

## From the Interlocking Tower

A message from our president Harold Helland...

Hello Members. Our new location continues to work out great for our club. The construction work for the expansion of the Trains for Kids room is complete and that layout is back in operation. Eddie Perez is working on the center section in order to “fill in the gap”. He is completing the mountain scene and plans to include a roller coaster and Ferris wheel in the center. John Castaneda is also rework-ing the section where the building with no roof once stood.

The contractors have completed work on our museum space adjacent to our main room. The club test track has been installed and we will soon be testing all the new engines that club members purchased while we were building our new layout. Speaking of our new layout, we have started laying roadbed and track on the last peninsula which will include a main line track, a freight yard and a passenger yard with the San Diego station. Thanks to all of you who have put in countless hours to get trains running.

In this issue we have another fun article from Dan Conway titled Texas Model Railroads with Sauerkraut on the side. You will enjoy reading the article and I will let you figure out where the Sauerkraut comes in.

Also included in this issue is an article from Dick Bale titled Modeling in the 1950s. It’s an article about billboards and the fact that they clearly show the era you are modeling. If a billboard announces the new 1952 Chevrolet, that pretty much defines your era. The article includes several 50’s vehicle billboards in HO

Since Terry Larson took over as the head of the Heritage Park team, cooperation and teamwork between our groups has improved significantly. Terry was able to quickly vacate the space next to our main room allowing us to complete expansion of our space much sooner than any of us thought possible. Thanks to Terry and her team for their hard work cleaning out the room.

We’re making good progress in all areas and I’m looking forward to the day when we can have fun running some trains. Thanks to all for pitching in and making things happen.

*Have a great day!*

*Harold*

### NCMRS Officers

**Harold Helland**  
President

**Rich Llewellyn**  
Vice President

**Rich Blankinship**  
Treasurer

**Jim Gillie**  
Secretary

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Director

# THE SEMAPHORE

North County Model Railroad Society.  
at Oceanside Heritage Park  
220-230 Peyri Drive, Oceanside CA 92058  
[www.ncmrs.org](http://www.ncmrs.org)

The Semaphore is published quarterly and distributed on-line to members of the North County Model Railroad Society. News and articles to be considered for publication may be submitted to Dick Bale at [rhbale@aol.com](mailto:rhbale@aol.com).

## Department Heads & Committee Chairmen Effective April 15, 2015

Computer Hardware, Software & Peripherals	Nick Ruddick
Decoder Pro & Test Track	Leo Valley
E-bay Sales	Rich Blankinship
Events / Field Trips	Al Cuevas
Kids Program	Amanda Lahey
Layout Planning & Design	David Ford
Layout & Facility Construction	Harold Helland
Layout Landscape / Scenery	David Ford, Harold Helland
Layout Electronics	Nick Ruddick
Library / Museum Displays	Rich Blankinship
Membership	Jim Gillie
Member Support (Badges, Shirts, Education )	Rich Llewellyn
Member Training	Al Cuevas, Dick Miller
Office Supplies	Leo Valley
Operation Lifesaver	open
Public Relations / Community Outreach	Dick Bale
Railroad Operating Sessions	John Stevens, Charlie Tucker
Semaphore Editor	Dick Bale
Semaphore Publisher	Dale Barney
Storage & Inventory	Bob Hunt
Train Equipment Testing, Certification	Tom Ashton
Trains For Kids	John Castaneda
Web Master	Nick Ruddick

The North County Model Railroad Society is a not-for-profit benefit corporation whose mission is to share the hobby of model railroading, create an active museum to encourage awareness of railroads both yesterday and today, and provide rail safety education to the northern San Diego County community. Donations are welcomed. For reference our tax ID is #33-0478444.



# THE SEMAPHORE

## TIME TABLES

### NCMRS Events

- Sat. April 25, NCMRS Business Meeting 10:00.
- Sat. April 25, Heritage Parking Lot Clean Up
- Sat. May 2, Heritage Park Day, 12:00 – 4:00
- Sat. May 30, NCMRS Business Meeting 10:00
- Sat. June 27, NCMRS Business Meeting 10:00
- Sat. July 25, NCMRS Business Meeting 10:00
- Sat. Aug 29, NCMRS Business Meeting 10:00
- Sat. Sept 26, NCMRS Business Meeting 10:00
- Sat. Oct 10, NMRA PSR tour at NCMRS 10:00
- Sat. Oct 31, NCMRS Business Meeting 10:00

### Other Events

- Sat. April 25, NCMRS Business Meeting 10:00.
- Sat. April 25, Heritage Parking Lot Clean Up
- Sat. May 2, Heritage Park Day, 12:00 – 4:00
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### Swap Meet Report

