Volume 26 Issue 7 September 2026

The New Desert Dispatch

Timetable

ARHS
Tempe Museum Work Sessions
Monday & Wednesday
9:00am to 3:00pm
Tempe Museum
2530 S. Rural Rd.
Tempe, AZ

Elections

ARHS Board
at the General Meeting Wed. Sept. 9 @ 10:30am Please submit your proxy to David Brown if you will not be attending the meeting.

2026 Events

The Hobbyist Model Train Show
1st Sat. of the Month,
7am
1764 W. Broadway Rd.
Mesa, AZ

ARHS Swap Meet
November 14, 9am
Tempe Nazarene Church
3929 Rural Rd.
Glendale, AZ

From the Business Car

Craig Faris, President ARHS

I recently had the pleasure of attending the **America 250 Locomotive Celebration** at the North Carolina Transportation Museum in Spencer, North Carolina. It was an incredible event, bringing together railroad history, patriotism, and hundreds of people who share the same passion for trains that we do.

Walking around the museum and seeing so many historic locomotives, especially those beautifully decorated for America's 250th anniversary, brought back a lot of memories for me. It also reminded me of why we, as railroad modelers and enthusiasts, put so much time and effort into keeping this history alive.

I left the event with some great memories and an even greater appreciation for the people who dedicate their time to preserving our railroad heritage for generations to come.





NMRA Events

2026 PSR Regional Convention

San Diego

Sept. 9 - 13,

Doubletree Hilton Mission Valley
7450 Hazard Center Dr
San Diego, CA 92108

PSR AZ-Division Meet

Scottsdale

Sat. Oct. 17,
8 am - 5 pm

Scottsdale Congregational United Church of Christ
4425 N Granite Reef Rd.
Scottsdale, AZ 85251

Future National Conventions

2027

Puget Sound Express

Tacoma WA
Aug. 10 - 15

2028

Rochester, NY

2029

Indianapolis, IN

C&O's Chessie the Cat

One of the most memorable advertising campaigns in railroad history began with a sleeping kitten. In 1933, the **Chesapeake & Ohio Railway (C&O)** introduced **Chessie**, a kitten shown sleeping comfortably under a blanket with the slogan **"Sleep Like a Kitten."** The advertisement promoted the C&O's air-conditioned passenger trains and especially the comfort of its sleeping-car service.





Chessie proved so popular that she soon became much more than a single advertisement. The railroad featured her on calendars, magazine advertisements, timetables and other promotional material. During the 1930s, the C&O expanded the imaginary Chessie family by introducing her mate, **Peake**, and their two kittens, **Nip and Tuck**.

During World War II, the railroad even incorporated the cats into its patriotic advertising. Peake was depicted as being away serving his country, while Chessie and the kittens appeared in wartime advertisements encouraging support for the war effort.



Chessie remained closely associated with the C&O for decades and became one of America's best-known railroad advertising symbols. Her popularity eventually helped inspire the name **Chessie System**, adopted in 1972 for the railroad family that included the C&O, Baltimore & Ohio and Western Maryland. The famous Chessie System "sleeping kitten" logo was a modern interpretation of the original kitten that had first appeared nearly 40 years earlier.

Today, **Chessie, Peake, Nip and Tuck** remain favorites among railroad historians and collectors—a remarkably successful advertising family that helped give the Chesapeake & Ohio a friendly and instantly recognizable identity

ARHS Officers
2023-2025
President - Craig Faris
Vice President – Ken Nelson
Secretary - Dave Brown
Treasurer - Dan Kubarych
Director – Dennis Ranke
Director – Dewayne Koltin
Past Presidents – Don Stewart, Jesse Poole

The New Desert Dispatch is a publication of the Arizona Railroad Historical Society. Views expressed by guest authors are their own and do not reflect the opinions or positions of the ARHS.
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Dranke@aol.com

Mission Statement

The Arizona Railroad Historical Society strives to create a world class railroad experience which includes history, education and railroad operations centered around the state of Arizona.

Arizona Railroad Historical Society

Candidates for the ARHS Board of Directors

Running for TREASURER Unopposed:

Dan Kubarych

Running for VICE-PRESIDENT Unopposed:

Bob Gibbs

I was born in Yonkers N.Y., raised in Commack, on Long Island. Graduated from SUNY @ Farmingdale, with my Associate Degree in 1979. Moved to Arizona in 1979 to attend ASU. Graduated in 1981 with by Bachelor's degree. Worked in the Office Products industry for 40 years, retiring in 2024.

