



Photo by David Heinsohn

# THE BRASS POUNDER



Official Publication of the  
Kansas Central Division  
Mid-Continent Region of the [National Model Railroad Association](#)

Volume 27  
Issue 3  
June 2018

## Timetable

The next KCD meeting will  
be at Midland Railway  
Historical Association on  
June 16, 2018

Directions on Page 3

### Join the KCD on Facebook!

Kansas Central Division-NMRA has a Facebook page and is for NMRA members only. It is a place to share model railroading adventures, post pictures, tell tales of woe in building your empire, post obstacles you have overcome, and ask questions. Have fun. Simply enter Kansas Central Division - NMRA in the Facebook search block and select request to join. See you there.

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### Join the KCD Yahoo Group!

Kansas Central Division has a Yahoo Group. To join the KCD Yahoo Group, send an email to [KCD-NMRA-subscribe@yahoogroups.com](mailto:KCD-NMRA-subscribe@yahoogroups.com). You will be automatically subscribed to the group with the email address from which you sent the message. Or, go to [groups.yahoo.com](http://groups.yahoo.com) and enter KCD-NMRA in the search window to find the group and to join

<h1>Call Board</h1>	<b>Director</b> Ray Brady <a href="mailto:joycove@wilsoncom.us">joycove@wilsoncom.us</a>	<b>Superintendent</b> (Open)	<b>Clerk</b> Tom Katafiasz	<b>Paymaster</b> Larry Tiffany
	<b>THE BRASS POUNDER</b> Editor and Publisher Ray Brady	<b>THE BRASS POUNDER</b> Associate Editor Christine Heinsohn		

# *Minutes of Last KCD Meeting*

On

*June 14, 2018*

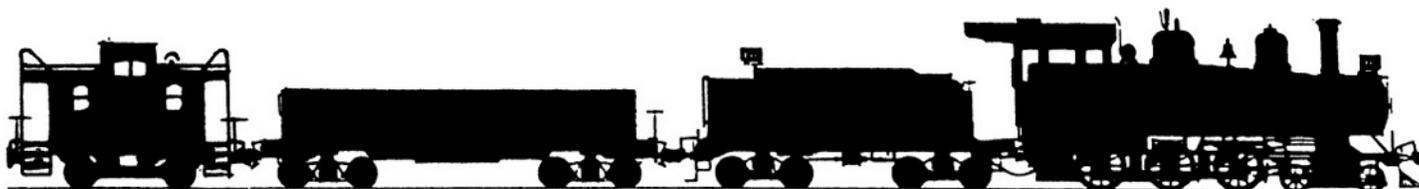
The KCD meeting of April 14, 2018 was held at Ray Brady's house. Those in attendance were Tom Katafiasz, Tony Schmitt, Ray Brady, and guest Tom Frankenfield.

Because of a mid-April snowstorm in Kansas the night before the meeting, the attendance at the meeting was very limited.

The election of a new KCD Superintendent after the untimely death of our Superintendent John Snell was postponed because of the small turnout at the meeting. No business meeting was held.

Those that attended spent the afternoon running trains on Ray's layout.

