



Huebenthal still has work to do to finish his railroading layout.

Wendi Brown, *The Phoenix Gazette*

Timetable

Railroad buffs into small-scale crafting on a large scale

By Betty Latty
Gazette correspondent

Grown men do not play with model railroads.

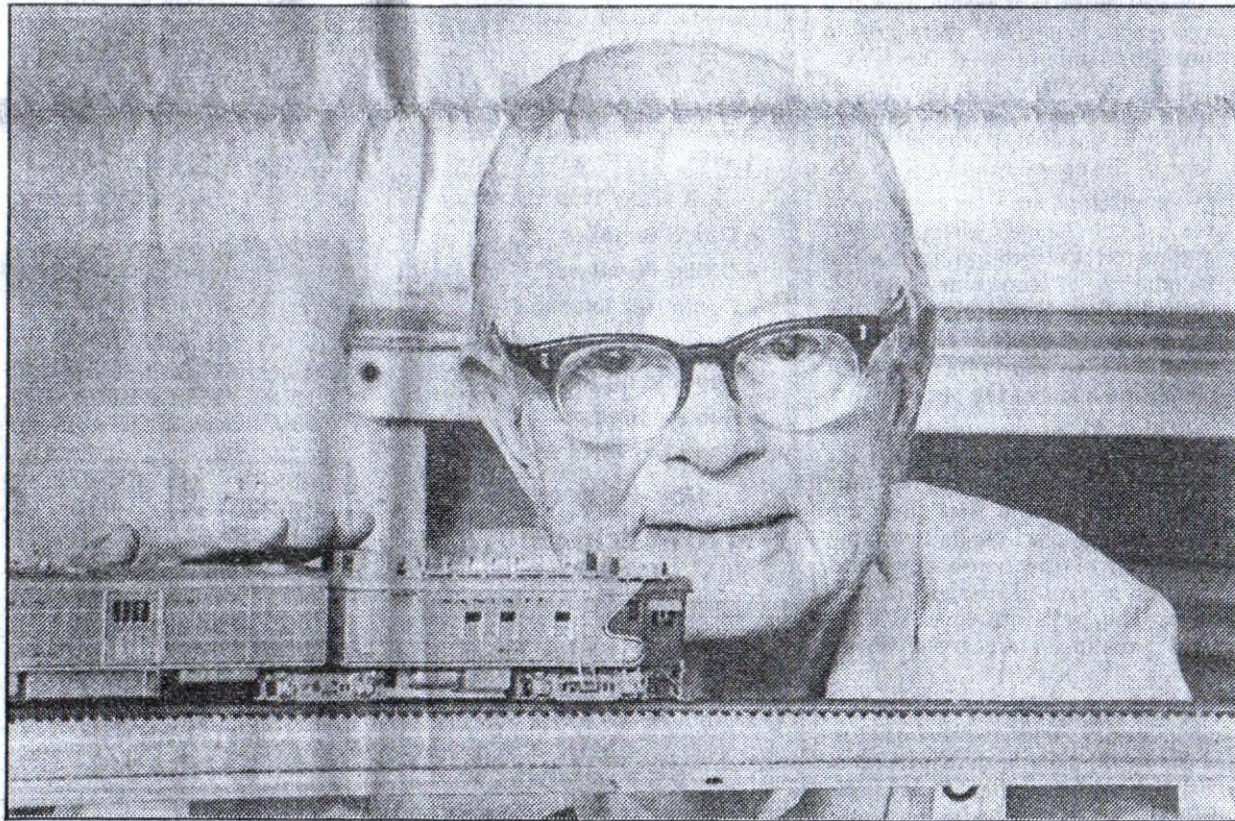
"We run them, we operate them," R. H. 'Huebe' Hubenthal of Sun City West said. Huebe, as he is known to all and sundry throughout this nation, can speak with authority.

He is a past president (1980-82) of the 22,000-member National Model Railroad Association, an organization for which he served as treasurer for 22 years from 1950-1972.

Huebe, with help from two railroad buffs, is building 125 feet of mainline track operation in his home, in a 16-by-18-foot room he built especially for his hobby. The work has taken about 2 years, he observed. "We've got another three years of work to finish it."

