

ABTO Round-a-bout

By Dick Izen



On November 7 several club members drove up to Phoenix to visit six layouts opened to us by members of the Arizona Big Train Operators (ABTO) club. All of the layouts were interesting in one way or another and the ABTOers were very gracious hosts.

Diesels seem to be supplanting steam engines in the garden. Only two of the layouts were primarily operating steam engines although another one had a live steam special interest group (sig) that demonstrated four G gauge live steam locomotives for us.

Ken and Kris Hawkins

Our first stop was in Surprise AZ., about 150 miles north of Tucson, at the Hawkins' under construction layout. They have created a large raised roadbed on two sides and across the back of their back yard. At our visit there was a single large loop operating an LGB Mogul pulling five cars. Plans for a shorter upper level loop and a separate mining loop were on display. Mogul pulling freight crosses bridges over waterfall into swimming pool.

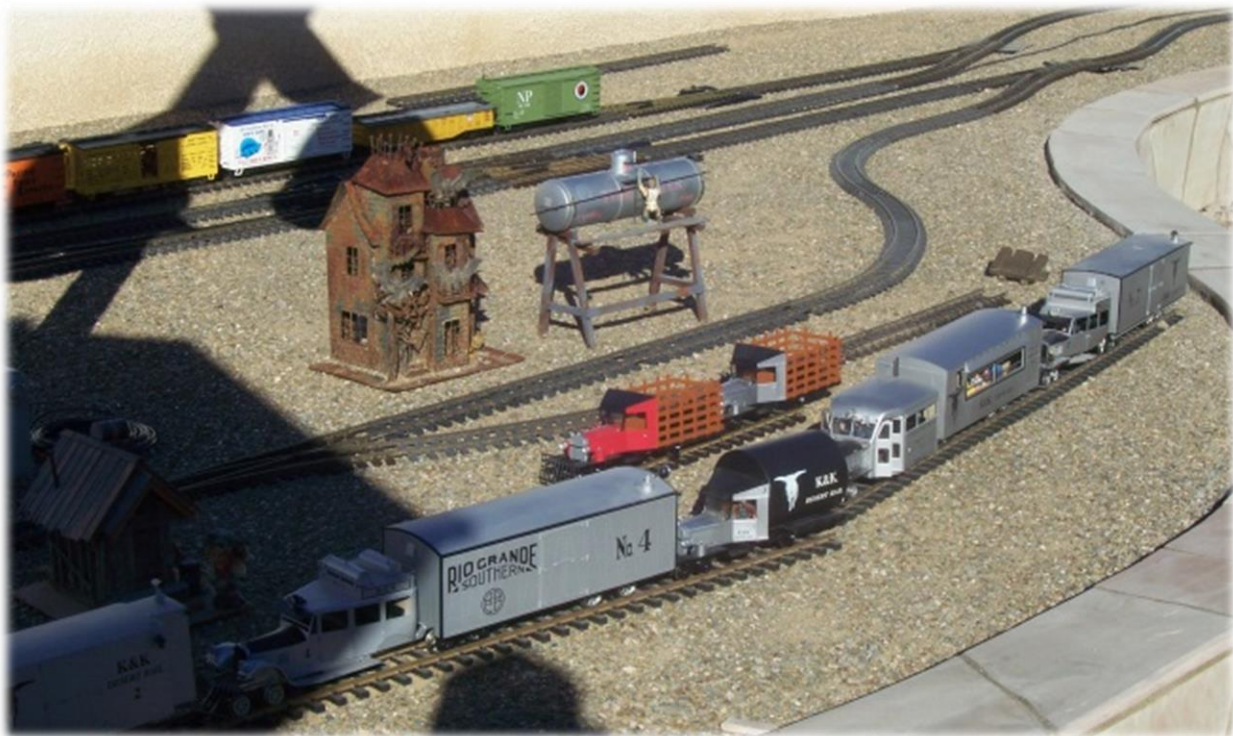




As might be expected at this stage of construction, scenery was sparse. In honor of Halloween, however, they had placed two frightening buildings along trackside.



Of greater interest was the extensive collection of 'Galloping Geese' of D&RGW fame, displayed on a siding. Note that all of these have been repainted and lettered for the Hawkins' K&K railroad.



Display of the gaggle of geese on a siding.



Closer view of 'goose' number 5 with passengers aboard ready to run.