Respectfully Submitted  
Ray Brady



# Kansas Central Division - NMRA June Meeting Announcement



## Midland Railway Historical Association 1515 High Street Baldwin City KS

*June 16, 2018*

**12:00 Lunch: Jo's Diner**

516 Ames St. (Just east of the stop light on US 56)  
Baldwin City KS

**1:00 Midland Railway Tour: by Larry Tiffany**

**2:00 Train Ride to Norwood (About 1 hour)**

*Adult \$14*

*Senior - \$12*

*Caboose - \$15*

*Caboose copula - \$20*

*Child - \$8*



- Directions from Topeka
- Take I-70 E/KS-4 E/US-40 E Continue to follow I-70 E Partial toll road 18.1 mi
- Take exit 197 toward Lawrence Toll road 0.5 mi
- Merge onto KS-10 E/S Lawrence Trafficway 8.1 mi
- Take the U.S. 59 ramp to Kansas 10/Lawrence/Ottawa 0.2 mi
- Turn right (south) onto US-59 S/E 1300 Rd/Iowa St Continue to follow US-59 South 9 mi
- Take 56 Highway exit to Baldwin City - 0.2 mi
- Turn left (east) onto 56 Highway
- Stay straight into Baldwin City. - 4 mi
- Turn right (south) onto 11th Street at Three Sister's Inn (Just past school)
- Turn right (west) at High Street (T-intersection) in Baldwin City.
- Destination of Depot will be on the left (south) - 4 blocks (at base of the grain elevator)



# *Notes from the Director and Editor*

## *From the Kansas Central Division - NationalMRA*

### **John Snell 1951-2018**

Since the last issue of the Brass Pounder, the Kansas Central Division was saddened at the death of our Superintendent John Snell on April 2, 2018. John joined the NMRA in October of 1997 and was an integral part of the group for over 20 years. For the last 3-4 years he had been the Division's Superintendent. This issue of the Brass Pounder is dedicated to his memory.

John's interest in railroading and model railroading was evident in his many railroad-related activities.

He had a particular affinity to the Virginia and Truckee RR, and he had a home layout under construction that represented the V&T from Reno to Carson City and points in between. He also participated in many V&T Historical activities so that the reality of the actual railroad could be brought to life in a scaled down manner.

He was also on the Board of the McPherson Museum and was instrumental in getting the museum to include a 29' X 38' room dedicated to a HO-scale model railroad representing McPherson – both past and present.

He also was active as an Engineer and Conductor at the Abilene and Smokey Valley Railroad, as well as volunteering in various other capacities at the A&SVRR.

The Brass Pounder interviewed John for the October 2017 issue, and it was clear during the interview that model railroading, and history of the V&T was his passion. That interview is reproduced in this issue as a tribute to him - in his own words.



# IN MEMORIAM

**John Ray Snell** passed away peacefully in his sleep on the morning of April 2, 2018 in his home. He was born September 25, 1951 in Santa Ana, CA to Arthur and Hazel Snell, and attended public school there. He met and married Lisa Hanawalt on July 6, 1974. After marriage, they moved to McPherson, KS, where he graduated from McPherson College with a Religion/Philosophy degree in 1978.

John's interest in music and talent as a guitarist led him into his career as a luthier. After a few years of learning instrument repair and practicing out of their basements, he and his college chum, Bruce Kitzel, opened Belli Bros. Music in 1980 in a small house on Kansas St. The business grew and was moved to Ash



Street, where the Mark Leaf Case Company was added to the operation. Eventually, the storefront moved to S. Main and was renamed Belli Bros. Music & Trains after John's lifelong hobby of model trains became part of the business. He and friend Larry Kitzel built an HO and N-scale layout in the basement—the third largest in Kansas at the time—that was open to the public. In 2006, John closed the retail store and moved the repair business to his home.

Service was an important part of John's life. He was a conscientious objector and volunteered from 1971–1973 for Brethren Volunteer Service. Later in life, he served on the board of the McPherson Museum. He was a long-time volunteer at the Abilene & Smoky Valley Railroad, where he conducted trains, served on the board, trained volunteers in safety, and eventually became an engineer. After the death of his first wife, he met and married Carol Wedel on December 7, 2013. They enjoyed almost five years of companionship and volunteered together at the A&SV Railroad. His family will remember him for so many things: his kindness, his gentleness, his honesty, his wit, his curiosity, his big heart, his beautiful voice, his twinkling eyes, and his legendary overalls. He was a man of few words, but his actions spoke clearly of the quality of his character.

He is survived by his mother, Hazel Grace (Smith) Snell; his sister and brother-in-law, Virginia (Snell) and Doug Anthony; sister-in-law, A.J. Hanawalt; his wife, Carol Wedel Snell; daughters, Rebecca (Becky) L. Snell and Amanda L. Keith; son-in-law, James A. Keith; and many cousins, nieces, nephews, stepchildren, and extended family.

