



GRAND CANYON MODEL RAILROADERS

MAIN LINE

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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

by John Draftz

As a reminder, 2023 dues were due by the end of January so the Secretary can create a current member directory and get it distributed. A renewal form is elsewhere in this newsletter. If you haven't yet paid, please contact Rod Johnson (602-625-4168 or crodjohanson@hotmail.com) as soon as practical to let him know your intentions.

Our March meeting is Saturday the 25th. The theme is: A Favorite Holiday Car Or Engine (you pick the holiday). Also. If you have a train that you can run before the meeting, plan to bring it and run it. After all, running trains is what we do. The BoD will meet about 8:30 with the member meeting starting about 10.

Our Winter Cactus swap meet was a success with a 124-table sellout and a waiting list. A special thanks to all those who helped set up Friday afternoon and to all those who helped during the meet. A special thanks to Peter Atonna for lending us his auctioneer skills and the accompanying train knowledge. The treasurer will present a more detailed report at the meeting.

I've already received table reservations for the Fall Cactus swap meet in September. We are 15% sold out at this point. Visit our www.gcmrr.org web site for more details and the vendor form.

Saturday, February 25th, was the Arizona Railway Museum (ARM) spring open house which saw over 1500 people in attendance.

Our mobile layout was in operation and was a major attraction as usual with all seven loops having trains running on them. A special thanks to Dave Brown, Rod Johnson, Janet and Terry Mattern, and John Zaval for running trains, answering questions, and being a great people outreach in general.

The 2023 annual spring mini-meet will be on our regular meeting day, April 22nd, from 9-11 and follow the format we've used before. Initially only GCMR members can have a free sale table at the church to sell "stuff" to the public. Any tables still available at the first of the month before the meet (April 1st) will be made available to members of other railroad clubs. The meet is free to the public. Janet has been willing to serve as the event coordinator. Please let her know if you want a table (602-569-0568 or tjmattern@cox.net). Our challenge is to get the word out to the public and thus potential buyers. July 22nd will be the other mini-meet.

See you the 25th.

CALENDAR

GCMR meets are held at 9:00am in the Parish Hall of Our Saviors Lutheran Church at 1212 East Glendale Avenue in Phoenix, located on the north side of Glendale, just east of the traffic

light at 12th St. It is easily reached off the Glendale Exit of either I-17 or SR 51. Go east from I-17 or west from SR 51 to 12th Street.

March 25 - GCMR meet - Our Saviors Lutheran Church. Theme: A Favorite Holiday Car (you pick the holiday)

April 1 - Tri Club picnic - Asti Ramada, Scottsdale Railroad Park

April 22 - GCMR meet - Our Saviors Lutheran / Church - Spring mini swap meet. See table reservation form this issue

May 27 - GCMR meet - Our Saviors Lutheran Church - – individual layouts Theme: Memorial Day; Space/Military Trains/Hardware. Drag races stock & custom

We are sad to report the passing of
two long time members of the
GCMR:

Doyle Bain
Frank Birney

LIONCHIEF VS. DCS EXPLORER

by Chris Allen

I operate portable modules several times a year. Besides the TCA trailer module that many of you are familiar with I have a small loop of Fastrack mounted on a door that I can set up very quickly. I use the door layout as a test track most often because of it's small size. On occasion I simply just throw down a loop of tubular track on the floor to run trains when the grandkids want to play. I'm not particular, it's just a quick setup before the kids get bored and move on to something else.

The orange control on the left is the Universal LionChief control, on the left the one that came with the set



I own a few LionChief locomotives and plan to add a few FlyerChief to my stable as well. I find them easy to set up and run and they seem to keep the younger hands and minds engaged longer than being tied down to transformers that we had as kids. As you are probably aware LionChief uses a Bluetooth connection between the engine and the remote control. Because of this you can also install an app on your phone or pad and also control the train that way as well. My grandkids like this option and they will install the app themselves to run “their” train on “their” phone.

While I do like the LionChief system overall, it does have one drawback. I can only operate the few LionChief locomotives in my collection and new engines require a several hundred-dollar investment for each locomotive that will see limited track time



The LionChief app on my phone. Running trains is simple, put the engine on the track, apply power, connect the engine to the app, run train

A few years ago I was introduced to the MTH DCS Explorer. It is similar to the LionChief system but instead of connecting the locomotive via Bluetooth it uses a Wi-Fi signal to a very small interface unit. The setup is almost as easy as the LionChief, and with the addition of a simple Molex connector I can go from conventional and LionChief to DCS Explorer with a quick cable swap.



When running LionChief I use several different power sources. When the grandkids are around, I tend to use a variable power transformer that I can drop the supply voltage down to about 16 volts so I don't have to worry about any high speed rollovers. For my test track operations I grab a MTH Z-1000 or Lionel Powerhouse 180 watt brick, both of which put out a solid 18 Volts. Setting up is easy, plug transformer into the wall, connect to track, hand the control over to the kids. If I want them to run MTH engines I simply insert the Explorer between the transformer and the track.