NCMRS held its first Swap Meet at Oceanside Heritage Park on April 18, 2015. Event chairman Al Cuevas, reports that by all accounts the event was a big success. Al presented a detailed report at the April Business Meeting with the all-important bottom line showing a net profit to NCMRS of \$744. Al gave credit to several members who contributed toward the success of

the event including Dick Miller and others who handled the distribution of fliers to spread the word about the NCMRS Swap Meet. Others including Leo Valley, Bob Kale, John Castaneda, Rich Blankinship, and Eddie and Linda Perez all worked hard to organize and sell the donated model railroad equipment. Al also expressed thanks to all the members who helped with set up and tear down for the event. Plans are already underway for another swap meet next year. —*Al Cuevas*.

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## Happy Anniversary!

June 17, 2015 marks the first anniversary of construction of NCMRS's new layout





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## Club News

### NCMRS Receives State Recognition

The California Parks & Recreation Society (CPRS) presented a Citation Award to the North Country Model Railroad Society in recognition of our efforts as a Community Partner with the City of Oceanside during 2014.

A plaque signifying the award was presented to NCMRS president Harold Helland at a special District 12 CPRS 2015 Awards and Installation breakfast held in Encinitas on March 25th.

CPRS representatives and civic officials from throughout San Diego and Imperial Counties attended the event. The City of Oceanside was represented by Parks and Recreation Department director Margery Pierce, Eileen Turk, manager, and several members of the Oceanside Parks & Recreation Commission including NCMRS member Rich Blankinship. Congratulations to all NCMRS members whose hard work throughout 2014 made the award a reality. Thanks to all of you for your help and support of club activities. —*Dick Bale*.



### Trains For Kids is Back On Track

The Kids layout is again operational in a beautifully expanded room that is now twice the size so viewers can move around the entire layout. Thanks to Joe and Terry Kirkpatrick who in-stalled new Plexiglas shield-ing on the three open sides of the layout. We are back on our 10 AM to 3 PM schedule every Saturday. As Harold noted in his president's message, Eddie Perez and several other members are developing scenery for the center section, and John Castaneda is reworking some of the buildings.

(Left) NCMRS member Cheyne Wagner helps a visitor understand the finer points of operating the Kids layout.

# THE SEMAPHORE

## Ebay Update. Help Needed

Sales of merchandise via EBay have been very good for the club in recent years. Profit generated over several months of selling is enabling the club to rebuild in our new location and maintain a reserve fund sufficient for several months of club operation. Success of the club's EBay sales has been due in large part to the commitment of several of our club members including Leo Valley, Dick Miller, Bruce Sutherland, Burt Gray and Joe and Terry Kirkpatrick. Of course the backbone of profitable EBay sales is the quantity and quality of the items to be sold. In order to move ahead with more sales the club now needs to find new donors of quality items, make any necessary small repairs to the items donated, get the item descriptions written, photo-graphs taken and then post the item on the EBay website. The EBay committee can use your help with these and other associated tasks. We have a small number of items ready to process now and we are gearing up to sell soon. —*Rich Blankinship*

## Outdoor Signs

The current plan for new signage calls for replacing all of the exterior signs with one large TRAIN DEPOT sign. Everyone seems to like Kids Caboose which will go over the new double doors into the Kids layout room. But the sign committee would like more suggestions for names of the other two rooms. A name for the main layout room shouldn't be too difficult but here's a challenge: what do you call a room that has the programming track, repair desk, video display, reference library, museum display, and Barstow branch? There is strong resistance to calling it a lounge, but other than that, we are wide open to ideas. Please get creative and pass your suggestions for room names to any one on the sign committee which includes Eddie Perez, Rich Blankinship, and Dick Bale.

## Background Painting

Artist Becky Watson will soon begin painting backdrop scenes on our layout. Becky is the same artist who created the mountainscapes on our old layout. Harold and Rich Blankinship met with Becky on April 29 to go over details and decide on the special requirements of a two-level layout. — *DB*.

