

The story is about the large train display put up each year by a group of SD members and other train hobbyists at the Museum of Science and History (MOSH) in Jacksonville.

Attached is a scan of an article from the Jacksonville Beaches newspaper describing the train display which includes an interview of member Bob Burch, the group's leader. Also attached is a photo of one section of the layout showing their latest addition - the new Lionel Polar Express Train with snow-covered passenger car roofs and the skiing Hobo car, which were big hits with the many young visitors.

Now that the display is over Bob reports that they had lots of visitors during their 15 operating days. They certainly are promoting our hobby to the public in a splendid way and bringing joy to many families of visitors. Among the other SD members in the group are Chuck Bryner, Bud German, Steve Johnson, Lloyd Lippert, Steve Lukefahr, Steve Molner, Henry Snyder, JP Snyder and Jim Troutman.



MOSH train display brings back fond holiday memories

by LIZA MITCHELL
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A new exhibit with all the bells and whistles for the holiday season is open at the Museum of Science and History. The Toy Train Collectors of Jacksonville host the 6th annual holiday trains exhibit through Dec. 31 in the MOSH Learning Lab, located at 1025 Museum Circle Drive in Jacksonville.

Volunteer operators will be on hand to engage visitors about trains, engineering and model building. Guests will enjoy viewing the trains as they travel through a winter setting, rotating throughout the day as each member brings something new to the table. The Annual Holiday Trains exhibit is included with regular Museum admission. Call 396-MOSH or visit www.themosh.org for information.

"You'll see something different most every day," said Atlantic Beach resident Bob Burch, who served as the president of the Toy Train Collector's Club. "Our scenery is a winter setting, so we have a lot of donations from folks a lot that go with our trains. We have little carnival set up and cars, trucks, people, trees that sort of stuff that adds more icing to the cake."

On Dec. 21, the North



The train displays at MOSH are winter-themed for the holidays. photo submitted

Pole Express trains featured in the popular holiday movie "The Polar Express" will be on display. "We will be running that all day plus a lot of Christmas trains with Christmas trees, Santa Claus chasing a reindeer on a car, more Christmas-oriented rather than a Florida East Coast passenger train," Burch said. "It will be more whimsical."

A special Military Train exhibit will be displayed Dec. 28 with Army, Navy, Air Force and even Coast Guard trains. "It's my favorite day," said Burch, who has several military trains in his personal collection. "Many of us do. My dad was Navy, so I lean a little towards Navy. During the 40's and 50's they

had their own trains. I think everything is contracted out these days but they're very popular with the kids."

The display tables were constructed by CSX and built for kids to experience the mechanics of the working trains at eye-level. "When we were younger, that's what we did. We were on the floor watching our trains and this way it's kind of the same effect. They really look nice from an adult standpoint but they are really something special when you come down to eye level with the train going by. The joy and excitement children get by watching our trains is priceless."

Burch joined the Toy Train Collector's Club

in the early 90's to talk trains and share interests with fellow train enthusiasts. The group of approximately 35 members often sets up at such events as the Home & Patio Show. "Our club is also responsible for setting up the Florida East Coast railway train at the Beaches Museum, so we have a train day down there in September."

Growing up, Burch remembers enjoying trains from an early age. As the youngest of three boys, he was the last in the line for the hand-me-downs which included the trains he was more than happy to receive. "I played with them with my brothers at a very young age. We all enjoyed trains. Our

uncles would come over and play trains with us. We'd turn the lights out and have a great time," he said. "Most of my club ran trains as kids growing up in the 50's, but when we became teenagers and perfume and gasoline became more of a priority, many of our parents threw our trains away."

When he became a father, Burch reignited his passion for trains. He especially hoped to carry on the holiday tradition of running a train beneath the Christmas tree. "My first child was born in '72 and Santa Claus just started bringing trains every year after that. That's how I started re-collecting trains," he said. "I've always liked the trains that smoked and whistled. Those were always the most fun. We like to have a variety. We have diesels, passenger trains, freight trains. As a kid, you got what Santa Claus brought. But getting older, I know Santa Claus and he brings exactly what I want."

This year, Burch is passing down his love of trains like a treasured family heirloom. He recently purchased his first train for his grandson, who celebrated his seventh birthday. "He's got his set up under the tree this year and he sleeps with his train catalog at night," he said. "It's in the blood."