The DCS Explorer sitting on top a MTH Z1000. All that is needed is to put the Explorer between the track and the transformer.

I had a one-time investment to buy the Explorer, purchasing mine on eBay used, and was able to add my MTH DCS engines to the lineup the kids can now run. What follows is not going to be a technical in-depth comparison but rather a quick overview of the two systems from my personal experience and setup.

Time to run the train, once it is powered up the process is similar to the LionChief, connect connect the app to the engine and run trains.

Pros and Cons. Both systems allow simple basic running forward, reverse, crew talk, horn and bell, which should keep most kids of any age busy. The LionChief remote is very intuitive and even five year olds figure it out very quickly. Unfortunately, the Explorer does not come with a remote and while the app is very easy to use, I have purchased a "Walmart special" Android pad and I let the kiddos use this pad rather than my cell phone when using the Explorer at public running events. As I mentioned earlier, my own grandkids have the app already installed.

Both the LionChief and Explorer app have a few extra functions available on the app and both will control multiple trains on a single track however only the Explorer will allow you to

make a multiple engine lash-up. If you have a multitrack layout, you can run as many LionChief engines as you wish on any loop, while the DCS Explorer is only for a single track.

More of a slight annoyance than a negative is the fact that the Explorer takes about a minute to “boot up” and for most typical runs you will need to connect your phone to the new “DCS hotspot”. Kids do this easier than most adults I know, and while LionChief is truly plug-n-play, the Explorer does require this extra minute of setup. While this is not a big deal this last item might be a concern for some of you.



Once the Explorer is up and running adding another engine takes less than ten seconds

Unlike a DCS TIU which can be run in passive mode, the Explorer cannot, which means track power flows through the DCS Explorer to the track. Although I have witnessed countless derailments without losing the interface, that potentially could be the weak link. It seems to clamp and drop power to the track very quickly, but one day I might not be so lucky.

On the plus side, I can run any DCS engine in my fleet and do not need to continue to purchase special LionChief locomotives. In addition the DCS app allows me to run some of

the Lionel TMCC engines, just like the regular DCS systems. However, I have not been very successful in doing this. LionChief does not control any other Lionel Command Equipped engines.

Which one is best? Using the LionChief system, your investment is in each individual locomotive itself, with the low end starting around \$300. The Explorer is a cheaper investment than a MTH DCS remote and TIU, comes with operational compromises, but does allow you to run any DCS engine you currently have. For my particular needs, and since I have a lot of inexpensive MTH Rail Chief locomotives, I prefer the Explorer.

If you have heard the news both Lionel and the new DCS systems will now be Wi-Fi only, no more handheld remotes. Let's see, I have CAB1, CAB2, LionChief and DCS remotes in my drawer, I guess this old dog will need to learn a few more new tricks if he wants to play trains.

**All setup waiting for the grandkids to arrive.
A little of this and a little of that**



FROM TRAINORDERS.COM

This was the best line of the day today on Donner. Up in Soda Springs, a woman walked out from the trees to watch the Rotary go by. One of the UP guys called out to his boss, Mr Young, "Hey! Where did she come from?! We've got a trespasser down there!"

A man standing next to me said, "That's no trespasser, that's my wife!" Apparently their house is there to the left, hidden in the trees.



MORE FROM THE REAL TRAIN WORLD

Information is starting to trickle out about BNSF's planned "Regional Industrial Rail Facility," also known as the BNSF Railway Western Hub near Surprise. The company started the process to develop the 3,500-acre site and have it annexed into the city after submitting the sole bid in an Arizona State Land Department auction in March.

BNSF's plans for the site include an industrial park with warehouse/manufacturing, distribution and other facilities. Documents submitted in support of the plan state the site's intermodal capacities would be beneficial for companies and would permit the efficient movement of goods and materials through a combination of rail and truck-based transportation.

If built as planned, the project would be the Phoenix area's first logistics and intermodal center.



NEW LIFE FOR "RAISNETTES"

by John Draftz

Quite some time ago when they were popular, I picked up some of the raisin figures at various thrift stores. Recently I decided to finish the project which was to use them as loads for gondolas.

To do so meant getting enough inexpensive, long gondolas. The was done at the Winter Cactus swap meet. The figures were cemented to the gons as that seemed the best. Conveniently the word "raising" can be written as "raisin" so signs were created on the computer with various, common sayings, printed, and attached to the sides of the gons. I plan to bring them to the March meeting.





him make the “Grand” sign for it and was when still in business.



The layout’s original “3 story era”

But the rest of the buildings were generic, commercial style buildings, two and three stories high. I simply added name signs for businesses that were there when we were in High School (high school yearbooks were a great help).

As you know, the current version of the layout extended “Douglas” into what had been the locomotive service facility area of the prior version. There, the buildings and kits there were attempts to more representing actual businesses.