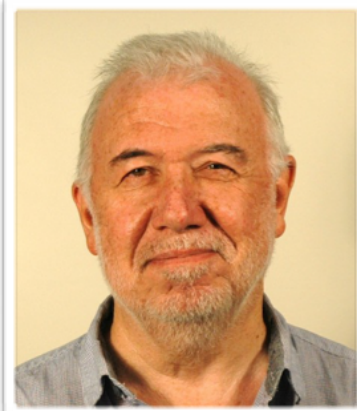
## Heritage Park Seeks Help

Oceanside's Heritage Park Village Museum is looking for volunteers to assist in renovating the Heritage Park buildings. The original structures date back more than a century and include the city's first general store, blacksmith shop and livery stable, Portola Inn, old city jail, Libby School and the Blade Newspaper. Docents are also needed to conduct tours on Sundays. For more information contact Terry Larson. — *Union Tribune*



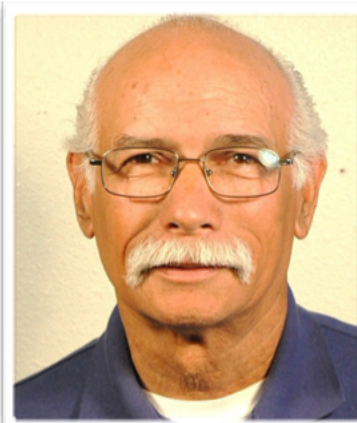
# THE SEMAPHORE

Say hello to some new NCMRS members...



**John Burrow** is a retired IT expert whose fascination with model trains began more than 55 years ago in his hometown of Bristol, England. John models in O Gauge Finescale, which is 43.5:1 or 7mm/ft. His models are mostly handcrafted from complex kits. This is a rare scale that requires both patience and skill. John is a member of the Gauge O Guild and is one of only five other modelers in Southern California working in this scale. John's home layout is based on a branch line of the Great Western Railway in South West England in the 1910-1920 period. The layout is entirely automated which allows him to pro-gram a particular set of circumstances, then sit back and relax as the computer takes over, dealing with problems and running the trains in a smooth, logical fashion.

**Rick Keefer** is a retired Navy veteran. His specialty was operating power plants in nuclear submarines. After his military career, Rick signed on at the San Onofre Power Plant where he used his Navy skills to teach others how the nuclear power plant worked. Rick's involvement with model trains began at an early age with an American Flyer set. He had moved into HO scale when the Navy put a hold on his modeling activities. Now that he is permanently retired, Rick is eager to get involved with NCMRS and helping build and scenic the new layout. Rick is a dedicated Padres fan and has lived in north county since 1981.



**Eddie Perez** is new to NCMRS and new to model railroad-ing. Eddie lives in Oceanside and is retired from Mossy Nissan. As a young man he loved to drive fast which resulted in several car wrecks. He repaired them himself and parlayed that experience into a 40 year career as a body and fender man. Last year a friend asked Eddie to build a 4 x 8 train layout for her kids. In no time at all he was laying track, building structures, creating scenery and running trains. Bitten by the MR bug, Eddie followed that initial experience by building a G scale operation in his backyard. He is enthusiastic about getting involved at NCMRS and has already used his skills in making several contributions to the club.

# THE SEMAPHORE

## Railroad Trivia

Leo Valley submitted some interesting trivia taken from years of railroading.

- **ADAMSON ACT** – The 8-hour workday for railroad workers was introduced in 1916. It was called The Adamson Act and was signed by President Wilson the day after it was passed. It went into effect on January 1, 1917.
- **BACK TO THE FARM** – Laid off because of slack business.
- **BALLAST** – Early railroad track beds did not utilize ballast (crushed stone). Railroads eventually incorporated using ballast to drain water from the tracks, therefore keeping the ties in place. Ballast also helped to keep the dust and dirt down, away from passenger coach windows.
- **BELT LINE** – A railroad with trackage within and/or around a city, operating as a pickup, delivery and transfer facility for truck lines and industrial plants.
- **BLIZZARD LIGHTS** – Originally the lights on either side of the headlight that served in emergency when the oil-burning headlight blew out. Now they indicate the train is non-schedule or extra.
- **BROWNIES** – Demerits. This system is traced back to George R. Brown, general superintendent of the Fall Brook Railway (later part of the New York Central) in 1885. He thought the then current practice of suspending men for breaking rules was unfair to their families and substituted a system of demerit marks. Too many demerits in a given period resulted in dismissal. The Brown system, with many variations, has since been widely adopted by the railroad industry. A superintendent's private car is called brownie box or brownie wagon. This is one proposed etymology of the slang expression "brownie points."
- **CORNERED** – A term used when a car has been struck by another car because it was not in the clear.
- **DEADHEAD** – Employee riding on a pass; any nonpaying passenger. Also a fire-man's derisive term for a head brakeman who rides engine cab. Also a locomotive being hauled "dead" on a train.
- **DEMURRAGE** – A penalty charge assessed by railroads for detention of cars by shippers or receivers beyond a specified free time.
- **DINING CARS** – The dining cars of the Union Pacific consumed 16,000 pressed sawdust logs per week. That is the equivalent of one box car load.
- **EMBARGO** – An order prohibiting the acceptance and/or handling of freight at certain points or via certain routes due to emergencies, congestion, strikes, etc.
- **EXTRA GANG** – The crew of track laborers assigned to maintenance work at various points on a railroad right-of-way. These employees may live in camp (bunk) cars where they are provided lodging and meals at a nominal cost.



