



# Arizona Big Train Operators

## Newsletter

Club web site: <http://azbigtrains.org/>

June 2006

Volume 14, No 6

### President's Message

Hello Garden Railroaders!

We had a unique opportunity at Brian Casull's May monthly meeting to have an actual operating session for all those who came to the meeting. While not all of our members elected to participate in one of the three teams, three winners did emerge to receive box cars for their efforts. I participated in one of the teams and have to say that I enjoyed the opportunity to actually put the tracks to use. After all, one of the reasons the tracks are there, is to run trains...



So I would like to thank Brian and Rebecca for offering the opportunity to the club to have our first operating session. Rebecca's efforts at providing the lunch environment for all of us to enjoy certainly deserves mention as well, and she was a most gracious hostess to all of us. As it turns out, the winners of the operating session were Don Sorenson, Bob Rauperstrauch and Jim Kangas, seen holding their "rewards" in the photo above. The real rewards were the sense of achievement in making the railroad operate as the builder intended. We were operating with track power and the operation was smooth and consistent with the Bridgewater power packs. They truly are nice units for controlling the track powered equipment.

On a new note, the up coming meetings for June and July will be at the M & M Mobile Home Park. We will be meeting in their club house for another of our "indoor" sessions. This gets us out of the heat for both of those months. For June, John Meyers will be giving a demonstration on making buildings out of real stone and showing what materials, techniques and tools that are needed. Now for those of you who have been unhappy about the survival rate of plastic buildings in our Arizona sun, listen up! There is a way to make fully weather proof and durable buildings that can be left out all year without significant degradation to the structure walls. For those of you who have not worked with real stone, and that includes me, this should be an interesting training opportunity. It is through the gracious efforts of Chuck Grady that this location is again available to us for June and July of this year. While the park is under new management this year, Chuck has persuaded the new owner to honor the old tradition of allowing ABTO to use the space. Thank-you Chuck, from all of us!

One final note regarding our operating session at Brian's. If there are those of you who enjoyed the chance to actually operate the railroad in a somewhat "prototypical" fashion, please let me know. We could consider another opportunity at one of our monthly meetings. Remember, when the trains run, we all have fun!

Photo courtesy of the editor

**ABTO Board Members**

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Bob Rauperstrauch

Vice President  
Glenn Sampson

Secretary  
Roy Towne

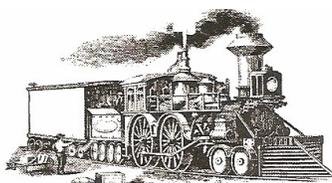
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LAST MINUTE CHANGES  
PLEASE NOTIFY the  
PRESIDENT or a  
BOARD MEMBER, or the  
NEWSLETTER EDITOR with  
information concerning a time,  
date, location change or can-  
cellation, in order that all mem-  
bers can be notified by Email  
and the Calling Tree can be  
activated in a timely manner.

Constructive comments are  
always welcome!



**Calendar of Events**



**June 3 8-11 Modules at The Queen Mary**

**17 12pm - 3pm ABTO General Meeting**  
M & M Mobile Home Park - Mesa  
See page 9 for details

**July 1 8:00am Board Meeting**  
Home Town Buffet  
1312 N. Scottsdale Rd. - Scottsdale

**3-9 National Garden Railway Convention**  
Bay Area Garden Railway Society

**15 12pm - 3pm ABTO General Meeting**  
M & M Mobile Home Park - Mesa  
details to be announced

**Aug 5 8:00am Board Meeting**  
Home Town Buffet  
2730 W. Bell Rd. - Phoenix

**19 11am - 2pm ABTO General Meeting**  
Ed and Mary Fishencord

**Sept 2 8:00am ABTO Board Meeting**  
Home Town Buffet  
1312 N. Scottsdale Rd. - Scottsdale

**16 11am - 2pm ABTO General Meeting**  
Mike Temenski

**Oct 7 8:00am ABTO Board Meeting**  
McCormick Stillman

**7 McCormick Stillman Rail fair**  
Modules

**21 Phoenix Botanical Garden**  
Modules

**28 11am - 2pm ABTO General Meeting**  
Tim and Karen Schlax

**Nov 4 8:00am ABTO Board Meeting**  
Home Town Buffet  
1312 N. Scottsdale Rd. - Scottsdale

## Rail Fans Enjoy the Glacier Express

*By Rich Hull*

Late last month 38 rail fans returned from a trek, mostly by train, through Europe. This was the fourth year for such a trip and this year's adventure was the biggest in terms of participants and geography covered. For many travelers this was the third trip they have participated in, and for some, they had been on all four. The purpose of these trips uppermost is to experience the passenger trains of Europe. The sightseeing, history lessons, food and souvenirs all take a back seat to the trains.