I received my first train set Christmas of 1964. It was a Rio Grande set by Lionel. Still have it in the original box. Price tag is $9.99. I got back into the hobby in 1998, joining the Grand Canyon State Model Railroaders . It is a HO scale modular group. Joining ARHS in 2025, I'm now running for Vice President so I may continue to help this fine group of model railroaders and bring this project to my community

Running for BOARD DIRECTOR Unopposed:

John Mick

Railroads have held my interest for as long as I can remember — riding them, photographing them, reading their history, and modeling them. That interest led me to the national Model Railroad Association (NMRA), where I currently serve the AZ division of the PSR-NMRA as Chief Clerk and Paymaster, and as Treasurer of the 2027 PSR Convention in Mesa. It also led me to the ARHS, where I have been a member and volunteer, and where I would now like to bring my executive expertise to the board of directors.

I served fifteen years on the Board of Directors and as the Treasurer of the Tal-Wi-Wi Water Users Association, a public utility registered in the State of Arizona. In that role, I prepared the quarterly income statement, balance sheet, and cash flow statement for every board meeting; filed the required Arizona Corporation Commission reports each year; handled quarterly billing to water users; administered the annual fire hydrant maintenance billing, and participated in the governance of the organization. In my professional career, I served on the executive staff of a billion-dollar semiconductor company, and I have been a very successful stock market investor for some sixty years.

My goal is to bring all my executive, management, financial, and corporate governance experience to the ARHS. I would be honored to serve, and I thank you for your consideration.

ARHS Tempe Museum Expands Workshop Space, Makes way to Build Benchwork for Phoenix

Story and Photos by Dennis Ranke



The AHRS has recently expanded its museum footprint by taking over the office space in the southwest corner of the building. The remaining rental unit has now been walled off, giving the Society some much-needed additional room for our activities.

One of the biggest benefits of the new space will be the ability to move the work tables out of the main museum room. This will open up the main area of the layout room and give us more flexibility when we have visitors and special events. Not to mention, it will look much tidier! The new room will also give us a place to hold clinics and provide a larger area for meetings and other club activities.

With the additional space now available, work on the layout is moving ahead. John Clarke, Bob Gibbs, and Al Shultz are currently constructing the table supports for the Phoenix area of the layout. This will be a major addition and will fill the center of the layout room, bringing us another step closer to completing this section of the railroad.



If you haven't been around the museum for a while, now is a good time to stop by and see what is happening. There is plenty of work to be done, and the gang could certainly use some additional help. You don't have to be an expert. We need people with all kinds of skills and abilities, and there is always something that needs to be done.

The expansion of the museum gives us more room to work, but more importantly, it gives us an opportunity to make better use of the space and continue improving the museum for our members and future visitors.

As Phoenix Mayor, Ray Rumble likes to say, **“ I can’t wait!”**. That pretty much sums up what is happening at the museum. There is a lot of work ahead, but with everyone pitching in, we are making progress.



Jesse Poole getting a leg up under Phoenix (left) Photo by John Clarke. “Reach for the Sky!” Brian Schnackel installing sky lights. (below) Photo by John Mick





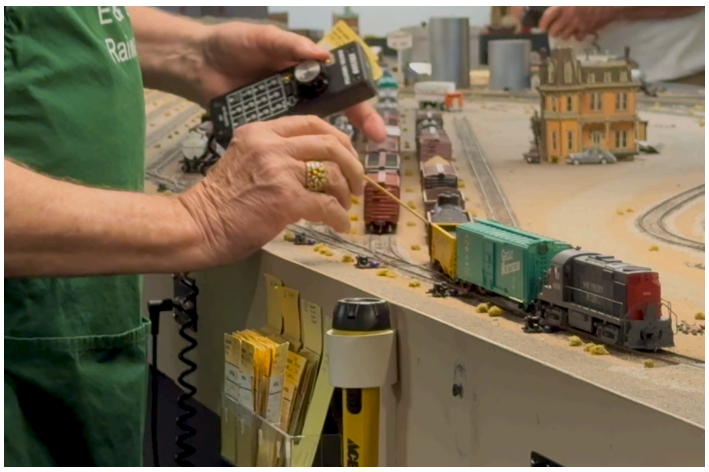
Beautiful downtown Tempe. (left) Ken Nelson continues to make progress on the Grand Canyon. (Below) photos by Dennis Ranke





What Makes a Good Operating Session?