About 18 months ago, I started on a 2/3rds scale model of Douglas’s signature building, the still operating Gadsden Hotel. When that was done, there remained one more signature building, the train station. In this case, it became a close to a full quarter inch scale model of the still in use and retired building.

SHRINKING DOWNTOWN DOUGLAS

by Peter Atonna

GCMR members who have visited my layout may remember that the largest “town” on it is Douglas, where Mary Jane and I grew up. And in our youth, Douglas was a major Arizona city - that is until the copper mines closed down, the smelter was torn down and the railroad left the city. But, even the first variation of the layout, started in 2000, featured downtown Douglas.

At that time, I built as many downtown commercial building kits as I could find. The only near-real replica was of the main theater, the Grand Theater. And that was a lucky find at a California meet where a fellow was making lighted Plexiglas boxes as theaters. One was a pretty good representation of the Grand. I had



But that made me look at other downtown buildings. They were OK, but some were two

and some three stories. In Douglas, downtown buildings were, and are, all two stories high. In my, now fussier, eye, downtown didn't look right.

And that became this winter's project. Two were beautiful Downtown Deco three story plaster cast buildings. They had to go. Fortunately the friend who bought the old train station was looking for buildings to go near it, and he now owns them both.

In one place, I found a Woodland Scenic's two story commercial kit that was fairly close to the early version of the main corner drug store. Next door were two more three story buildings, one another plaster kit and the other an Ameritown plastic kit. In each of them I was successful in slicing out the second floor!

On the last replacement for the plaster kit, I needed another, larger building to match the size of the old plaster kit. It was signed as a landmark Douglas store, the Levy's Department Store. Levy's, in southern Arizona, was what Goldwater's was in northern Arizona.

Two merchant Levy brothers came west in the early 20th century and set up stores in Arizona mining and smelting towns. And the son of one of them was a neighbor and good family friend. So a Levy's store it would remain. Fortunately I was able to find a great early postwar photo of it (before a "modernizing" with a new streamline design storefront, which I find boring). You can see it on the left of the downtown Douglas photo above.

So, up it went as another scratch built store. Fortunately, I had all the materials I needed, so it went up pretty quickly (no scratch built structures are "quick", for this one it meant about six week)

Now, when I look over downtown, it no longer bothers me as all buildings are only two stories and I can pretend I am looking at downtown in 1957.

But wait, there is more! Since doing this article and photos, I discovered a great historic photo of the Grand Theater you see on the right of

both photos. Again the basic structure was similar, but I could see all sorts of trim and details on the facade. They now embellish the building.



A NOTE FROM HERB ANDREEN

The open House at our Mesa residence was a complete success on Sunday March 12th. The register reflected that there were 40 members in attendance from three clubs: GCMR, TCA, and P&P as well as a few guests. The weather was great and a good time had by all.

!!!FREE!!!

MODEL RAILROAD
MINI-SWAP



SAT. APRIL 22, 2023

9:00 AM TO 11:00 AM

OUR SAVIOUR'S
LUTHERAN CHURCH

PARISH HALL

1212 East Glendale Ave

Phoenix, AZ 85020



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email: info@gcmrr.org

SELLERS: TO RESERVE A SWAP TABLE, CONTACT JANET MATTERN
AT 602-569-0568 OR tjmattern@cox.net. LIMITED TABLES AVAILABLE.
PRIORITY GIVEN TO GRAND CANYON MRR CLUB MEMBERS.



BEAT THE HEAT 2023

VENDOR APPLICATION

Saturday, July 29, 2023

Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University Event Center
3700 Willow Creak Road
Prescott, AZ (see attached maps)

We only have 6 foot tables so please plan accordingly. The cost is still the same, \$30 for the first table and \$20 for each additional table. Large display items and shelving units CANNOT be placed in the public isles. If you need room for one small display/shelving unit (3 feet wide or less) please describe in the Special Request box at the bottom of the Vendor form. I will try to leave a gap between tables for you. If you have larger displays you will need to pay for table space but I will remove the table so you have room for your oversized displays. Again, please describe in the Special Request box at the bottom of the Vendor form. If you are only getting 1 table, please try to limit yourself to just one helper.

We have invited several clubs to bring their traveling train layouts.

There will be a Hot Dog cart, just outside the doors, serving a variety of dogs, chips and sodas. Credit Cards or cash. Also, there is at least 6 fast food restaurants within 5 minutes from the venue (if you can send one of your helpers to go get food.)

Include this form and your check for the total of tables.

Make check payable to CAMRRC and mail to:

CAMRRC
Fred Williams
PO Box 25138
Prescott Valley AZ 86312

For more info, call Fred at 928-463-5163

NAME: _____

COMPLETE ADDRESS: _____

PHONE: _____ EMAIL: _____

of 6 foot Tables _____ \$30 for the first & \$20 each for additional tables. Total \$ _____

Helper Names: _____

Special needs/requests: