

# LOCO NEWS

March 2007



Volume 20, No. 3

## Words From the Top

### The President

We seem to have made it through a wintry February without any damage to our club facility. The February 4 Public Run Day was certainly cold and dreary, but our trusty crew was ready for all visitors. Unfortunately none showed up! A few members braved more poor weather the following Saturday and showed up for the Fun Run. *Art Gustafson*, *Gene Berger*, and *Truman Hefner* ran *Joe Fawcett's* train to keep the battery charged while *Steve McClure* exercised the club's GP-7 train.

Now that *Gene Berger* has cleaned out the brush pile and burn barrel area, he, with the help of *Harvey Cannon*, are removing the lower limbs on the evergreen trees that line the driveway just north of the storage containers. Once cleared, they will be able to survey the right-of-way for the outer loop track.

We are over due for a spell of good weather, so let's leave the winter blues behind and get ready to run trains! The next member's Fun Run will be on Saturday, March 11. See you there.

### The Secretary

There are two days you MUST mark on your calendar. The first is March 10 for the March Madness Member Fun Run. This is open to all members and their guests, begins when you get there, and ends when you leave.

The next date is April 14. This will be a special member Fun Run during which several events are planned. Included will be controlled bi-directional runs which are to extend past sunset - our first night run of the year. Another first for LOCO will be timed runs. These runs will not be a test of speed but a test of your engineer skills. The winner will be the engineer who makes the run through a specified course at a time as close as possible to a prescribed time which represents a safe operating speed. In addition, there will be a pot luck dinner—and maybe Truman will fix the chili. So bring your family and invite your guests for a VERY special day at the LOCO track.

## Superintendent of Track Maintenance

Track maintenance projects were pretty much at a standstill for all of February due to our tough winter weather. Station Track No. 2 remains closed awaiting final ballast work; but the new track from Four S Bridge to the diamond is open for service, although a few train loads of rock are needed to make it pretty. Indoor work has started on the Polly's Crossing/Container Junction track replacement project. *Gene Berger* and *Truman Hefner* cut 12-foot Trex planks into 500 ties which *Robert Simmons* has used to make 8 of the required 11 panels. If the weather guessers are right and the winter is behind us, these projects should be completed during March.

## Air compressor leak fixed

About a month ago, a hole appeared in the tank of the new-to-LOCO air compressor; and Roy Kline took it home for some "warranty" work. The compressor has been repaired and returned to the LOCO shop. However, Roy explained that the tank failed because it was not properly leveled and regularly drained of water and strongly recommends that the compressor not be used until it is properly leveled. In addition, the tank must be drained not less than monthly. Now, before the compressor can actually be returned to service, LOCO needs a couple of volunteers to level it. Any takers?

### Station Stops . . .

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### Editor's Note

I realize this is a slow-news time of year in the hobby, but a lot has been going on at the LOCO track. Unfortunately, much of it is not being recognized because it is not being reported in writing or recorded in pictures. This is also the time of year when kid-related obligation—scouts, sports, and school—prevent me from making it to the track on any regular basis. THEREFORE, it is up to YOU, the LOCO members and readers of LOCO NEWS, to fill in the gaps. Please send pictures of what you are doing for the club and a description of what is going on. Its fun to share!

# Along the LOCO Rails



Trash cleaning - before and after



Evidence of cold weather flexing of  
the LOCO main.

# Public vs. Private Is that the question?

By: Joe Fawcett

I have seen some e-mail flowing between LOCO members recently concerning lawsuits at other clubs and the concern over which way we should take concerning such things as birthday parties, run days, and open houses when the general public visits our track. In other words, should we keep our doors open to the public to minimize our risk of a possible lawsuit? We have run the gambit of suggestions from keeping things as they are to limiting our exposure by only allowing groups like the Boy Scouts or Girl Scouts (who have their own insurance) out to the track or going private again to further limit our exposure. In this article, my goal is not to advocate one extreme or the other; but I will try to discuss several important points from a corporate strategy level that must be explored or considered by our membership if this comes up on the club's scope in the future.

To operate our club, our annual expenditures have been in the \$19,000 to \$21,000 range and go hand in hand with the thousands of annual volunteer hours. Although we have made great strides in updating antiquated infrastructure (track work, septic system, parking lot, bathroom facilities, and some house refurbishment), there is still a heck of a lot to go. For example, the roof on the house has shingles that are well past their life span, and the back of the house is slowly falling in/down. Most existing track work is now 10-15+ years old, and the rail and the ties have met their service life. The pole barn that is used to store LOCO equipment is beginning to show its age, and some of the poles are starting to rot at their base along with the roof needing a periodic recoating of sealant. Along with putting down new rail and replacing old rail, we are also trying to improve facilities and other infrastructure. So, what concepts should the club also consider when considering public vs. private?

**Club Dues.** Club membership dues by itself will not generate sufficient revenue to keep the club operational—unless full-time members were willing to pay annual dues in the \$750 to \$1,000 range (or more). We would also need to maintain membership at its current level with the above fee structure or higher to keep on par with the current momentum. Any large projects such as house renovation or roof repairs would take us to a much higher cash flow requirement level and demand even more money from the membership if we went down the private membership route again.

**Club Membership.** Our goal here several years ago was to increase membership; and one of the ways to do that was to reduce the annual membership dues so that it is more affordable to a wider demographic that wants to/can afford to belong to our club. By lowering the dues, we have been able to attract new members and families that would not have otherwise been unable to join. The current dues structure is affordable, and the membership has grown under the current fee structure. If we are to keep a viable, active club, we must be able to ATTRACT AND KEEP members of all ages and backgrounds.

