

TCA Mission: To develop an appreciation of and to preserve an important segment of history – Tinplate Toy Trains –through research, education, community outreach, fellowship, establishment of collecting standards, and to promote the growth and enjoyment of collecting and operating toy, model and scale trains.



Desert Division

DISPATCH

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Volume 55, No. 5

May 2026

MAY-BE SPRING COMES AFTER SUMMER?

It has been that kind of year where the old saying of “if you don’t like the weather, it will be different tomorrow” has been the predominant theme in the Valley of the Sun so far. However, Desert Division remains consistent in offering opportunities for members to enjoy the comradery and fellowship around our common enjoyment of toy trains. April was yet another busy month for both the Division and the Rio Grande Chapter with our tri-club picnic in April that was discussed in the previous issue, a two day train show that Rio Grande participated in at the Wheels Museum that featured among other things the 1:1 scale ATSF 2926 Northern (Heavy Mountain in Santa Fe speak) steam locomotive, and finally our April Division meet. With the unavoidable eventual temperatures our locale is famous for around the corner we begin to wind down for our summer hibernation. However, we still have plenty of events for members to enjoy coming up.



Mark Thompson and Angelo Lautazi are preparing for the monthly meeting.

Our April 11th meet was a little lighter in attendance than has been typical for the year, but the members in attendance enjoyed socializing and catching up

MARK YOUR CALENDAR – UPCOMING EVENTS

May 9th – Desert Division “Pizza Meetza”

9:00 AM – Paradise Valley United Methodist Church – 4455 E Lincoln Dr, Paradise Valley, AZ
Meeting in Room H-1

May 17th – TCA Rio Grande Chapter Meet

9:00 AM – Wheels Museum, Albuquerque, NM
1100 2nd St SW, Albuquerque, NM 87102

June 13th – Desert Division Meet

9:00 AM – Paradise Valley United Methodist Church – 4455 E Lincoln Dr, Paradise Valley, AZ
Meeting in Room H-1

for the first hour prior to the formal meeting. President pro tem, Angelo Lautazi conducted and served as the recording secretary for the meeting as President Mike Dietrich and Vice President John Craft were unable to attend. Then as Secretary Angelo reported that membership is currently at 152 members with 56 of those members in the Rio Grande Chapter. Treasurer Mark Thompson provided a report on Division finances. He also reported that the cost for the Spring Picnic worked out to \$166.48 for each of the three clubs that participated.



Angelo serving as the Division President for the meeting in addition to his normal secretarial duties.



Waiting for the meeting to start. It looks like Chris was experiencing some technical difficulties with the Zoom online setup.



Steve Bienstock and Christie Wilson purchasing raffle tickets.

In old business, the picnic recap noted that approximately 50 people were in attendance and that it was also Easter weekend. Railfair was formally discussed and Chris Allen noted that the location of the displays was in the same location as vendor tents, which may have contributed to reduced attendance. However, Chris noted that this might be improved for next year based on feedback to the park. He also thanked the volunteers who took their day to set up, operate, and pack up the trailer. It was an efficient effort. Chris also noted that the Railroad Park provided sandwiches and water for volunteers this year. Those of us who were operating through lunch were grateful for this as it allowed us to focus on keeping the trains running.

In new business Chris discussed the upcoming meeting with the McCormick-Stillman Scottsdale Railroad Park Mechanical Society to make a formal proposal to have a permanent standard gauge layout in the layout building. As is typical of all the contracts with other organizations in this building, the city retains ownership of the display structure while the club retains ownership of the trains, the accessories, and the track. The goal is that the Mechanical Society will cover the cost of the enclosure that includes some metal work, finish carpentry, and display glass to match other

installations in the building. The Division is looking for donations for the trains and accessories for the display. While we all love the authenticity of the original tin-plate locomotives and their reliability for occasional operation on our home layouts, this layout will require modern reproductions for their reliability and repairability. There is now 15 years of evidence since this building has been open on how much use these trains get. Chris put a counter on the GCMR S gauge layout and in two weeks recorded over 600 operations. We cannot underestimate the positive impact this will have for the Division and TCA as a whole. It has been noted in the past, but bears repeating that in 2025 over **1,000,000** visitors went through this building. The Railroad Park remains one of the premier attractions in the Valley. Chris closed the discussion by asking for creative ideas on what kinds of operations beyond the running of the trains we could provide to increase public interaction. Have a great idea? Please share it! For more information on this exciting new endeavor, see Chris's article in this issue of the [Dispatch](#).