# KCD Associates in the NMRAssociation

## Activities and Interests of the Division's Members

As a way of introducing each of us to each other, the **BRASS POUNDER** is talking to members of the Kansas Central Division about the exciting things that each is doing in the Model Railroad world that would be of interest to all the membership as a whole. We hope you enjoy reading about what other model railroaders are doing.

### *Reprint from October 2017 Brass pounder*

*In this issue, The Brass Pounder talked to John Snell, Superintendent of the Kansas Central Division of the NMRA. What follows is this discussion.*

**BP:** What got you into Model Railroading?

**John Snell:** It really is a typical story of a ten-year old kid. My dad picked up some used HO trains from some friends of ours and we got excited about building something. We added on a big room to the garage and we started building. That was back when there were no ready to run cars. You had to build them. It was in southern California in 1961.

**BP:** You couldn't go into the basement because SoCal doesn't have basements?

**John:** No one has basements in southern California so that is why Dad had to build the addition onto the garage.

**BP:** So you didn't take over the garage?

**John:** No, it was a 2-car garage and it was filled with cars so we added an addition. We did have a pool so later the train room later became a dressing room for the pool. That is how I got started and how I continued that for 3 or 4 years. Then my interests started changing. I think it a pretty typical story - in it for 2 or 3 years as a kid and then your interest changes. And then you get back in it as an adult.

**BP:** What all did you do?

**John:** We took a plan from the "101 Layouts" book and we started building. We had a framework and I learned a lot about carpentry. It was an open grid framework. We built sub-roadbed that followed the plan and we used True-Track for the roadbed. It had the ties and rail spaces milled into the roadbed. And we had 3ft lengths of rail - probably code 100 - and spiked it down. We also had hand built turnouts. So it was quite the experience.

**BP:** What scale?

**John:** HO. It was pretty early in that scale. I remember building car kits - wood with paper sides. I don't remember engines. I do remember heavy body Santa Fe F-units. I think that was all we had - maybe two of those. So, yeah, there was nothing to just take out of the box and put on the track. You had to build it all.

**BP:** So you wound up with basically an oval layout. Did you do any switching or any operations type of things?

**John:** We got it to the point where you could run trains over the entire layout. It wasn't a real fancy layout at all. We never did get to the point of scenery. I think I remember some trains that hit the floor. But, it was a lot of fun and I remember spending a lot of time together with my dad.

**BP:** Good bonding time?

**John:** Yeah. I think that was his intention. I don't know if he had any particular interest or passion about model railroading. It was just something he and I could do together.

**BP:** The fact that he added onto the garage indicated he was serious about time with you.

**John:** Yes, he was. I kind of think he thought I wouldn't last long and that the addition was something he wanted to do anyway.

**BP:** At that point could you see you had favorite aspects of model railroading?

**John:** Yes, I had been building plastic car kits – airplanes and model ships but nothing too elaborate. But the railroad car kits were a little different. I did not use styrene cement but something like Walther's Goo. Maybe Ambroid. So, at that time I think building car kits was my favorite thing to do. We had a local hobby shop that wasn't too far from our home and I'd go there quite often. With money I'd earn from my paper route I'd buy a car kit for \$1.25 or something like that.

**BP:** Hang out with the other kids? Or adults? Or both?

**John:** I think I probably went in there with my dad. And, I'd go by myself too. I'd ride around with my bicycle and go quite a ways away from home. There were always both adults and kids there. I later got into slot cars in junior high but by that time the layout had gotten torn down. So after 3 or 4 years, model railroading kind of took a back seat. I had a friend that lived behind us over the back fence and we got into slot car racing. In fact I still have my toolbox that says Snell-Doman Racing Team. I don't know why I keep it. So I enjoyed that hobby for several years.

**BP:** Then you went into other endeavors after that?

**John:** After that I got into guitar playing and girls. So hobbies like trains or cars were little kid things that I felt like I was growing out of.