This year was no exception. The group started out on the very fast Eurostar train from Waterloo Station to Paris. The 25 minutes spent under the English Channel was quite a thrill. The Eurostar train was laid out much like an airplane and in a little over 4 hours the group arrived in Paris. Later in the week the group enjoyed a first class trip from Paris to Lausanne, Switzerland on a very fast train that France is so famous for. In Germany, the group enjoyed many trips on the famous ICE Trains (Inter City Express). On the long trip from Nuremburg to Berlin, many of the Rail Fans spent most of the trip sitting with the engineer in the cab of the engine. On that trip, the train often approached speeds of 180 mph. The engineer spent the entire trip talking to anyone who would listen about how the trains worked. Once the train entered what was old East Germany, he pointed out the differences in signals from West Germany.

The ultimate highlight of the trip was the Glacier Express from Zermatt to St. Moritz Switzerland. This trip was 8 ½ hours long with many stops and adding engines, cars and then deleting them. The trains switched from normal electric powered engines to cog trains many times. The Glacier Express offered the Swiss Alps in a nutshell. The train transports you through the green gentle hills covered with alpine flowers, past tiny mountain hamlets clinging to craggy rock faces, through narrow river gorges and under snow covered peaks, and yes, with glaciers. No other trip in the world offers this kind of scenery. The trip is

only 180 miles long and altitude changed from 1,700 feet to 6,670 feet. At times it was like a rollercoaster with ears popping many different times. Three different railway companies operate the Glacier Express.



View of St Moritz from the Hotel Balcony.

We left on the Glacier Express from Zermatt, a relative quiet village that allows no motorized vehicles in its city limits. Although we didn't see the Matterhorn the morning we left, we were soon in clear skies looking at snow-capped peaks that seemed to stretch to the heavens. The trip through the 9.6-mile Furka Tunnel was awaiting the group as well as many bridges that seemed to be an engineering marvel each time. Our Glacier Express trip ended in St Moritz

Another highlight of the rail fans trip was two days spent in the Normandy area of France. The many museums highlighting the events of June 1944 were overshadowed by a walk on Omaha Beach and a visit to the American Cemetery above Omaha Beach. For the rail fans that have traveled on these trips many times, they had the opportunity to experience WWII from the tunnels of Dover to the final days of the War in Berlin. The third try is often the best because this time the group was able to travel to Hitler's Eagles nest in Berchtesgaden, Germany.

The LGB factory in Nuremburg welcomed the group with a first class tour of their plant. Photographs were allowed each step of the way and tour guides repeatedly said they have no secrets. The group was treated to some glimpses of products due out in the future and learned that all LGB track is now being made back in Germany. Wolfgang Richter, President of LGB, welcomed the group and received hand made placemats from Sandy Rauperstrauch and ABTO featuring LGB trains. Wolfgang joined the group at the end of the tour to once again answer questions and talk about their plans for the big LGB Anniversary celebration this summer. That evening the President met with the many 2008 Convention committee members with a one on one dinner session that stretched into several hours.

These trips were designed to expose rail fans to the trains of Europe. In the past four years the group has traveled on virtually every kind of transportation. The trips also allowed the group to be exposed to different cultures, taste different foods and see in person many of the sights we have only enjoyed in pictures. But most importantly, it was an opportunity to get to know ABTO Members and Tucson Members better. The friendships made on these trips last long after the pictures are filed away and the souvenirs moved to the back of the cabinets. These friendships are enduring.

The next rail fans trip is slated for the fall of 2008. Plans are to start in the Netherlands, travel across Belgium and France with emphasis on seeing Italy from the Italian Alps to the Boot Heel. Make your plans now to participate in this trip. Space will be limited.



Zermatt Railway station

### Riding on the ICE train

*By Bob Rauperstrauch*

One of the delightful things about traveling, is that sometimes your best laid plans turn out wildly more successful than you had expected. Case in point, traveling by ICE train. As we were standing on the station platform in Nuremberg waiting for ICE train #1612 to arrive, conversation began with a German railway worker. As one thing lead to another, turns out he is the engineer for the Nuremberg to Leipzig leg of the train trip to Berlin. Well, as the train arrived, conversation concludes and we all board the train. As we took our seats, lo and behold, we were sitting right behind him, with a clear glass wall and door between us and the locomotive cab, wherein he sat in plain view. At this point, I had taken my seat farther back in the lead car / locomotive.