The Division trailer is now formally for sale. There have been a few prospective buyers but no formal offers. It will be listed for sale on Facebook and other social media platforms. The Division has started new eBay page to sell items that will not bring proper value at Division auctions and the remaining Atlas hoppers will be listed there as well. The tentative date for the November train show is November 21st, pending a contract from Living Streams Church. The November Auction will be a Paradise Valley United Methodist Church on November 7th. The holiday party was discussed at length regarding venue, atmosphere, time and day of the week, and the tabletop auctions. It was clear that there was certainly no pleasing everyone. Dave Brown made an announcement that the bus trip to the "Beat the Heat" meet in Prescott is on again this year. The cost will be \$40 per person, which includes the entry fee to the meet. There will also be an optional lunch held at Peter Atonna's home at an additional cost.

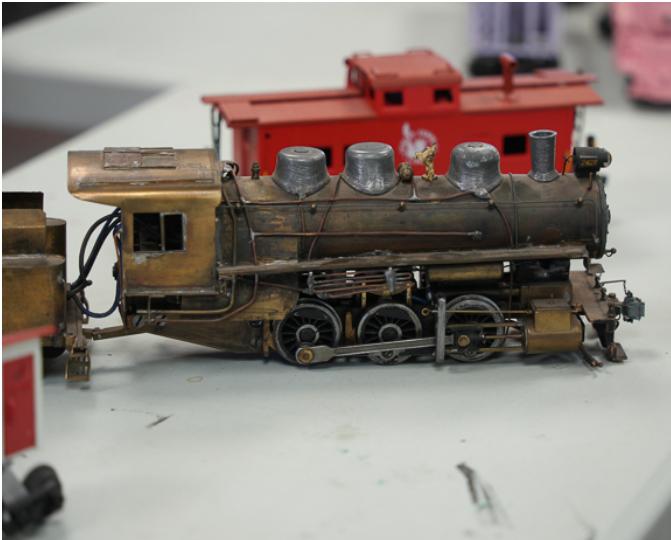


Dave Brown's "Stock" car.

The educational segment for April was "something the Easter Bunny brought or something pastel". Dave Brown went with an April Fool's theme and brought an HO car that was covered with Wall Street Journal newspaper clippings. This is his "stock" car which was met with the appropriate number of groans. His other two cars were outhouses mounted to train trucks which is his version of "double heading". Again, this met with more groans.



Definitely a double header.



Jonathan's Walthers 0-6-0 steam locomotive and International Model Products caboose.

Jonathan Peiffer explained that he did not have any pastel trains in his collection but instead brought a 1950's brass International Model Products caboose he had finally painted into CNJ Red. He also discussed his Walthers 0-6-0 Polydrive steam locomotive that will go with the caboose. These locomotives were only produced in 1941 and 1947. He believes the locomotive is 17/64 scale and discussed the debate in the US from the 1930's on whether 17/64 or 1 / 4 scale would be the official "scale" O. 1 / 4 scale won out with the introduction and the popularity of the Lionel 700 E.



Your Dispatch Editor once again discussing the details and history of a model and the prototype it is based upon to infinitum.

Paul Wasserman brought Irene's Lionel Girl's set from 1957 and got the education segment back on topic to the monthly theme. He explained that when he acquired it, it did not have the original box. It took an additional 3 years to find a mint box for it that cost more than the set.



Paul Wasserman showing the pages from the 1957 Lionel Catalog that introduced the Girl's Train.



The catalog, the box, and the train set.

Angelo closed out the education segment with a Beatles aquarium car that was more psychedelic than pastel. He presented the one Easter themed item with an egg dye Lionel vat car that was part of Barbara Lautazi's collection. Finally, he presented two pink Cadillacs that were parked in front of the

diner on his layout. He hoped that the diner patrons would not miss them.