**BP:** Where did the guitar playing take you?

**John:** It started in late high school – senior year – and into junior college. But I really did not like junior college. It felt too much like high school. So I only did a semester and did not go back. I just started working full time. I finished my college degree at McPherson College in the seventies.

**BP:** Did you play professionally?

**John:** No I did not play professionally. Not then anyway. I never got paid for anything. But, a fellow was teaching me blues and I did play with his band a couple of times. We went to a place in Laguna Beach. It was a basement under a store – not a music store. His band played there and he invited me. So I played and sung a little. I love to sing. So that is when my life long passion started. But I didn't get back into trains until I came here to McPherson. I met Larry Kitzel here who was the band director at McPherson College.

I came here to go to school in 1973. Larry was into N-scale so he and I would start talking about model railroads. And then we went to a train show in Kansas City and that is when I really fell in love again with model trains.

**BP:** The model railroad experience had grown internally over 10 year, together with the new technologies that had come along.

**John:** Even the technologies in the late 70's was such as the Athearn kits were easy. You could put one together in an hour. So, that is when I came back to it as an adult. And at that point I hadn't really focused on one particular thing. I just what did what I found interesting. At one point I was trying to gather as many passenger train sets as I could – just because I liked the looks of them.

I think a lot of people buy trains because of the colors – the color combinations - not because of

the history. I think the history comes later. For me it did. When I finally learned about the *Virginia and Truckee Railroad*, I really got started into finding out where they were and then my interest just grew and grew and grew.

When I had the layout at the basement of the store, I didn't have a real focus. But I set it in the transition era so I could run both steam and diesel. And it was a freelance so I did not have to follow any particular plan. And, that layout was so big that I didn't have to draw any track plan. I just let it happen. I figured that I'd put the big yard here, the passenger station there, etc. Then I had places along the layout. It was 77ft long and 25ft wide so I had room to make some mistakes and I could correct them later. I had the track all laid out and working before I did any scenery. That was one thing I learned was to make sure that the track work is good.

**BP:** Were you the owner of the store?

**John:** I owned my business but leased the building. But, I had intention for staying there for a long time. The store was successful. Yes we had a few down years, but by and large it was successful. And the basement was available and could not be used for store purposes. So, I invited Larry to build an N-scale layout in the middle, since my HO layout was around the outside. The HO was attached to the walls, and the N-scale was attached to 2X4's in the middle.

But by 2006 I was so sick of the retail business. You had to be there all the time. And finding help was a problem. I wanted people that could help my customers like I could and did. That was tough, but I was able to take one day of week off so I started going to the Abilene & Smoky Valley Railroad. Larry and I had found out about it and we went up there, received training, and became trainmen and then engineers. So that was the day I would get away. So, in 2006 I sold everything and moved the repair shop home. My wife was all for it so it worked out.

**BP:** So you can call your own time now?

**John:** Yes, but there are still some constraints, but very few.

Back to the *V&T*. After doing some reading on everything I could find, I went out to Carson City several times and walked the right of way. And, I brought back cans of dirt from Carson City, Virginia City, including some mine tailings. So, even though the layout will be high desert, it will be colorful because of the variety of colors in the dirt.

When I got back into the hobby, I was never very particular about the prototype. I was not a rivet counter. But with the *V&T*, I am. I insist on the proper rolling stock, and the engines. I have gotten brass models of the correct prototype engines. I have had a friend in Arkansas paint them for me. He also added DCC and sound to them so I am anxious to see them operating on my pike.

**BP:** This is Hon3

**John:** No, this is HO standard gauge. There have been people that have made mistakes about that. From Moundhouse, they went down to California and built the *Carson and California* in narrow gauge. And the interchange was at Moundhouse. So, I will have some dual gauge track there. I have a brass *Carson and Colorado* cabooses that I will put on the layout as scenery. The *C&C* never really paid off for the *V&T* so they sold it to the *Southern Pacific*. And just a few years later they hit gold or silver at Tonopah so the *SP* made a ton of money off it. The *SP* called it their "Slim Princess".