The Hawkins also took on the task of feeding their hungry visitors a wholesome breakfast with baked egg casseroles, sweet rolls and fresh fruit as well as beverages. I think all of us were grateful for their efforts.

Terry and Carolyn Fields

Moving back south to Phoenix we visited the Fields' very large layout based primarily on the Santa Fe. It featured a model of Kingman Az., quite a bit of hand laid track in three or four loops and a simply spectacular long 'steel' bridge which he scratch built from aluminum strips and girders. In addition to scratch built buildings there were several sections of 'industrial' flats which helped to create the illusion of a working railroad.

That's our intrepid newsletter editor Claudia Nelson, looking at one of the long freight trains heading toward the camera, behind Kingman's main street.





The scratch built Kingman station, across from a J.C. Penny's store. Note the solar powered platform lights and the semaphore train order signal.

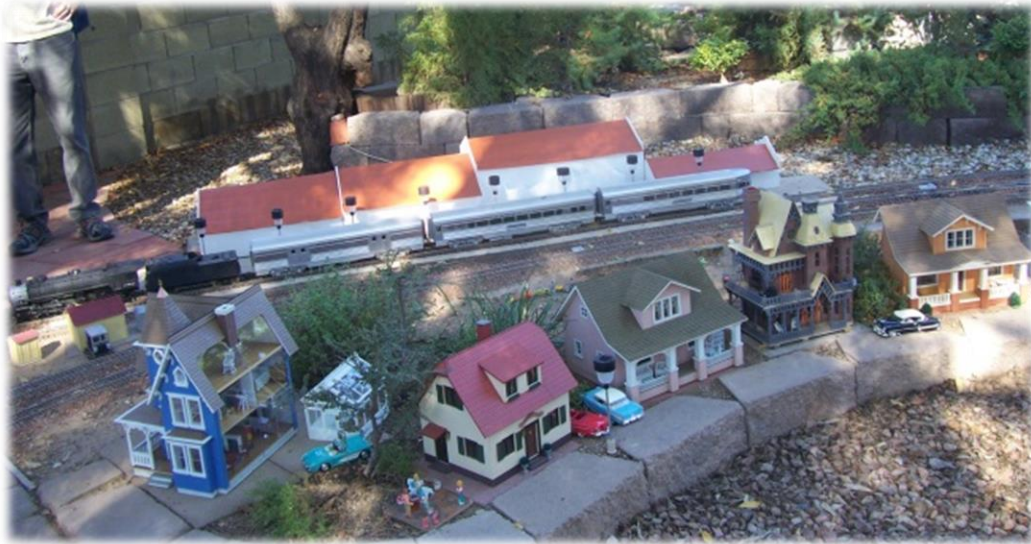
Operations consisted mainly of two multi-unit diesel locomotives pulling long freight trains and a diesel powered work train on another loop.

Work train crossing the spectacular scratch built bridge.

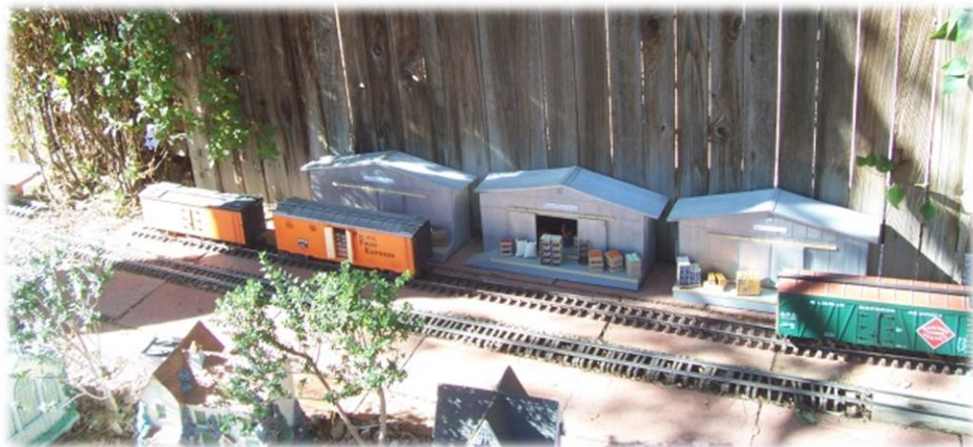




A better view of the bridge itself.