So far, the track, all hand-laid and designed by Huebe, rests on waist-high structures, levels convenient for the operators. The design permits up to eight operators to walk around the layout with their trains within specified blocs of action, all functioning with electrical circuitry designed by Huebe.

Eventually, the entire assembly will be landscaped into hills, valleys and mountains through which the HO-scale trains will whistle and toot ahead of passenger and freight loads. Dedicated model railroaders are into such stuff as making timetables, commuter systems, freight loads and deliveries — and maintenance yards for their cars. It's all at Huebe's.



Lyle Gibbon shows the Santa Fe gas electric car he made from hand.

Bill Johns and Lyle Gibbon, both of Sun City, join Huebe officially once a week to work. Unofficially, they're there whenever the mood strikes to swap stories and do a little extra work.

Johns and Huebe are members of the Thunderbird Model Railroad Club, headquartered at Arizona State Fairgrounds in Phoenix. During fair time, when members are on

hand to meet the public, "we have 17 days of pure joy," Huebe said. They recently had nearly a week of such joy when the club participated in a show at Valley National Bank Center in Phoenix. Johns added another joyful week this month. He and a buddy from California vacationed in San Francisco, doing nothing but riding trolley cars — although they checked out the BART subway and some of the new

surface cars. Johns, although retired from the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers, always loved the electric cars. He particularly enjoyed riding those in San Francisco, many of which are antique cars from countries around the world and operate as a tourist attraction.

Each of the men bring a special expertise to the layout at Huebe's. Gibbon, the others tell you, does

remarkably fine modeling work and is greatly experienced in narrow-gauge ON-3 scale work.

And it was Gibbon who addressed the question of model railroading's appeal. "We are bringing back to life something that once was a very real thing. We built it on precision scale so that it will be authentic, function as it once did and we can relive it all."

Model railroading, according to Huebe, "is the most versatile hobby in the world. You need to be a carpenter, an electrician, and a machinist — a fine machinist, just like a jeweler. You have to know plastics, too. And you have to research, study and plan. There is something for everyone."

Johns probably is known to Sun City residents more for his music than his railroading, although his career began back in 1935, when he worked on the first eight switch engines built in General Electric's then-*Electromotive* Division at La Grange, Ill., and delivered them to a division of New York Central. A former dance band musician, proficient on clarinet and sax, he picked up the instruments again in 1969 when he and his wife moved here and joined the Del Webb Ramblers, the first band to play in these parts.

Somehow, though, Johns always seemed to get his love of music and railroading together. "Sure," he grinned. "Back in my band-touring days, we used to travel by train, and boy, did we have a lot of jam sessions in the aisles."

Just like in the moom pitchers.