**BP:** What drew you to the NMRA?

**John:** When I first joined, I think it was in the early 90's. What drew me to it was the fellowship and a national organization. I think I have learned a lot at the national and regional meetings. I think the meeting that Larry and I went to in Kansas City was NMRA. I think the NMRA is a wonderful thing for the hobby. Probably the best thing is the standards that have been established and manufacturers have pretty much followed. When Dad and I first started, I bet the couplers that we used were the horn-hook couplers. But then Kadec came along a little later. So standardization in

rolling stock, locomotives, track, and lately the DCC will be pretty much compatible across the lines.

**BP:** What I am seeing among the decoder manufacturers is that sound control is diverging between decoder manufacturers so that people are starting to make choices to limit their learning curve. But yes, the standardization that NMRA has brought has been exceedingly beneficial.

**John:** In all the years I have talked to people about this hobby, is that you can have fun at any level. Whether it is just track on plywood and running trains around in a circle - that is fine. The hobby is to be enjoyed. And, I've never had the feeling from the NMRA that you have to do this, or do that, or that all your cars have to be weathered, or anything in "only one way." You see a lot of that in Model railroader and other magazines but I have never felt the pressure to do all that. I think the only pressure I feel is the pressure I put on myself to do what I want to do. So, that is the main feeling I have about the NMRA - that there is no pressure and that you are in this for fun.

**BP:** And there are so many facets to the hobby. Just look at the certificates for MMR. What do you think would make the hobby better?

**John:** Well, finding a way to keep prices down would make it better. I think that is a big issue. There are always going to be people that price is not a concern. But I know there are many people that just cannot afford to do a lot. I don't know how manufacturers would do it, but if they could find a way to make stuff more affordable that would be great. I think that we could get young people in the hobby if we could make it more affordable,

When I started with my Dad, it was easy because he supported it financially. But when I came back into it as an adult I was at the point where I could foot the bill. Maybe they need to focus on the 30-40 year olds - people that have an established career and need a stress-relieving outlet.

I'm sure you have read the articles about the hobby dying. Well I'm not so sure about that. I don't have any empirical data. It is just a gut feeling. But I don't think the hobby is dying. I think it has changed a lot. And, I think we'll see more of the 30 and 40 year olds with the advent of electronics. They have grown up with it and they know about what can be done.

Battery power will be in the future. I think that is going to be the next big thing.

**BP:** What do you feel about the meeting location for our division?

**John:** I don't have any objection to what we are doing. I think it is good to mix it up. By the way, we are going to Larry Tiffany's in December.

**BP:** So we are not coming here [McPherson] then?

**John:** No. I really am sorry I missed the meeting when he did the airbrushing thing. I have talked to him and he has agreed to do it again. I would like him to talk about maintenance of airbrushing and he can go from there if he wants.

Yes, because we are so spread out that I am sure location is a problem for some people. You know, looking at a list of members, I cannot see more than 8 or 10 that would be active. There are probably some that do not want to go to meetings. I think we should just continue the way we have been. I think every other month works out well. I know that David wanted to do odd month activities, but I don't think they have been well attended have they?

**BP:** Personally, none of the meetings have been well attended - even the scheduled meetings. If we get 5 people there, we have a crowd. 5 people out of 25, to me, personally, says we haven't found the magic formula for getting people out - to get people to travel as much as 2 hours to go to a meeting.

**John:** I think this would be a good subject to bring up to talk about. So, let's leave it at that.

**BP:** What kind of meeting do you like?

**John:** When I first joined, business meetings were quite lengthy. So, when I run a meeting, I want to give everyone a chance to talk. But let's get it done and go on to the meat of the meeting. I enjoyed the meeting with Alan Meinhold and the making of trees. So, I have had so much difficulty airbrushing that I am really looking forward to Larry talking about that in December.

For me, my big issue with airbrushing is maintenance. I can clean and clean and clean the airbrush. And, when I pick it up the next time it is clogged up. I enjoy the clinics. And, when they are small attendance, we can ask and receive more personal attention.