The steam powered passenger train in front of another station wasn't operating during our visit. Note the blue building and the building second from the right which were both built from 1:24 doll house kits. The blue one has a clear plastic wall to display the fully furnished interior.



Three industrial warehouses with plenty of crates and boxes made the busy railroad more realistic.



I hadn't mentioned the logging loop with the only non-Santa Fe locomotive we saw.



One of the long diesel powered freights running during our visit.

John and Pat Meyers

Our next stop was at the Meyer's home.

This was an especially important stop as the ABTO people had set up tables of cars, figures, and accessories for sale. What model railroader doesn't need more?

John was having some track problems so his only operating train was a single diesel road switcher going back and forth with a single freight car and a caboose.

The Meyers have a large property, however, and in the rear, behind John's machine shop, ABTO had a raised two loop live steam layout. While we were there we saw four different live steamers.



Two cylinder shay with scratch built superstructure running on inner loop. Note the trailing refer that has been converted to an office car with a door and windows as well as a stack for the 'coal stove'.



A live steam 2-8-0 Consolidation running on the outer loop. That snow plow isn't just decorative as the owner lives in Flagstaff and has run in several inches of snow. The shay and office car are across the layout on the inner loop.

In addition to the live steam the Meyers hosted ABTO's barbeque lunch for us. There were plenty of hot dogs and hamburgers, with all the fixings, as well as spicy cooked beans

and chips. Desert included brownies and cookies. Cokes, root beer and water were available. I don't think any of us left hungry.

We also took a group picture while at the Meyers, it is displayed at the front of this trip report.

Gary and Nancy Alberti

The Alberti's have packed four loops of track between the rear of their home and the rear fence. Two of these are long loops on which they operate long diesel freight trains while the other two loops are at a Disney themed mountain at one end of the property. The lower 'Disney' loop has a steam powered tourist train of open cars while higher up the mountain is a figure eight carrying a short steam powered passenger train.



Two long freight trains, are heading in opposite directions, on two of the long loops.



Steam powered passenger train rounds 'Disney' mountain.



The tourist or park train at 'Disney' mountain. The rear of the passenger train is above to the left.

The Albertis' also have an extensive N gauge layout built indoors. This was abundantly detailed with street lights and lighted buildings including some model skyscrapers.

Kal and Barbara Miller

Our fifth stop was the Miller's considerable layout featuring two long loops and extensive scenic features. While we were visiting Kal was running a long (17 cars) double headed freight train and a triple headed (A-B-A units) passenger train with six long streamlined cars including two dome cars and a round ended observation car.

The layout itself has hollow long tunnels, full size mine cars, many bridges and is back dropped by a tall wall of bamboo. Roughly 'L' shaped, the layout is operated by Kal from a central control station located in the bend of the layout's 'L'.



Overall view of the long side of the layout. Note the full size ore cars and the dense bamboo backdrop wall.



That's President Glenn Mitchell and Ruth Taylor on the far side of the layout. The passenger train on the fourth track back and the freight on the second track are both moving in the same direction but the passenger train is going counter clockwise on its' loop while the freight is going clockwise on its' loop. Note the hollow log tunnel that the passenger train is just entering.



Having completed their turns the freight is now on track three while the passenger train is on track one. A refinery is partly visible at the far left.



A better view of the refinery.

The long passenger train is running through the hollow log tunnel.



That's out host, Kal in the red shirt seated at the control station as the passenger train heads toward the bend in the L shaped layout. I can't identify who is talking with him but that's Wayne Wesolowski in the mid distance.



A final shot of the passenger train. I could argue that I included the above shot because it shows an impressive bridge but it was really because I like long streamlined passenger trains.

Vince Simpson & Carolyn Triquart

Our final stop of the day was in Casa Grande, about 55 miles south of Phoenix.

Vince, our host, also runs VES, a hobby supplier, and had a display of their many buildings and flats arranged as we entered. He had priced them with a club discount. You might think our group would have been all done shopping but I saw a number of buildings bagged and purchased.



Freight train headed toward eastern end of layout.

The freight having completed its' run has turned and is crossing the bridge westbound. Note the Mickey Mouse and Goofy hand car running back and forth on the track to the left.





Eastbound passenger train

Passenger train enter tunnel to turn and head west. Mickey and Goofy are far up the track on the left.



After a full day we headed back to Tucson, tired but happy after a good day of viewing model trains. Next year will be our turn to set up a roundabout and entertain ABTO. I hope you all consider participating