

The Spur

FOR THE HIGHLAND PARK SOCIETY OF MODEL RAILROAD ENGINEERS, INC.

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NO 1

Vol 2, No 1, and so we have begun our new year and we're off to a running start... by running trains, which went along pretty well, particularly if you think back to a year ago. We've made quite a bit of progress with our operation. We have developed a simple time table and while we have not attained perfection by any means, we are successfully doing it and most anyone in the club can jump in where needed and keep the trains running on time. As everyone knows by now, it ain't easy. Just beyond being able to read schedules, throw the right switches and plug in the right blocks, it takes trains that run correctly and dependably, trackwork that is right, switch machines that throw when energized, electrical circuits that are complete when plugged in and a hundred and one other things that make a railroad go. Our railroad runs better every time we try and the way we get better is to be objectively critical... and so after the session the execs met and said:

THAT, at 7:00 p.m. we were overrun with visitors which created quite a bit of confusion and the attention we gave them caused us to get a late start with our operation. We didn't conclude what we can or should do about this, its just a fact.

THAT, our expected dispatcher didn't show and we made a change and it was no particular problem. But we did say that it would help if anyone who has a key job to do where others may be dependent upon him, either on a night when we're going to operate on a work night, it would help if he would call and let us know hes' not gonna make it. Exec's in particular.

THAT, the membership generally came later than usual which added to our late start problem.

THAT, not enough equipment was brought in on Monday night to set up all the scheduled trains and so there were still some to be set up and checked out which added to the late start. Said that it would be a lot better for everyone who wants to run a train on an operating night to bring it in Monday so we can get completely checked out and have it ALL ready to run right away on Wednesday.

THAT, everything ran pretty smoothly as long as everyone worked at it. Did note that when the dispatcher wanders off somewhere else, that others start making dispatcher decisions and in one case a scheduled train got run into the storage yard, and later, when it was sposed to leave bayshore it couldn't be found, and during the dispatchers absence a couple of engineers also wandered off of their cabs. And in another case a train was on the right track at the right time to leave Bayshore, so it did but when it arrived at Del' Mar Yards the dispatcher starts yelling this isn't the right train. Wonder where that went wrong.

THAT, trains ran pretty much on time.

THAT, equipment is running better all the time, that checking everything out in advance is paying off and that members are paying better attention to their equipment.

And with that, we closed it up and went home.

THAT is, after Jefferys presented a contribution for the Spur which presents an idea which is a pretty good idea. Here it is, herewith, along with the official announcement for a short business meetin' for votin' in John Weis, July 21.

Thanks for the cookies Eddie, this sure is a nice extra for our organizing sessions, good eating too.

A FEW NOTES FROM JEFFERYS

The other night at the club, while setting up for the July operating session, a thought struck me. I have noticed the condition before, but it really hit me to the point where I feel something should be said. I am looking for thoughts and idea from the membership. Maybe you agree with me, maybe you disagree. I would like to find out. Probably the best way of informing me will be your reaction in either doing or not doing what I will discuss.

Let me give a little background to what I have to day. We have a rather large layout. We will have something like 700' of mainline eventually, and now have close to half that. We tried to design a mainline railroad, with larger terminals and yards, and sufficiently large blocks to accomodate a sizeable train. I know some of you will not feel the blocks are long enough, or that we can really operate as long a train as we may like, while a few others will feel we should have shortened everything down. What we have is a comprémize, of course, but one that permits what I at least feel is a reasonable length train.

What is going through my mind is that we are not really taking advantage of what we have, and are not showing off the layout to best advantage. We are not really trying to simulate a big railroad, of mainline proportions and capacity. How are we not doing this? We are not operating trains that look big. We are not using our capacity, as limited as it may be to some.

Visually speaking I feel that size can best be conveyed in a train by a combination of two things. First is the motive power. When I look at a model train I see these same two things, and the first I look at is the locomotive. If I see large power, I get a feeling of a large train. What do I mean by large power? Well this can be accomplished in several ways. If it is steam, then a large locomotive, an articulated, a big northern, or any big steam locomotive, With smaller power, double heading will accomplish this feeling, the need for two locomotives to haul the load. Diesels require a little different treatment, Here a multipule of units are required, at least three (3), preferably four (4) F or GP type units, or two (2) or preferably three (3) passenger units. Obviously longer units can be in less numbers. What I am aiming for is a diesel lash-up that is 2 to 2½ feet in length.

The second visual element is the train. The motive power above, trailing a 9' or 10' train (9 to 10-80' passenger cars, or equivalent freight cars) This to me is taken as a unit, I rarely count cars. A hefty locomotive with a reasonably long train will convey the impression of a very long train. A single diesel with about as many cars will convey the impression of a much shorter train.

My feeling is that we are operating too many short trains. Short in impression if not in actual length. There are too many single unit diesels running around. There are also too many short trains, 4 or 5 passenger cars, 10 freight cars or so. We are making the layout look small, we are making it look like a little branchline, not a big main line.

What I am advocating is lets make up trains that look like trains, ones that convey size. Lets get those three or four units on the point, or a large steamer or double headed steam. Lets put 9 or 10 passenger cars, or an equivalent number of freight cars behind, and lets make it look like something. Lets convey the size of railroad we are trying to depict. Lets show off.

Now I am not eliminating the short or small train, The mixed, or a local passenger, or an occasional short freight behind a consol is perfectly correct and needed, and looks great, but I feel maybe 3 trains like this out of a dozen on operating night should be enough. They fit in well, but lets not let them predominate like that have up to now. The answer is up to you. If you put branchline trains on the layout, that is what we will run, if you put mainline trains on the layout, that is what we will run.