

The Manifest, August 10, 2014(c)
Railroad News and Musings from
Green Country Model Railroaders' Association SM

A few of us had fun this last week at one of the public parks. We set up a supposedly portable layout and the day camp attendees rotated in small groups through our presentation. A surprising number of the elementary school students had actually ridden a train. Excursion trains and OKC trains seemed about equal in number. The children were quite nice and interested and interesting.

I learned several things. It's nice to have a few dedicated members who make sacrifices for the group. Much thanks to George Miller, who ran back and forth between unavoidable obligations, and Terry Smith who gave up a day and "sweated to the oldies" while hammering to overcome a damaged corner. It's so nice that we have people that are dedicated enough to support the club even when it's inconvenient, rather than agreeing to help and then not showing up.

Another thing I learned was that things have improved a lot since the 1980's, when the equipment we used was manufactured. Today, entering a 3-digit code and pushing a button throws a smoothly-operating realistic slow-motion switch or turnout. Even though I taught electrical things for years, it still bothers me you can leave current applied to a Tortoise(c) brand turnout and not burn it up. Sadly, the same is not true of the "snap-action" switches of yesteryear. The popular brand switches of the old-type actually combined two types of switches into one mechanism. You slid the switch left or right to select the closed or thrown position. Then you momentarily pushed the same switch down to send a short-duration pulse to the device. Well, after 21+ years, in spite of exercising the switches a number of times, one switch decided to stick down, continuously applying power to the switch actuator.

As a result, one group of campers got to observe a switch machine start smoking. Of course, being over 21, it was old enough to smoke. (Rim shot! I'll be appearing at the Kitty-Kat Lounge all week! Tell your friends!) If that weren't enough, before I figured out what was wrong, the housing actually melted, exposing the innards. The kids thought that was pretty cool.

There were several other problems including the fact that many of us available during the daytime have enough physical limitations that we probably can't set up this particular layout again. It would be nice to build one for public display that is much easier to transport and require only about two people to set up.

In our continuing saga of railroad drama, this is an interesting article with a twist about two trains colliding. The on-board computer signaled the engineer that something was wrong, so he applied the brakes. How did it know?

http://news.yahoo.com/wisconsin-train-crash-hurts-2-people-spills-fuel-162855921.html?soc_src=mediacontentstory

So what do you do when you're trespassing on a railroad track on a bridge and you remember the truism from physics class that states two objects cannot occupy the same space at the same time? Outrun the train? Didn't work. Jump off the bridge? Long, long ways down. The jump probably wouldn't hurt you but the sudden stop... Well, there's a third option, which these two women chose. It resulted in the train crew presuming the women had died. Instead, they are now facing criminal charges:

https://gma.yahoo.com/two-women-survive-being-run-down-freight-train-171545896--abc-news-topstories.html?soc_src=mediacontentsharebuttons

I tried to give you a link to an article with a most interesting headline but Yahoo(c) and Open Office(c) only succeed in crashing and loosing all data to the last save. So, I'll just tell you there is a very fortunate redwood tree in California. It was saved from being chopped down to make way for a new railroad track. (Do they still "chop" trees anymore? Or is that expression as dated as "dialing" a telephone number?)

A similar techie problem means I'll just tell you Pennsylvania has eleven railroad bridges for sale. If you have the resources to buy and move one, I'm sure you can figure out how to get the details on your own. ;-)

For those of you that like collisions with fireballs:

<http://news.yahoo.com/video/raw-truck-train-crash-leads-202458231.html>

There is good news, as well:

http://news.yahoo.com/blogs/trending-now/commuters-band-together-to-rescue-man-trapped-between-train-and-platform-165827801.html?soc_src=mediacontentsharebuttons

I'll close with one of my personal favorites. It seems to me the purpose of AMTRAK is to transport passengers. Agreed? Well, if you want to correct poor ontime performance, I suppose you could just leave all the passengers behind, but to what end?

<http://www.businessinsider.com/an-amtrak-high-speed-train-left-new-york-without-its-passengers-2014-8>

Remember we have our regular membership meeting this coming Thursday at 7:00 at the layout. Stay cool and enjoy trains!

Victor Banham

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