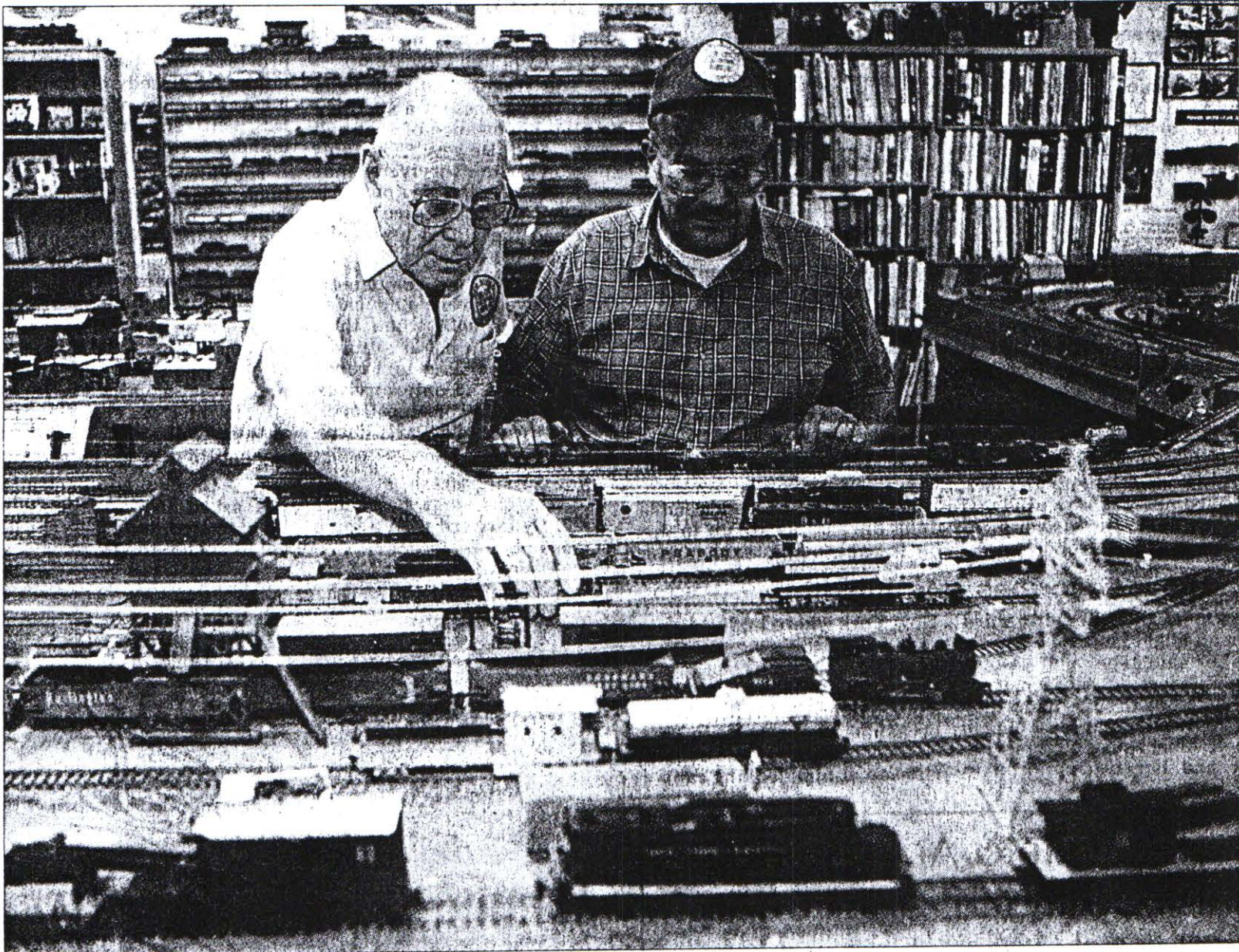
Photo by BRET McKEAND/Independent Newspapers

Trains keep rolling during the holidays

Looking for an ideal way to entertain those visiting kids and grandkids? Members of the Sun City Model Railroad Club invite residents to stop in and visit their miniature model train display at Fairway Recreation Center. In anticipation of an increase in the number of visitors expected during the holiday season, the clubroom will be open 1-3:30 p.m. Monday through Friday through Dec. 24. Although closed Christmas day, the room will reopen for extended hours, 10 a.m.-3 p.m. Dec. 26-28, and return to 1-3:30 p.m. for Dec. 30-31. Monitoring the action during a recent test run are club members John Devore, left, and Bill Wilson.

12-19-96

Back on board



Steve Chermek/Daily News-Sun

Fred Curtis, left, and Fred Becker play with their big train set at the Sun City Model Railroad Club's layout at Fairway Recreation Center. The club reopened Tuesday and is open from 1 to 3 p.m. Thursdays and Fridays until Oct. 1, when it will be open Monday through Friday. The new layout has three different lines and sometimes runs six trains simultaneously. Curtis said he once hooked up 56 cars to three locomotives.

Model trains tickle visiting tykes

By JEFF OWENS
Staff writer

12-1-97

Christmastime 'tis the busiest season for retailers, true, but it's also the busiest season of the year over at the Fairway Recreation Center, headquarters of the Sun City Model Railroad Club. 'Tis the season when the din of electric train whistles is second only to squeals of delight from visiting grandchildren.

The day after Thanksgiving saw the beginning of that season. Model railroader Fred Becker of Sun City knows that for the next three months or so, there's no keeping track of all the junior engineers who gaze slack-jawed at the awesomely large and elaborate layout, with visions of Lionel engines chugging through their heads.