Angelo's colorful display of trains and cars.



A closeup view of the Easter egg vat car.

The meeting concluded with raffle drawings and Paul Wasserman won the \$100 Hudson drawing.

The next regular Division meeting will be held on May 9th and will have pizza for those who attend. Our educational segment theme is: **"April showers bring May...STEAM...show us your favorite steam engine."**



A happy Paul Wasserman receiving the \$100 drawing and a reluctant treasurer giving it to him.



Remember the 2026 TCA's 72nd National Convention is being hosted by the Lone Star Division from June 22nd through June 27th in Grapevine, Texas. It is not too late to sign up!

<https://traincollectorsassociation.regfox.com/72nd-annual-national-convention-grapevine-tx>

Finally, see Chris Allen's article about the exciting news regarding the permanent display at the Railroad Park and regular contributor Bruce Brown's timely article on Memorial Day.

MINUTES APRIL 8TH, 2026 TCADD BOARD MEETING AT THE ELK'S CLUB

In attendance: Mike Dietrich, Mark Thompson, Paul Wassermann, Terry Hass, Chris Allen, Steve Bienstock and Angelo Lautazi.

The meeting was called to order at 7:03 PM.

Membership: The Desert Division has 95 members, and the Rio Grande Chapter has 56. Division total is 151.

Treasurer's Report: Checking \$6768.62, Savings \$1749.26, PayPal \$205.58, eBay Acct \$1585.48 and Wells Fargo \$26,223.53.

Old Business – Recap

- BOD Luncheon: about 22 attendees at Pizzacata. The food was very good.
- Railfair: new date and new one day format. Attendance was lower but the location was not great.
- Railroad park Picnic: weather was good, but attendance was low. Probably because it was Easter weekend.

New / Ongoing Business

- Trailer sale: so far, no interest from persons who checked out the trailer during Railfair. Chris has many photos and will put a listing on Facebook.
- Standard Gauge Project: Chris will be meeting with the city and the Mechanical Society this week to make our presentation for the display.
- The Club's eBay account has been created and the Atlas car has been listed. We will lower the sale price to \$69.95.
- We are hoping to book the Train Show into the Living Streams Church that we used last year. Looking to book for November 21st for the event.
- Christmas Party: still exploring options for the location. Sunday December 13th will be the date.
- The November Auction will be at the church (PVUMC) on Saturday Nov 7th.
- The Pizza meet on May 9th will be held in our normal meeting room H-1. Angelo gave Paul the Pizza order and Paul will bring to the meet.
- The National Convention is in Dallas this year. Paul made a motion to donate 3 cars from our stock to the convention fundraising activities. Mike seconded and all approved.

Board meeting was adjourned at 8:41 PM.

The next Board Meeting on Wednesday May 6th, 2026, will be at Mark's home.

Minutes submitted by: Secretary, Angelo Lautazi

PRESIDENT’S MESSAGE

Dear Friends,

Welcome to May and it certainly been a strange spring with nearly a week of actual spring at end April or record March and early April heat. The Division is feeling the heat as our activities are gearing up for what will be a fantastic 2026. We have a full schedule of meetings, auctions, a show, and a party in the works! The upcoming events are listed below in the Ear to the Rail.

As the newsletter will show, we had a few less guests over the Easter weekend for our Annual Tri-Club Picnic at McCormick and Stilman Railroad Park, but had a wonderful time catching up. While the weather heated up our intrepid chefs soldiered on and served an outstanding variety of grilled treats. Hat’s off to Angelo and Mark (Smurf) for their dedication to the flames. Additional kudos to the members of the three clubs that came together and worked together for the event.

I’d like to take another moment and thank our volunteers that made these events a success. Their tireless dedication to the club is what makes what we love to collect more than a simple hobby. As mentioned in the April Dispatch, we held a fantastic volunteer’s luncheon at Pizzacata in Glendale at the end of March.

We also have great news from the Railroad Building as we have been given a green light to start the Standard Gauge layout thanks to the hard work and advocacy of Chris Allen. As mentioned at previous meetings, this will be the ideal way to engage the public and showcase what our small but mighty Division has to offer.

