

KEEPING TRACK

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Editor: Jim Gibson

Hill Family Visits Casey Jones Museum

By Correna Hill

Back in April, my husband Herbert, my son William, and I had the opportunity to visit the Casey Jones Museum in Jackson, TN. William was especially excited because he is truly fascinated with trains. There was a lot of railroad memorabilia to see, and it was very educational and interesting. The museum had a small theater that played a 20-minute documentary about the life of Casey Jones at the start of the tour to put everything into perspective. Outside, next to the main building, was the house that Casey and his wife and three children lived in, which was moved to the museum site in 1980. All the furnishings were antique, with a lot being original and some donated. We enjoyed seeing how Casey and his family lived back around 1900. On the other side of the museum was a replica of the No. 382 locomotive Casey was driving on April 30, 1900, when his tragic crash occurred. Thanks to his fireman Sim Webb, who survived, the truth of what happened was told. The story also lives on in "The Ballad of Casey Jones" by Wallace Saunders. Casey was a true hero who saved the lives of everyone on his train at the sacrifice of his own, and this museum is a wonderful tribute to his heroism. We highly recommend it if you are ever in the Jackson, TN area.



Left: Will Hill among some of the many display cases full of railroad artifacts. Middle: Correna Hill was fascinated with this kitchen where Casey Jones's wife prepared meals on her coal stove. Right: Will got to check out a replica of the loco Casey Jones "made his trip to the Promise Land" in. Photos from Correna Hill

The Word From The Prez

For me July is a month filled with patriotism and train memories

This month always starts off wonderfully with a celebration of the founding of our great country. I can look back and remember spending time at my grandfather's farm shooting off fireworks with my cousins. I also remember the long trains being pulled a mile from my grandfather's farm along the great Rock Island line in Kansas, after the wheat harvest had been finished. The line started in McFarland, KS, and extended west to Belleville, KS. It was lined with many small towns and their grain elevators. These are some of my early memories of trains. It is sad to think that these same communities now have hundreds of diesel trucks hauling their grain to larger markets to be processed.

I hope everyone had a wonderful Fourth of July this year. I am looking forward to spending a little more time inside during the summer heat this year, especially at our train club. It's nice to have air conditioned climate control this summer, especially when I think back to our previous location where we didn't!

ASMR members run Storybook Express at Childrens Art and Literacy Festival



Above: Engineer Jim Gibson (L) and Conductor Cecil Walston (R) are ready for the first Storybook Express train riders to arrive at Everman Park on Saturday morning, June 7. Steve Butman Photo

For the second year in a row, ASMR members ran the Cultural Affairs Council's Storybook Express train during the CAC's annual Children's Art and Literacy Festival activities. On Thursday afternoon, June 6, Jim Gibson was engineer and Cecil Walston, resplendent in a tuxedo and top hat, conducted with

gusto during a parade from the Grace Museum to the Civic Center. On Friday, Jim and Cecil repeated their roles for train rides all day in Everman Park.

Saturday, Chris Bisset and Ken Riediger split engineering duties and Cecil conducted again for Everman Park rides all day. Since its arrival in Abilene a year ago, the Storybook Express has proven to be an extremely popular attraction at several downtown civic events where ASMR members have operated it for the CAC. **JG**

ASMR Meeting Highlights

Pres. Scott Fritz opened the June 1 meeting at 10:00 a.m. Cody Hilliard presented the May 4 meeting minutes. Treas. Ken England reported a club accounts balance of \$6,493.72, with nine members overdue for a total of \$596. Members voted to drop Jim and Yori Korman.

Ken E. also mentioned the Abilene Cultural Affairs Committee's Children's Art and Literacy Festival event this coming weekend where we will be running the Storybook Express street train. Jim Gibson volunteered to cover the parade Thursday and Friday's rides, and Cecil Walston said he would help. Ken R. said he would run the train on Saturday.

Ken R. also said he now has price lists ready for the train items he is selling for C. T. Kelly, and that his next home layout Ops Session will be June 22. Ken E. mentioned that the club's missing white step stool has been returned.

Someone suggested putting the club bulletin board back up, and the subject of the 2020 fund raiser calendars was discussed. Jim Gibson again raised the question of getting a commitment from each member for a definite amount of calendars they would sell, but nothing final was agreed on. Charles Lepole, who has had health issues and been absent a lot, donated a number of N-scale items to the club, and members voted to reinstate him as a member for a year at half the annual dues rate. Jared Burleson suggested that members quit leaving stuff on the layout that doesn't belong there, and clean up their space after working on it. Everyone agreed. Ken R. said he will have a special, all-day, Ops Session on his home layout for a group of real UP railroaders on Aug. 17. The meeting adjourned at 10:25. Next meeting will be July 6. **JG**

KRBRR Ops Session Report

Only one operator showed up for the KRBRR Ops Session on June 22, Chris Bisset. After waiting a short time past the normal start time, we decided no one else was going to come, so Chris wanted to look at some of the items Mr. Kelley has for sale and proceeded to buy a few. After that, there was still time for him to run a set of train orders so he proceeded to do so. Only one train was run, but we still had fun. The next session will be on July 20, at 1:30. Hope to see you there. **KR**

The Editor Speaks

Traveling on Amtrak to LA is a great way to get there

My wife Emma and I recently made our fourth trip to Los Angeles on Amtrak, and we enjoyed it just as much this time as the other three. Since it was kind of an 80th birthday present trip for me, we splurged on larger compartments both ways, instead of the economy roomettes we've had for past trips. On the way to LA we were downstairs, which didn't afford us as good a view as being upstairs, but the room was larger than the upstairs one we had coming back. Both rooms had more upper berth headspace than a roomette does, which made a big difference to me at bedtime. Both also had a sink and toilet/shower.

One of the neatest things about train travel is meeting some really interesting people and having time to get to know them. For example, I met a very nice young Middle East war vet named James Welborn. He was on his way to Arizona to start a grueling 3,100 mile trek up the Continental Divide Trail through the Rockies from Mexico to Canada. He will be raising money from donations for the Gary Sinise Foundation in support of veteran's issues.

We have generally found the food on Amtrak to be quite satisfactory, and a changing view outside the window of the diner as you roll along adds to the enjoyment of the meal. The entree selections are usually pretty generic, so I was surprised this time to see steamed mussels as one of the dinner choices. I couldn't imagine that dish having wide appeal, but one of our table mates (a New Yorker) ordered it and seemed quite satisfied. Shows how much I know! Being a lot less adventurous, I opted for a steak, and that worked just fine for my less exotic Texas palate.



Above: Tucson, Arizona depot.

Jim Gibson Photo

My favorite stop along the route was Tucson, AZ. While our train was being refueled and serviced, I explored the beautifully restored Spanish deco depot, and a Southern Pacific 2-6-2 steam engine, built in 1900, that was on display along with a number of other railroad artifacts, and even some life-sized *Wild West* statues. Departing Tucson, we passed by the Pima Air Museum, and I spotted two Air Force heavy transport aircraft (a C-124 and a C-133) like the kind I navigated back and forth across the Pacific Ocean during the Vietnam War. **JG**