"Watch the trolley over there," Becker calls out from his perch at the controls to two little boys in the process of going completely bananas. A little yellow trolley bolts up a paper mache hillside and makes a circuit, braking to a halt in front of a familiar stop. "Why is it stopping there?" he asks them.

They giggle deliriously. The trolley has stopped in front of a miniature McDonald's.

All around the large room, eight trains chug around three rail lines that in truth have the big boys just as enthralled as the little ones.



Mollie J. Hoppes/Daily News-Sun

Fred "Trainwreck" Becker shows visitor James Sandkuhl, '8, of Phoenix the ins and outs of running trains at the Sun City Railroad Club at Fairway Recreation Center. James is the grandson of Margaret Sinkey of Sun City.

Jim and Sharon Rallis of Sun City brought their two little grandsons down to have a look for the first time. Lucas, 7, was buzzing around the room like someone put a quarter in him. He was in model-train heaven; the little guy practically wants to be a train when he grows up.

"I'm going to get one for

Christmas, and then I'll add on," he said, with that slightly glazed look all grandsons get when talk turns to trains.

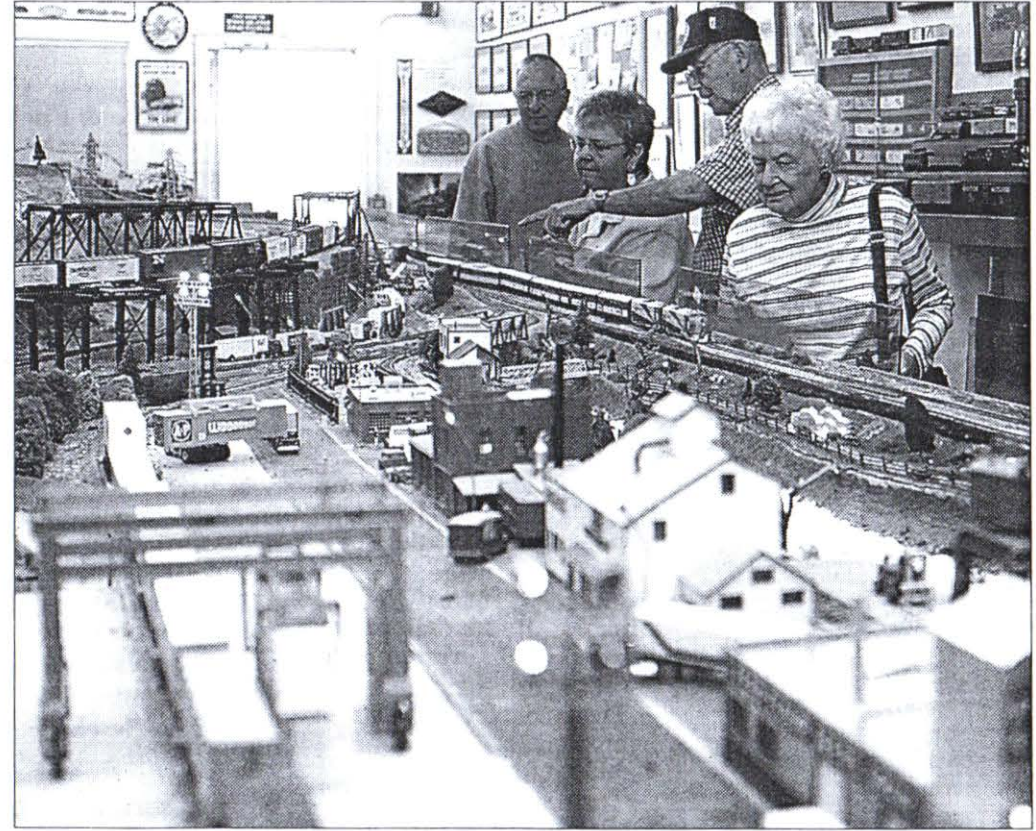
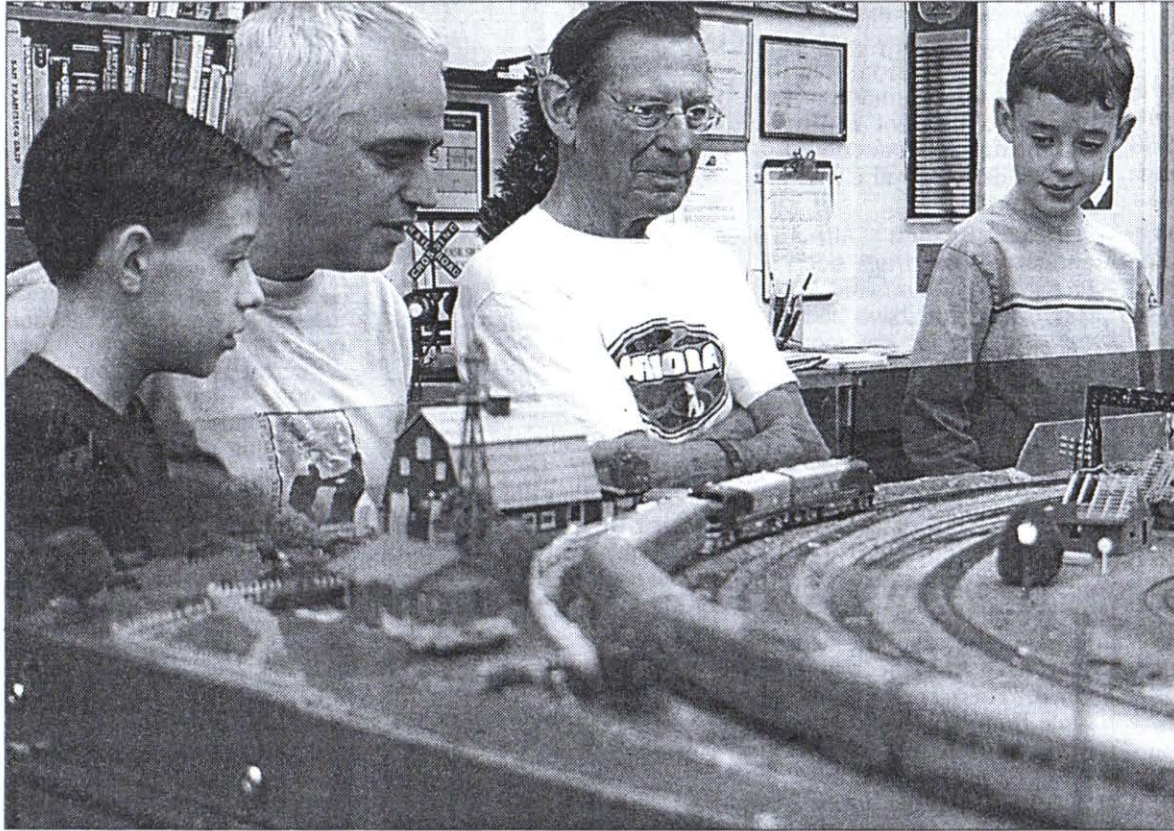
Pete Novak of Mesa brought his grandson Zachary, 3, in for a look. When Zach pressed a red button which made one engine's whistle blow, his face lit up

like the headlamp of the Santa Fe Express.

"We buy him train movies, and he just sits there and watches them for hours," Novak said. "It's a big thing when you're a kid."

Model engineer John Van Loon said 37 people showed up Friday morning before the place had even opened.

This job requires a lot of train-ing



PHOTOS BY JOY LAMBERT-SLAGOWSKI/DAILY NEWS-SUN

Above left, from left, Joey Winters of Dallas, his dad John, grandfather Joe Thornton of Phoenix and brother Danny, 9, visit the Model Railroad Club at Fairway Recreation Center in Sun City Tuesday. Thornton said friends told him about the club. Above right, Bob Arnold of the club, second from right, explains some of the setup to, from left, Mike and Verna Glasmann of Sun City and Ruth Pankoski of Denver.

Model train club members recall railroad's heyday

MITCHELL VANTREASE
DAILY NEWS-SUN

During the late 1940s, Mitch Jeczalik began an almost 20-year career as a conductor for a railroad company in Chicago.