The May meeting will feature pizza and conversation in H-1 of the Paradise Valley United Methodist Church. We look forward to updates on the Auctions, Turkey Meet, and Holiday Party and Turkey Meet as the spring develops.

Ear to the rail for the rest of 2026

- May 9th: Regular meeting and Pizza (no auction)- H-1
- June 13th: Regular meeting, Room H-1
- July-Aug: No meetings
- Sept 12th: Regular Meeting, Room H-1
- October 10th: Regular meeting, Room H-1
- Nov 7th: November Auction, PVUMC Fellowship Hall
- Nov 21st: Turkey Meet, finalizing details, stay tuned, Living Streams Church
- December 13th: Holiday party, details of the new location coming soon

As I will close each newsletter, I hope to welcome you to one of our events or meetings and I’d like to add two more “C’s” to the Chamber of Commerce slogan: Collecting and Camaraderie, as the later is what keeps us going!

May education segment: *“April showers bring May...STEAM...show us your favorite steam engine.”*

DESERT DIVISION BOARD OF DIRECTORS 2022-2026

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MELANCHOLY THOUGHTS ABOUT MEMORIAL DAY AND TRAINS

By Bruce J Brown TCA #95-41451

I share many of the same feelings as Greg Palmer expressed in the May 2025 Issue of The Dispatch in his article, "Do You Ever Wonder What Stories the Old Toy Trains You Buy Have?"

When we look back on the days of our youth, what other toys have endured and survived through the years like our trains? When we look at our trains and thank heavens some of our parents didn't throw them away, it is amazing how many memories they conjure up. Whether we grew up as baby boomers or whether we grew as a kid before or during WWII, toy trains became our tangible connections to our past. We might even remember the very minute we got our first train set. If it could talk, every old train piece would have an interesting story to tell.

With Memorial Day upon us, we are reminded of the heroic acts, bravery, and sacrifices made in major wars that touched our lives. Many United States young men never returned home. There were approximately 405,000 deaths in WWII, 36,000 in the Korean War and, of my generation, 58,000 perished in Vietnam.

How many of these soldiers had toy trains when they were kids growing up? Seeing that the WWII vets were kids in the late 1920's to early 30's, Korean vets in the late 30's to early 40's, and Vietnam soldiers in the 1950's, it's a good bet that many of the deceased soldiers left behind trains in their parent's basements or attics. It's hard to imagine the anguish of families dealing with such personal loss and eventually coping with disposition of their son's possessions.

But what happened to these trains?

Going back to my early point about trains enduring through the years, isn't it a reasonable assumption that a good number of these trains could still be around? Who knows how many times they've changed hands or have been sold or maybe they've even stayed in the family lineage?

More to the point, some of these trains undoubtedly sit on someone's table in your local train show or even in your own collection.



**1930s FAMILY PLAYING WITH TOY TRAIN IN FRONT OF CHRISTMAS TREE
Fireplace (Credit: Camerique / Alamy licensed to Bruce Brown)**



**1930s YOUNG BOY PLAYING WITH TOY TRAIN BY CHRISTMAS TREE
(Credit: ClassicStock/Alamy licensed to Bruce Brown)**

It may not be far-fetched that some kid who died on the beaches at Normandy had their trains on a table at the Blue Hall in York or at a local train show. And if we could find that engine, there probably is a story attached to it of an excited little boy opening a package next to a Christmas tree with the family huddled around. There are probably stories to be told of a proud dad sharing the joy of that train with his son in, what would turn out to be all too few precious moments.

Who knows all the family milestones that train experienced and people's lives touched. They're all gone now. Just a piece of metal and gears now sit on a table with a nondescript, exorbitant price tag--something we'll pay pedestrian attention to as we scurry along the aisles at these shows. So, we ever really think of the human story behind the train--the laughter, tears, and stories elicited by that inanimate object?

So, the next time you are breezing down those aisles at a train show and see an old engine lying amidst hundreds of others, pause for a second and think about the joy this train probably gave to someone when first opened. Imagine all the wonderment it brought to someone many long years ago, and all the people's lives it touched in some way.

It might have even belonged to a little boy who was to make the ultimate sacrifice for his country.

