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Trains Roar Through Lafayette's Happy Valley

By Victor Ryerson



A long freight train hauled by an impressive mallet steam locomotive rounds a bend on the Los Arabis Creek garden railroad. Photo Victor Ryerson

The model railroad is G (for "garden") scale, a 1:29 recreation that is much bigger than your indoor Lionel set. Originally started in the early 1990s for the benefit of their young son, it has expanded from its original 50-foot loop of track to a much more elaborate layout with two large loops that replicate the real world Tehachapi Loop in Southern California. It was initially rebuilt for the 2006 garden railway convention, but when that design proved too cumbersome, Evans dismantled it and rebuilt it all over again. He spent a full year readying it for this year's convention.

Trains run through a realistic, meticulously detailed Western landscape of mining buildings and wooden shacks. A grove of Dwarf Alberta Spruce trees was planted in 1994, and now they soar to chest height. There are touches of whimsy, too. For example, a birthday party complete with balloons is in full swing just a short distance from a burial service.

Evans says he has loved trains ever since he got his first Lionel train set at age six. He rides trains whenever he can, and goes camping near real railroads. The Los Arabis Creek is "a lot of work, but a lot of fun," he says. Nevertheless, the annual maintenance may become too much for him in the future, and the days of open houses may be numbered. "Still, open houses are a lot of fun and we still have more room outside than in, so who knows?"

To get on Evans' email list for future open houses, contact him at bobe_94549@yahoo.com.



The Los Arabis Creek Railway Company is not your average railroad. Although its long freights and flashy passenger trains wind along a creek and through the trees of Lafayette's Happy Valley, nobody is hollering, "Not in my backyard!" As a matter of fact, many of us would hope to be so fortunate.

The Los Arabis Creek is a garden railroad, the creation of train lover Bob Evans, and it runs in his backyard. With his wife Norma, he recently opened it to visitors from all over the country, and to local friends and neighbors.

Attendees of the National Garden Railway Convention, held this year in the Bay Area, were their guests as part of a tour of local garden railroads. On July 10 neighbors and other members of the public were also invited to have a look. Nobody left disappointed.

The colorful "Daylight" passenger train negotiates a replica of Tehachapi Loop on the scenic scale model backyard railroad. Photo Victor Ryerson

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