All of a sudden someone came back to get me, saying that the engineer has opened the door to the cab and is allowing us to stand in the doorway! Well, I don't need to tell you I haven't moved that fast since I sat down on that ant hill while working on my railroad.

As it turned out, he was most gracious with us, even allowing us to sit in the cab behind him as we traveled approximately 100 mph. We were under speed restrictions and so were limited in top speed. As we chatted he described not only the surrounding countryside but the locomotive as well. Here is some of what he told us. Our train was about 2 years old. It contains 3 brake systems, one dynamic, one air, and one magnetic. Seems the last one is an emergency setting and magnetically clamps a steel block to the top of the rail head to slow the train down. He says you don't get any more free coffee and snacks from the Café car when you let that happen...

The operating voltage is 12,000 at 800 amps which is stepped down to a lower voltage for the traction motors. You set the top speed with a keypad and if the speed is exceeded, you get an audible warning and then the braking sequence begins automatically. Yes, there is a dead man's pedal as well. The whole operation is controlled through computer touch screens and a keypad. Interestingly enough, the speedometer is an analog design, i.e. it has numbers on it like your automobile. We did ask him about the obvious security violation and were worried that he could be disciplined or fired. He repeatedly assured us that he was a civil servant and so could not be fired! He could be retired, however. He went on; when he was in the States, he was riding in the cab of a locomotive and was treated to the history of the area and operating details of the locomotives. So, he thought he would just return the favor. Whew! Some favor... One interesting point he raised was about salary. He makes about \$1700 US net, and was considerably discouraged to find out that American engineers with the right seniority are paid in the neighborhood of \$5,000 US for the same hours of work. Needless to say, we sat in the cab until Leipzig and the end of his run. Rest assured, we all knew what a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity we had had.

His name was Deter, and he certainly made our day!



### LGB Presentation !

LGB trains that were quilted on placemats, put a big smile on the face of **Wolfgang Richter**, President of LGB .



Photos by Janice Hanson

## The V.P.'s FYI and Random Thoughts Column

*By Glenn Sampson*

Mike Lewandowski is currently running a very informative series on the DCC requirements, so the following remarks and thoughts are more a shotgun of what's available than a detailed evaluation.

Keyboard or pushbutton operation seems to be the most prevalent method of operation available. The Aristo Train Engineer, Loco Linc, MTH, and the older LGB MTS systems are examples. The Airwire 900 and newer LGB MTS are incorporating the Knob or rheostat, similar to our old Lionel transformer. I haven't seen many others, but I use the Joystick, like our old model airplane controllers, with my Live Steam Locomotive. I'm sure there are others, but the point is there are many methods and it would be interesting to see and learn more about each. Many times I have regretted not evaluating other options before buying into the first one I ran across.

The modules now have Battery, Aristo Train Engineer and MTH operating systems and it has become apparent that we all should have some training in these disciplines. Even if we aren't going to utilize them on our own layouts, it's better to understand what exactly is involved and required for proper and more efficient operation, as well as some of the problems that are being encountered.

Every wireless control system, MTH, LGB MTS, NCE ,etc is unique and all differ in some manner from our old tried and true transformer and Train Engineer approach. With the great diversity of these operating modes for our garden railroads, and the knowledgeable individuals we have in this club, I have been wondering if the membership would like to have a series of seminars, at different members layouts, where we could spend some time involved in a hands on, or at least a more detailed, 'Here's how I did it', what's required, what's different, and exactly how it really works.

In the April newsletter, Roy Towne wrote a very nice article on the his MTH system. He has agreed to conduct a session at his home, giving all interested that hands on opportunity. We will be scheduling it later in the year. Dennis Busby has also committed to providing an article and a session on the LGB MTS system sometime later.

I'm going to try and setup some other sessions as well and would like your suggestions as to exactly what would be of the most interest. However, all of this must come after the current flurry of activity has subsided. I envision these sessions on weekend days or even evenings if so desired, at a time that wouldn't interfere with other club activities.

A few years back a proposal was made, I believe by Tony Vacek, to create a consist of freight cars, each representing , and emblazoned with the name and/or logo of the participants railroad, these were to be run on the Module. At the present I know of only three or four that were ever fabricated. I'm proposing that we renew this project, and all members that would like to provide a car would certainly be appreciated. The idea is to have them setup on a siding at the show, with the LGB Santa Fe Mikado and caboose we presently have, and any member that wishes to run this unit could be scheduled on the "runboard." This would insure that we would have a consist ready to run at the inevitable times when someone isn't quite ready to operate and we need something out on the mainline. Storage facilities can be provided for the entire unit in the trailer, ready for use at the module outings. Anyone interested, please let me know and I'll coordinate this effort.

Glenn