A NEW STANDARD FOR DESERT DIVISION

By Chris Allen HE-40580

On Tuesday May 14th Desert Division met with the Scottsdale Railroad and Mechanical Society and representatives from the City of Scottsdale Parks and Recreation department. We were placed on their agenda to present our proposal for installing a Standard Gauge payout in an area of the Model Railroad Building at McCormick-Stillman Railroad Park.

During the presentation we outlined our vision of sharing the unique history of Standard Gauge trains with guests who visit the building while enjoying this very unique park. McCormick-Stillman Park and Desert Division have a long history and members of our club have participated in the annual Rail Fair event every year since it was organized. Yes, we were running Standard Gauge trains at that first Rail Fair.



One of the Mechanical Society members' grandfather was a Desert Division member and the family has his train collection in our fall auction. He pledged the proceeds from the sale of those items towards the project and offered to donate any items from the collection to be used for the display. Other members of the Mechanical Society explain that the display would fill a much-needed void currently in the building and the McCormick Stillman Park representative mentioned that Desert Division was one of the few clubs that supported the recent Rail Fair held this past month.

Following the discussion the Scottsdale Mechanical Society voted to fund the entire display enclosure, leaving the Desert Division funds to be reserved for the track, trains and accessories. Once the contract is approved by the Division Board of Directors the funds will be released to the various contractors and construction will begin. That work will take about six to eight weeks to complete. And once the layout is secured and the keys turned over to the Division, we will begin our installation with a target completion by the end of summer.

There are many challenges still ahead of us but we want to thank the Scottsdale Railroad and Mechanical Society for their financial support and the City of Scottsdale Parks and Recreation and the staff at the McCormick Stillman Railroad Park for giving the Desert Division this opportunity to share this important segment of toy train history with the public and park guests. Full steam ahead!



The goal is to provide the park guests with an interactive Standard Gauge layout with two running trains along with four interactive accessories. As we all know, there were not a lot of operating accessories made during this time and pushing a button to watch a crossing gate go up and down has very little play value. These challenges were detailed to the Mechanical Society, and we give a rough idea of the creative use of LED lighting and sounds and perhaps even short recorded historical recordings of certain items we feel we can meet and exceed the challenges ahead of us.

Also, during the presentation, we informed the group that Desert Division has allocated \$10,000 towards this project but estimates for just the benchwork and safety glass to meet park specifications far exceeded that amount of over \$18,000. During the Q&A discussion we asked the Mechanical Society for financial assistance to cover that part of the project.

UPCOMING RIO GRANDE CHAPTER EVENTS

- May 17th:** TCA-RGC Meet at the Wheels Museum – 9:00 AM
- June 13th:** Rob Adelman will be at the Wheels Museum to talk about his new books, MTH and Model Trains
- June 20th:** Summer Member BBQ Picnic at Tims. Bring some trains to run and have fun.
- July 19th:** Matchbox Gathering of Friends Convention module setup, run trains, and tear down – **1:00 PM**
- July 23rd or July 25th:** Socorro, NM field trip to Hammel Museum trainset and Jim Jackson layout.
- August 28th & 29th:** Socorro, NM module setup, run trains, have run, and tear down.

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Dues are \$15.00 per year. (Members may pay up to 5 years in advance). No. of Yrs. X\$15.00=

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Angelo Lautazi, Div. Secretary 6109 E Sonoran Trl scottsdale, AZ 85266

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Please Indicate Your Hobby Preferences from the Categories Below. Check All that Apply.

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- 4. Scale / NMRA
- 5 Standard
- 6. G or #1
- 7. O or O27 Tinplate
- 8. S
- 9. HO
- 10. OO
- 11. N
- 12. Z
- 13. Live Steam

MANUFACTURER

- 14. American Flyer
- 15. Lionel
- 16. Marx/Mars/Allstate
- 17. Ives
- 18. Dorfan/Fandor
- 19. MTH
- 20. Williams
- 21. K-line
- 22. AMT/Kusan
- 23. Other-please specify _____
- 23A. Basset/Lowke
- 23B. Bing
- 23C. Boucher
- 23D. Bub/Karl