Story and Photos by Dennis Ranke



If you have never participated in a model railroad operating session, the first time you walk into one can be a little intimidating. You may look around and see several people with throttles in their hands, trains moving in different directions, and operators talking about things you have never heard of. You might wonder, “What am I supposed to do?”

The good news is that you don't need to be an experienced model railroader to take part in an operating session. In fact, one of the best things about operations is that you can learn as you go. A good operating session should be enjoyable, organized and, most of all, welcoming to new operators.

An operating session is basically a chance to operate a model railroad as though it were a real railroad. Instead of simply watching trains run around the layout, operators are given jobs to perform. One person might be the engineer of a freight train, another might work the yard, and someone else may be responsible for directing the movement of trains.

So, What Should a New Operator Expect?

The first thing to understand is that every layout is different. Some operating sessions are very formal, with schedules, paperwork, train orders and specific rules. Others are much more relaxed.



Before you start, the host or layout owner should explain how the particular railroad operates.

Don't be afraid to ask questions.

You may be given a throttle and assigned a train. The host will normally explain where your train is located, where it needs to go and what your job is. You may also receive a switch list showing which cars need to be picked up or delivered.

If you don't understand something, ask. Nobody expects a first-time operator to know the layout or its operating procedures. It is much better to ask a question before moving a train than to guess and send a boxcar to the wrong town!

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Learn the Railroad Before You Run the Railroad

One of the most important things a new operator can do is take a few minutes to become familiar with the layout.

Find out where the major towns, industries and yards are located. Learn which direction is east and west—or north and south, depending on the railroad. Find out where the staging yards are and what tracks you are allowed to use.

If there is a track diagram or map, spend some time looking at it.

You don't need to memorize the entire railroad. Just get a general idea of where things are located. Once your train starts moving, the layout will make much more sense.

Don't Be Afraid of the Throttle



For someone who has never used DCC, the throttle can look more complicated than it really is. Most of the time, you only need to know a few basic functions: start, stop, direction and speed.

The host should show you how to select your locomotive and control it. If the locomotive has sound, you may also learn how to operate the horn and bell.

Take it slow.

There is no prize for being the fastest operator on the railroad. In fact, realistic operation is usually quite slow. Freight trains don't normally race through town, and switching cars requires patience. Learning to make smooth starts and stops is much more important than learning to operate the throttle quickly.

Switching Can Be the Most Challenging Part

For a new operator, switching cars can be the part of the session that takes the most getting used to.

You may be told to pick up three cars from one industry and deliver them to another. That sounds simple until you discover that you have to figure out how to get the cars in the correct order.

This is where it pays to think ahead. (Continued on Page 8)

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Before making a move, look at the track and determine where you need each car to go. You may have to move several cars out of the way before you can get to the one you need. That's normal. Real railroad switching isn't always simple either.

And remember: **there is nothing wrong with stopping the train and thinking about your next move.**

Follow the Rules

Every railroad has its own rules. Some layouts use signals, others use dispatchers, and some rely primarily on verbal instructions. Listen carefully during the briefing before the session begins.

If the host tells you that a particular track is off limits, don't use it. If you are told to wait for another train, wait. If you aren't sure whether you have permission to proceed, ask.

These rules aren't there to make the session difficult. They are what make the operation feel like a railroad.

The Most Important Rule: Have Fun

A good operating session should not feel like work.

Mistakes are going to happen. Experienced operators make them, too. Cars get put on the wrong track, switches get thrown the wrong way, trains occasionally end up where they shouldn't be, and sometimes somebody simply forgets what they were supposed to do.

That's part of the fun.



A good host understands that new operators need some help. Experienced operators should be willing to answer questions without making someone feel foolish for asking. After all, every experienced operator was a beginner once.

For someone attending an operating session for the first time, my advice is simple: **Don't be intimidated.**

Show up, listen to the instructions, ask questions and take your time. You don't have to know everything before you start. By the end of the session, you'll probably know considerably more than you did when you arrived.

And you may discover something else along the way, operating a model railroad is a lot more fun than just watching the trains go around the track.