**Club Workers.** Yes, someone has to volunteer their time and abilities to keep things running. As in most organizations like ours, the majority of the work at the track is accomplished by the minority



Brush clearing project north of the containers.



Fence extensions being readied for installation.



New sign announces LOCO public times.

of the total membership. Additionally in our organization, a majority of those folks that come out to help are approaching or have met the gray hair stage of life. So, if we want to accomplish certain projects, we must be realistic and consider having the project contracted out to experts. Since we cannot save on cost by using our organic volunteer labor pool for some large projects, we must consider a different strategy and cost to accomplish some projects. For example, there are only a few LOCO members that would be nimble enough to get on ladders and try to do roof work. Besides, although the membership may have the basic skill sets to do the work, an expert can have things done in days rather than the weeks or months it would take us to do the same job.

**Our Organizational Structure and the Responsibilities That Go With It.** The club is currently organized as a 501(c)(3), not for profit corporation. As such, we have a responsibility to open the organization up to the public to some degree. Unfortunately I am not a lawyer, and I do not have the complete rules to pass to you of what this means, but I can say we must allow some direct public interaction with the club. If we were to give up this status, we would lose a major advantage that we currently have which is the tax advantages offered corporate and private donors who provide funds to 501(c)(3) organizations.

**Our Aging Equipment.** The club's train equipment is not getting younger. We know that Double Aught is 40+ years old and is on its second boiler which is itself over 10 years old. As a result, it has experienced different parts wearing out and breaking. The GP-9 is one of the first of its kind produced and is over 25 years old. The electronics in the diesel are hearty but would require a major upgrade if something fried from an electrical problem. The Little Mack is over 15 years old but was just renovated to new status this past year. Currently there are no plans to update or replace any aging club equipment.

**Club Progress.** Almost a decade ago the club got on the progress train, released the brakes, set the club throttle to "high ball," and has not looked back. However, the great things we've accomplished like a parking lot, septic system, bathroom facilities, backhoe purchase, and such come at a cost. If we want to replace all the old worn out stuff, we must continue to seek an annual infusion of cash.

**Club Dreams.** The membership definitely has some fertile minds and a lot of good ideas on what would be best for the club. However, enactment of these dreams takes effort, time, and money. We should select, prioritize, and determine what the various projects would cost. At least then we can properly plan, budget, and execute those plans as funding is available. Don't be afraid of tackling a project by saying we do not have enough money in the bank today to do it. **WE CAN FIND WAYS** to get the money!

**A Fear of Spending Money/Going Bankrupt.** Come on, folks. We voted our leaders into office for their many varied qualities, talents, and expertise. I do not believe our directors would ever allow the club to go bankrupt. They know how much money the club has, what are the must pays, and what can be allocated to projects to get the best bang for our hard-earned dollars. Oh, if you don't agree with their decisions, you can always attend meetings and let the membership know your thoughts. Also, if you believe you can do better, please run for one of the director positions.

**Risk Aversion.** Sorry, folks, but I have always believed that the club needs to take risks and that funds need to be spent wisely

# About LOCO

## LOCO NEWS

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## ANNUAL MEMBERSHIPS

Resident — \$100  
Associate — \$25 (optional  
for anyone living more than  
60 miles from the LOCO  
facility)

today on club projects. We must spend down the club's available monies each year and not be afraid of hitting the zero balance in the bank account by the end of the fiscal year. In this way, we achieve several positive goals and objectives. First, the club accomplishes projects to keep the club facilities and infrastructure viable. Second, we execute an annual plan that shows the membership and potential cash donors that we are a progressive organization. Third, we show prospective donors that any monies received will be used wisely with the added benefit of public exposure of their good name to our organization—particularly for corporate sponsorship. Fourth, by human nature, being cash poor makes us more attractive to donors. Think about it. Are you more apt to donate to an organization asking for donations that has \$10,000 in the bank and does nothing with it or one that has no money in the bank but a damn good track record of spending donations wisely?

**Insurance.** In either case, public vs. private, the need for insurance will exist. On a basic level, we have all pseudo agreed that the club is not liable for anything that may happen to us or our families out at the track. However, if something catastrophic happened, I'm not sure if our families would still hold to that basic agreement. With public exposure, our need for maintaining insurance is definitely a must; but, that is what insurance is for. To mitigate any public exposure, a firm set of ENFORCED AND DOCUMENTED set of safety rules needs to be in place.

Well, I've gone through a litany of topics above. To some, they may appear as disjointed; but they must be considered in their entirety when considering the basic principle of LOCO's scope, structure, and destiny. If you still believe that the LOCO organization needs to change to a different track at this time, I hope that you carefully explore all the "what ifs" before doing any radical changes.



Sleep easy - Joe is on duty!



## Calendar of Events

### Scheduled Events

#### March

- 3 - Saturday  
Board Meeting, 11:00 a.m.  
Membership Meeting, 12:30 p.m.
- 4 - Sunday  
Public (Only) Run, 1:00 p.m.
- 10 - Saturday  
LOCO Fun Run, all day

#### April

- 7 - Saturday  
Board Meeting, 11:00 a.m.  
Membership Meeting, 12:30 p.m.
- 8 - Sunday  
Public (Only) run, 1:00 p.m.
- 14 - Saturday  
LOCO Fun Run, all day

### Proposed Events

(Times and dates to be announced\*)

Membership trip to the Railroad Museum of Oklahoma  
Membership ride on the Quartz Mt. Flyer  
Invitational runs for local railroad clubs  
Bi-directional run  
Night run

If you have any thoughts about these or other fun things club members could do as a group or would like help organizing any of these, contact Stephen McClure: [stephen.mcclure@us.army.mil](mailto:stephen.mcclure@us.army.mil)

**Return to Station**