- 23E. Buddy-L
- 23F. Carlisle/Finch
- 23G. Elletren
- 23H. Hafner
- 23I. Hoge
- 23J. Hornby
- 23K. Issmayer
- 23L. LGB
- 23M. Marklin
- 23Q. Plasticville
- 23R. Littleton/Skyline
- 23S. Pride Lines
- 23T. REA/Aristo-Craft
- 23W. Voltamp
- 23X. Weaver
- 23Y. McCoy

- 23AA. USA Trains
 - 23BB. S-Helper Service
 - 23DD. Fleishmann
 - 23EE. Carette
 - 23FF. Eastwood Auto
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FOR SALE: Lionel 38071 SP Cab Forward 4-8-8-4 Brand new, never run \$750. Lionel 51008 Burlington Pioneer Zephyr brand new, never run \$900. Lionel 38014 D&RG Challenger 4-6-6-4 OB \$750. Lionel Prewar STD Gauge #10 set, Peacock, 332, 339, 341 cars. Individual boxes and set box \$325. Lionel Prewar STD Gauge #8 set, Red, 337, 338 cars plus transformer. Individual boxes and set box \$250. Lionel Santa Fe 2333-20 P X AB Diesel, battery compartment clean. Individual boxes and set box \$250. Chet Henry 480-532-3065 or bchenry@cox.net.

FOR SALE: TRACK SALE - New: Case of GarGraves phantom rail track, 50 sections OB, \$350 (retail \$635); case of Midwest cork roadbed, 25 pieces OB, \$50 (retail \$75). Can be shipped at actual shipping costs. Peter Atonna mjatonna@gmail.com

FOR SALE: TMK Lionel Prewar 0 & Standard 1900-43, Lionel Postwar 1945-69 TM Lionel 1970-89, 3-Rail price guide, Lionel 1901-95, Lionel 1970-1992, Lionel 1901-1997 each \$20, Greenberg's Repair & Operating Manual 736 pages \$30, Lionel Train Book 131 pages \$20, Hess Toy Truck & Racer 1997 \$15, Southern Crescent Limited 9530-34 new \$75, MDH Track Layout & Accessory Manual 64 pages \$20, MDH Operating 0&027 Trains 237 pages \$20. Dan Martin 520-360-0519 dannieaz@cox.net

FOR SALE: Lionel Model Builder magazine, complete run #1 thru #80 (1937-1949) plus the pre-release Sample Copy of Lionel Model Engineering. All with covers, no cut-outs; \$495 + S/H, or I'll bring to DD meet. Tim Halchuck, Fountain Hills, AZ. Cell 213-700-5455 or email tim@sound-sources.com

FOR SALE: MTH Premier 20-20340-1 DC-3 w/PS3 \$300, MTH MT-6019 UP Four Car aluminum passenger set \$100, MTH 20-6538 Five car ABS passenger set \$150 -- PayPal & credit cards - Chris Allen 480-820-9559 sparkyshome@cox.net

WANTED: for my collection. Lionel prewar and postwar engines in master cartons, scarce separate sale items such as Lionel scrapers, bulldozers, boxed autos, Lionel 6464-700 Santa Fe, -900 New York Central, -250 Western Pacific, -450 Great Northern boxcars in Type III body molds, mint freight cars in high grade original boxes, 6414 Autoloaders with autos in yellow, brown, or kelly green with grey bumpers, following cars in separate sale boxes: 6352 Culvert car, 6352-1 PFE icing car, 3460-25 Piggyback car, any rare Lionel items. Bill Sivley 281-804-3629 or mrwls911@yahoo.com

WANTED: VHS Tapes, Lionel - The Great Years 1955 & 1956 by Joe Algozzini/Don Varda (I have 1954) - Marx 51100 Southern Double Deck Auto Carrier or Flat Cars with trailers/tractors, Marx E-7's - Chris Allen 480-820-9559 sparkyshome@cox.net

This page is provided as a service to our members for trading among themselves on a space available basis. Contact them directly for items listed above. Contact Editor when your item sells so space can be made available to other members.

****DEADLINE FOR AD's - THIRD SATURDAY OF THE MONTH ****