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## Railroad Trivia (cont.)

- FLYING SWITCH OR DROP – Switching technique in which cars are cut off from behind a moving locomotive and the switch opened after the engine has passed.
- FROG – A track structure used at the intersection of two running rails to provide support for wheels and passageways for their flanges, thus permitting wheels on either rail to cross to the other OR it can mean an implement for re-railing car wheels.
- FUSEE – Combustible torches which burn for ten to fifteen minutes as warning signals to other trains when touched off, placed, or thrown on the ground by train service employees.
- GIRL OR OLD GIRL – An affectionate term for a steam engine. The locomotive, like the sailing ship, is often called “she” instead of “it”.
- HEADLIGHT – The headlight, a major feature of American locomotives, never caught on with British railroads. Railroads in the U.K were required by law to fence in all tracks, eliminating the need for engineers to see far ahead of their trains.
- HI-CUBE CAR – Originally a box car of approximately 85 feet in length and 10,000 cubic feet capacity, designed for hauling automobile body stampings and other low density freight. The term has become frequently used to describe any box car of excess weight.
- HOG LAW – The federal statute which provides that all train and engine crews must be relieved of duty after 12 hours of continuous service.
- HOSTLER – A fireman who operates light engines in designated engine house territory and works under the direction of the engine house foreman.
- IMPACT REGISTER – An appliance placed in a car with a shipment which is both a time clock and a measuring device to record the amount of shock the car received en route.
- MacARTHUR LOCOMOTIVES – During the anti-Japanese sentiment of WWII, some railroads renamed their Mikado-type engines to MacArthur locomotives.
- PORTERS – In the 1870’s, northern industrialist George Mortimer Pullman recruited former slaves as porters onboard his new sleeping cars. These porters were charged with the responsibility of providing the utmost service to his passengers. By the 1920’s, Pullman was the largest private employer of African Americans.

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## Railroad Trivia (cont.)

- **PRESIDENTIAL FUNERAL** – The first presidential funeral train carried the remains of William Henry Harrison, in 1841. Harrison was in office for less than a month before dying from pneumonia, becoming the first U.S. President to die in office.
- **RAILROAD CLASS** – Railroads are categorized by the United States Surface Transportation Board. In 1999, the STB used the following rules in classifying railroads. a) Class I: Operating revenues of at least \$258.5 million. b) .5 million. b) Regional: Non-Class –I operating 350 or more miles of road and/or revenues of at least \$40 million. c) Local Railroad: A railroad which is neither a Class I nor a Regional Railroad, and is engaged primarily in line-haul service. d) Switching & Terminal Railroad: A non Class I railroad engaged primarily in switching and/or terminal services for other railroads.
- **RUN-AROUND** - If it is a man's turn to work and he is not called, he may claim pay for the work he missed. He has been given the run-around.
- **SANDERS** – Devices operated by air for applying sand to the rail in front of or behind the driving wheels of the engine.
- **SEALS** – Metal strips, designed for one-time use, applied to the hasp of closed freight car doors. To remove, they must be broken. They are used to indicate whether or not the contents have been tampered with while in transit. They are stamped with a name, initial and/or number for identification.
- **SNAKEHEAD** – This was the term for when a loose piece of rail poked up and tore through the bottom of a car. This was especially hazardous to passengers in the early days of railroading.
- **STUB TRACK** – A track connected at one end only.
- **SUN KINK** – A condition in which high temperatures cause the rail to over expand and push the track sideways. Such conditions could cause derailment.
- **SW** – Stands for Switcher Locomotive.
- **TELESCOPING** – A colloquial term used to describe the act of one railroad coach violently plunging itself into another coach during a train wreck.
- **TORPEDO** – A torpedo is a device similar to dynamite, which is strapped to the top of a rail. When a train drives over a torpedo, it emits a very loud bang which can be heard over the noise of the engine, signaling the engineer to stop immediately. Torpedos are generally placed by the flagman when protecting a train ahead.
- **TRACKAGE RIGHT** – Right obtained by one railroad to operate its trains over the tracks of another railroad.
- **TURNTABLE** – A turntable is a device used within railroad yard complexes to turn locomotives and/or railroad cars.
- **WEEDBURNER** – A flame thrower vehicle which rides on the tracks and is used to kill weeds along the track right-of-way.
- **WHEEL FLANGE** – The wheel flange is the projecting edge or rim on the circumference of a car wheel for keeping it on the rail.