**BP:** Anything you want to say about your layout?

**John:** My goal is to get it to a point where I can operate it. It is not very big, and it will not accommodate many operators. My goal is to model the *Virginia and Truckee* at Reno, Virginia City, Moundhouse, and Carson City. It is a point-to-point layout with selective compression and can have multiple crews.

**BP:** Time table and Train Orders, or Track Warrants?

**John:** I'm not sure how I am going to do that. That is something I need to learn more about. I started the layout before Lisa passed away and then that year she got sick and I just didn't get anything done down there [train room]. But, now I am getting to the point where I can spend time with it.

**BP:** And what about the McPherson Museum Layout? You've spent a lot of time with it.

**John:** When we started building there, we would typically have 8 guys show up and sometimes a dozen. That was when we were doing the carpentry construction work. But once we got to the point of it being operational, attendance dropped off. And now, we are lucky to get 4.

**BP:** Are they there now as we speak [Editors Note: This interview was on a Sunday afternoon.]

**John:** Well, John (Madden) for sure.

**BP:** So where do you see that club going?

**John:** John and I have talked about that recently. We are coming to the point on the layout where there is not that much work left. There is at least one member that is tired of what we are doing now. He wants fellowship, so we are making the layout more accessible to members. Let the members bring their trains and run them around and around. We are working on the computer to make the layout accessible to the members whenever they want to come in and run trains.

**BP:** So it sounds like you have the same issue with MKMR that we do with KCD – we need something that pulls us together for a common goal.

**John:** The goal was to build the MKMR layout. That goal is coming to completion. So, now what do we want to do next is the question.

**BP:** How about operating sessions? Cut in some industries with sidings?

**John:** When we had the planning sessions for the Museum layout, we all agreed that it would be a display layout for the benefit of the museum visitors. Well, I guess we didn't look far enough ahead- what do we do when it is done? Do we disband? I hope not, because there is always going to be maintenance. And, we have to find someone that is interested in computers so there is more than one person that knows what to do.

**BP:** Well John, thank you for your time. I enjoyed the conversation.

**John:** Thank you!

# *Out and About*

**An “Extra” section of the Brass Pounder  
submitted by members of things seen  
“*On the Road*”**

Photo courtesy Tom Katafiasz  
Salina 4/26/2018



Photo courtesy Tom Katafiasz  
Salina 4/26/2018



# **Wanted!**

## **Articles of Activity!**

**What have**



**been doing?**

**Anything railroad-related stokes the fire  
for all of us.**

**So contact the BP Editor for things you  
have been doing.**

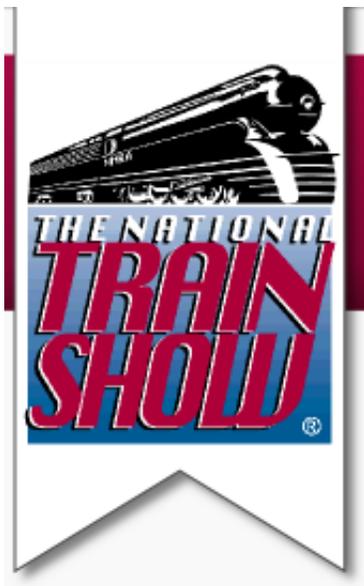
**YOUR Brass Pounder needs YOU for it to  
be successful.**



A Few of the layouts on tour



**National NMRA Convention**  
**August 5-12, 2018**  
<http://www.kc2018.org/>



# *Timetable*

**A Look Down the Line**

**Mark Your Calendars  
2018 KCD Meetings**



**August 4, 2018**

At the NMRA Convention in  
**Kansas City**

**October 6, 2018**

*Alan Meinholdt*  
**Emporia KS**

**December 1, 2018**

*Ross Boelling*  
Junction City KS  
1:00PM KCD Meeting  
followed by  
Experiences of a BNSF  
Dispatcher and Layout Tour