mabee's Holiday Express Car*



*Greg Pulis showed a Dominion Flyer car*

*Jim Kenney's brass locomotive*





*December Displays*



*The TCA Western Division Ladies Holiday Prize Winners*



*Door prize winners included Steve Waller who won the \$100 and Bob Nord won the Lionel #773 Hudson*

## Spiegel Department Store Special

*Article Submitted By Jim Kenney*

I have been a TCA member since 1975. When I lived in the Chicago area, I began an interest in American Flyer Prewar trains. I had American Flyer 'S' gauge trains when I was a kid but really got hooked on the Prewar stuff. I attended the St. Charles, Illinois toy show one spring and met a gentleman named Augie Schmidt. He used to run an ad in the Chicago Tribune Newspaper, daily, seeking "Toy Soldiers, Trains, Trucks, any Old toys". His main interest was Toy Soldiers. Any other toys or trains that he bought through his ad would be sold at the toy shows which were held every 4 months at St. Charles. After getting to know Augie and buying my first Wide gauge American Flyer train set from him, I would call him before every toy show and ask about the trains. He would save them for me, stick them under his table so I would have first shot at buying the trains, mostly American Flyer Prewar Wide Gauge and 'O' gauge trains. One of the first sets that I bought from Augie was a beautiful AF wide gauge Pocahontas passenger set, with all the boxes and set box, in all original condition. I still have this set in my collection. I bought lots more from him in the 4 years that I lived in the Chicago area before transferring back to the Los Angeles area.

This article is about one of the rarer American Flyer Wide gauge sets I acquired over the years. It was actually purchased by my wife, Lois, for me one Christmas several years ago. The set formerly was owned by John Thousand, Past President of TCA Western division. After he passed away, his family sold all of his collection. I was interested in this particular set when I visited his home to see his collection before he passed away. I mentioned the set to my wife as being a very rare set, but figured John would not sell it. After he passed away, Lois contacted John's wife and arranged to purchase the set.

The set I am describing is an American Flyer Spiegel Department Store Special uncataloged passenger set. Spiegel's Department

Store was a local chain in the Chicago area and also had a mail order catalog, similar to Sears or Ward's catalog. The set came with the original boxes, consisting of a St. Paul style electric locomotive #4635 with matching 19" passenger cars, which are 2-#4081 Washington Pullmans and a #4082 Valley Forge Observation car, all in Tan / Brown color. The set has all the original boxes which are stamped with "S" and each car number for Siegel's Department Store and the numbers of the engine and cars. I also have the original Spiegel transformer that came with the set. The set is pictured on page 29 of the Greenberg guide to American Flyer wide gauge trains by Alan Schuweiler. I have only seen one other set which is owned by a well-known TCA member and collector, John DeSantis, in my 35 years of collecting. I saw his set when visiting his collection on a layout tour at the TCA National convention in Pittsburgh a few years ago. I mentioned to him that I had the same set but mine consisted of 2 Pullman cars where his had a Baggage and a Pullman. I indicated that I did not think his set was original with the Baggage car but he insisted that his was correct. When I told him that my set had the 2 Pullmans instead of the baggage along with the original stamped boxes, he was dumbfounded and wanted to buy my boxes and the set, but all for naught. I still have the set. His set has the cars that came with the Chief President Special in 1926, with a square NYC electric loco, so it probably is a made up set. Moral of the story is that it pays to have the original boxes. The locomotive has considerable paint loss due to the brown paint being notorious for non-adhering to the metal. You see the same problem with Ives Brown sets.



*Rare Spiegel Department Store Special*

## In Memoriam

Long time Western Division member Larry Kirk (1947-2012) has passed away. Larry provided many years of service on the WD Board of Directors, filling 3 terms as WD Secretary in the late 1980's. Our sincerest condolences to Larry's wife Phyllis "DeeDee" Kirk and family.

## Surgery Recovery

David Mabee had surgery on January 4, 2013 to remove a benign brain tumor and is on the mend. Please keep Dave in your thoughts and prayers.