# THE SEMAPHORE

How to build a peninsula in five easy steps...



Clockwise from above:

1) Charlie double checks the dimensions and location for the peninsula. Andy and Rich supervise. 2) David gets ready to man the saw as 3) Harold prepares the cross braces. 4) Assembly gets underway with Rich, Andy and Charlie leveling the framework as the legs are put in place. 5) The top panels are screwed down and in not much more than an hour or two the peninsula becomes a reality. Drawing in the track center lines and laying cork roadbed for National City, the yard, and San Diego will soon begin.





# THE SEMAPHORE

## Shipping Chevrolet Vegas by Rail

By Dan Conway

Until the early 1960s, automobiles moved by rail were carried in boxcars. These were 50-foot long cars with double-wide doors. Inside was room for four full-sized sedans on two-levels - two raised up off the floor on a steel rack and two others tucked in underneath. This protected the cars during transport but wasn't very efficient, as the weight of four vehicles was far less than the maximum weight a boxcar of that size could carry.



Loading a Vert-A-Pac railroad car with Chevrolet

When 85-foot and 89-foot flatcars came into service, it was possible to pack a total of fifteen automobiles in one car on tri-level auto racks. But those loads still didn't reach the limit allowable weight for each flatcar.

When Chevrolet started designing its popular Vega line of vehicles during the late 1960s, one of the main objectives was to keep the cost of the car down to around \$2,000. At the time, the freight charge for moving a loaded railroad car from the plant in Lordstown, Ohio where the Vegas were to be assembled to the west coast was around \$4,800. Since the Vega was a subcompact, it was possible to squeeze three more cars on a tri-level auto rack car, for a total of eighteen instead of the usual fifteen. But that still worked out to shipping costs of around \$270 per automobile – a substantial surcharge for a \$2,000 Vega.



A train-load of Chevrolet Vega station wagons.

In order to reduce the cost of transportation, Chevrolet pushed for ways to squeeze more Vegas on a railroad car. The engineers at GM and the Southern Pacific Railroad came up with a clever solution. Instead of loading the cars horizontally, the Vegas were to be placed vertically on a specially designed auto-rack called the Vert-A-Pac. Within the same volume of an 89-foot tri-level auto-rack car, the Vert-A-Pac system could hold as many as 30 Vegas instead of 18.



# THE SEMAPHORE



A Frisco Vert-A-Pac car, above, with some of the ramps closed.

Right, the fork-lift at the far right is closing a ramp, which when locked in place, forms the side of the railroad car.



Chevrolet's goal was to deliver Vegas filled with all necessary fluids and ready to drive to the dealership. In order to be able to travel nose-down without leaking fluids all over the railroad, Vega engineers had to design a special engine oil baffle to prevent oil from entering the No. 1 cylinder. Batteries had filler caps located high up on the rear edge of the case to prevent acid spill-ing out, the carburetor float bowl had a special tube that drained gasoline into the vapor canister during shipment, and the windshield washer bottle was installed in the cars at a 45 degree angle. Plastic spacers were wedged in beside the power train to prevent damage to engine and transmission mounts. The wedges were removed when cars were unloaded.

The Vega was hugely popular when it was introduced in 1970. However, it quickly earned a reputation for unreliability, rust and terrible engine durability. When the Vega was discontinued in 1977, the Vert-A-Pac cars built to haul the Vegas had to be retired as they were too specialized to be used for anything else. The Vert-A-Pac racks were scrapped, and the underlying flatcars went on to other uses. Thanks to Tony at the Roundhouse South Hobby Shop, Port Orange, Florida, for assistance in pre-paring this article.



# THE SEMAPHORE

**CAUTION! MEN AT WORK**





# THE

## Pendleton Tour



80-ton GE switcher at Camp Pendleton.

On March 11, two cars of inquisitive NCMRS members proceeded to Pendleton for a guided tour of the Chapel, the Ranch House, the Mechanized Museum, and the bone yard of equipment ready for reconstruction to like-new condition. The Camp Pendleton Historical officer, MS Faye Jonason and members of her staff, provided interesting insights of Camp Pendleton including the transit of the Santa Fe Railroad through the base to

Fallbrook and Temecula. The building that houses the Mechanized Museum is itself an important piece of Pendleton history, as it was the terminal building for the railroads that serviced the base shortly after its purchase in 1942. Many a Marine arrived at Camp Pendleton at this terminal to begin their training for WWII and Korean War battlefields. We appreciate the courtesies extended to NCMRS members by MS Jonason. – *Joe Kirkpatrick..*