The 75-year-old Sun City West resident remembers the trains that transported everything from passengers to farm cattle. But not many people take the train anymore, and the railroad system has changed a great deal since he rode the lines.

"You just don't see that much anymore," he said.

Jeczalik has helped recreate that era with the model railroad club at the R.H. Johnson Recreation Center. Inside the workshop, visitors can view a large-scale model railroad equipped with a number of trains and sceneries.

Ronald Nagy, club president, said about 150 people visit the railroad room a day. The room is especially busy during spring break when grandparents bring their grandchildren, he said.

"People are always fascinated with trains, and this keeps them coming back for more," he said. "They're mesmerized almost every time they see it."

Susan Westphal, a Connecticut resident, recently brought her son, Daniel, into the club workshop. The pair watched as the trains passed through some of the miniature towns.

"It's amazing to see how all of this comes together," she said.



Susan Westphal of Westport, Conn., holds up her son, Daniel, 4, so he can watch as a model train passes in the model railroad club room at R.H. Johnson Recreation Center. The pair were visiting family in Sun City West.

FYI

- **WHAT:** Sun City West Model Railroad Club.
- **WHERE:** R.H. Johnson Recreation Center, 19803 R.H. Johnson Blvd., Sun City West.
- **WHEN:** 9 a.m. to noon.
- **INFO:** 544-6148.

In 1984, the railroad club chartered in a tin shed and started with models on a small scale. As the club grew, it moved to a new location that operates under digital controls, with 2,000 feet of track as well as 50 steam and diesel engines.

There are 300 freight cars, 60 passenger cars and two trolley lines. More than 75 members have worked on the model that had major

reconstruction in 2000.

"It's always a work in progress," Nagy said.

Nagy said the models bring back the nostalgic days of trains for some of the members.

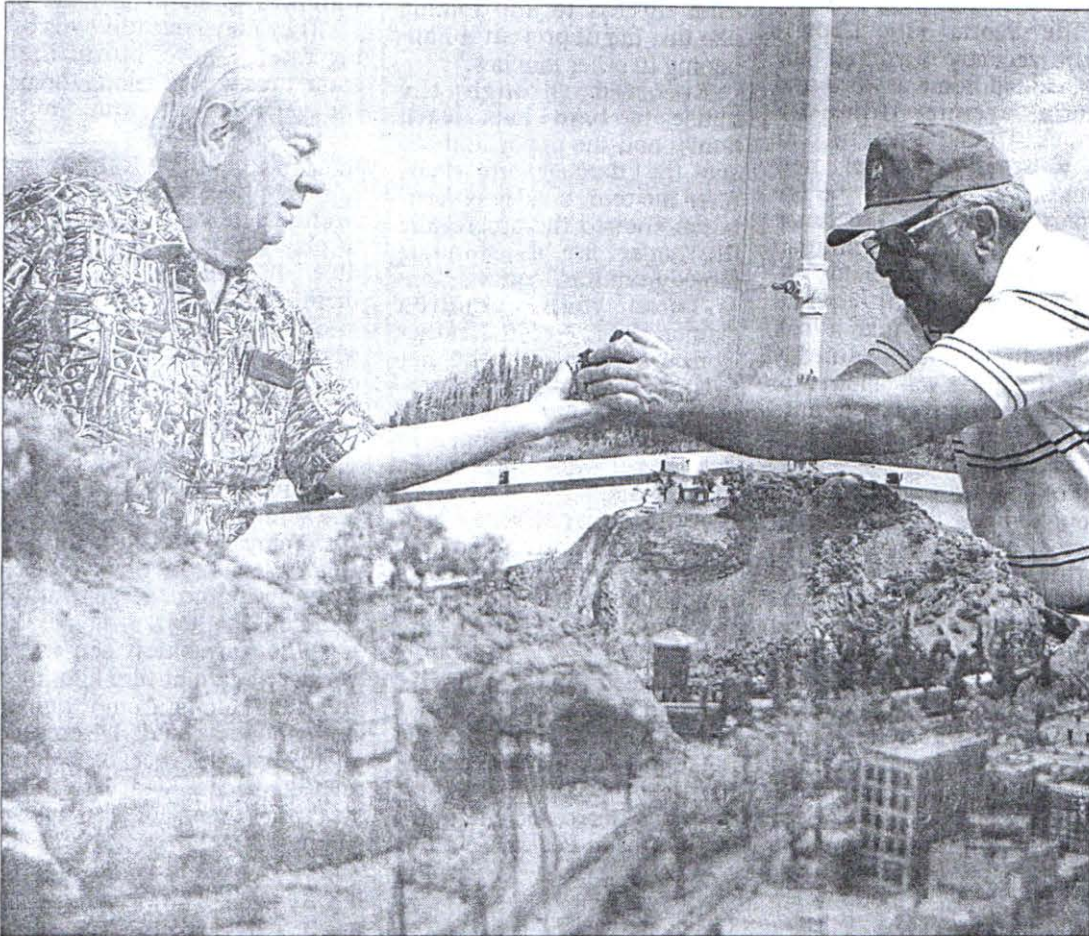
"Most of us grew up around railroads as kids and others worked for one," he said. "It makes us very happy to relive those days as we put this stuff together."

For Jeczalik, the railroad will always remind him of "the good old days."

"Cabooses used to be at the end of trains, but you definitely don't see that anymore," he said.

If you have a hobby to share, call Mitchell Vantrease at 876-2526 or e-mail mvantrease@aztrib.com.

HOBBIES



PHOTOS BY THOMAS BOGGAN/DAILY NEWS-SUN

Rich Summers, left, and Tom Rehn collect model train cars that fell off the track. Both men are members of the Sun City West model railroad club at the R.H. Johnson Recreation Center.

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Independent Newspapers/Rusty Bradshaw
Grayson Delamar, 7, visiting his grandparents from Boston, got a chance to try the Fairway Model Railroad Club's new attraction designed for younger visitors.

New display, timetables added to railroad room

By Rusty Bradshaw
Independent Newspapers

There is always something about trains that draws attention, especially model trains.

The Fairway Model Railroad Club's always growing display has visitors almost constantly. Adults and children alike spend hours watching the trains traverse the countryside club members created in their 30' X 50' area. In October, there will be something new for the younger set.

Club members constructed a special display geared for children. A 12' X 2' under-glass display of a carnival, complete

with Thomas the Tank Engine and following cars circling the festivities will debut next month.

"We have talked for some time about building something for kids," said club member Bob Batt.

At one time that project was to be part of the general layout. But members later decided a separate display was the best option.

The new display will be located along the east wall of the club room, and will include interactive buttons to allow young visitors to activate the displays features for

See Train — Page 18

seum collection grew to 1,468 specimens,

VF-SC Railroad Club Independent September 2, 2015

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Train

Continued From Page 16

about a 10-second run each, explained club member Don Russ.

"We still need the plastic covering to protect the display, but in all other aspects it is complete," he said.

The new display was built entirely by club members.

The children's display is just part of the club's ongoing efforts to improve its "village."

"The push now is for our Operations Committee to establish timeables," Mr. Russ said.

While up to now members have simply run trains in the village on their own schedule, the club wants to establish a specific schedule for multiple trains to run, just like a real railroad, according to Mr. Russ. Members are running the timetables 10 a.m.-noon Thursdays to prepare, and will establish a separate time and date in October for public runs, according to Mr. Russ.

The club's summer hours are 10 a.m.-2 p.m. Wednesdays. In October the hours will change to the winter schedule, 1-3:30 p.m. Monday-Friday and 10 a.m.-2 p.m. Saturdays.

The club's display includes more than 300 feet of mainline track and an extensive variety of scenery for the trains to travel through. Settings include rural, a train marshalling yard, town and industrial. The club has about 50 members, but only about six have railroad experience.

"The rest just enjoy modeling," Mr. Russ said.

The trains run by the club now are HO scale. But Mr. Russ said the club is looking at adding an N scale layout to the collection. Anyone interested in joining is encouraged to visit the club room at Fairway Recreation Center, 10600 W. Peoria Ave.

"We have a number of people who want to join, but they do N scale," he said. "So we are trying to accommodate them."

Members are also researching an associate members program for nonresidents of Sun City.