



# THE Lantern

January 2018

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## 35th Annual Children's Day, Saturday, January 27, State Museum/R.A. Gray Building

BBMRA is participating in the 35<sup>th</sup> Annual Children's Day Saturday, January 27, at the State Museum/R.A. Gray Building just east of the Civic Center. Our club has operated at most of these annual events over the years and the model trains are always one of the most popular activities, drawing lots of kids, parents and grandparents.

The Large Scale Division will be running Thomas the Tank Engine, with Randy Lombardo, and the Disney Layout. Joe Haley will be at Children's Day as usual with the Timesaver. There may be other BBMRA participation as well.

Hours of operation are 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. Set-up at 9 a.m. and breakdown begins at 3 p.m. We need several folks to help in the setup at 9 at the state museum, two or three throughout the operating hours and then folks to help us tear down.

\*\*\* BBMRA Meetings \*\*\*

**January 16, 2018, 7:30 p.m.:** "Third Tuesday" BBMRA Meeting. "Old" Tallahassee Antique Car Museum, 3550 Mahan Drive. Planning for 2018 and Running Trains.

**February 20, 2018, 7:30 p.m.:** Third Tuesday" BBMRA Meeting. "Old" Tallahassee Antique Car Museum, 3550 Mahan Drive. George Sellios' Franklin & South Manchester video, part one. The video is being provided by club member Bill Reschke.

## Passion for Trains Keeps Polar Bear Express Chugging in Bristol

(Tom Keenan, who passed away in 2015, was a member of BBMRA. Our club always has had a special relationship with Tom, Gloria Keenan and Veterans Memorial Railroad in Bristol. This excellent profile is from the Tallahassee Democrat, December 16, 2017, and was written by Amanda Sieradzki, Council on Culture & Arts.)

Gloria Keenan stood akimbo in the grass with her late husband, Thomas Keenan. The pair was sizing up their acreage, speculating if a newly acquired 1950s "Century Flyer" 24-gauge amusement park train and track would fit. A third of the size of a real locomotive, but substantial nonetheless, the train was loaded up onto a logging truck by Thomas and transported to Bristol in hopes of providing some backyard entertainment for their grandchildren. Gloria pointed out the landscape's challenges — a ravine and a hill — to which he calmly replied that he would build a trestle.

"He was an amazing man," states Gloria fondly. "He had travel logs and wrote books, and he did everything he wanted to do by reading and learning."

This month, the train is busy zooming through a life-sized Santa's Village, Polar Bear Mountain, Candyland and light display.

Gloria fell for the quiet, business-minded Thomas as they bonded over their love of travel and trains. He was a retired air force veteran and she had spent most of her career as an administrative aide for a legal publishing firm before going into marketing as a salesperson. Once she retired, Gloria continued working with families and



**Gloria Keenan and her late husband Tom Keenan  
(From the Democrat and courtesy of Gloria Keenan)**

children who lacked access to recreation as an administrator, and also served on the Liberty County's Arts Council.

Both wanted to find a way to give back to their community, and as they debated what to do with their new train set, the idea for the Veterans Memorial Railroad was born. In 2001, they were given permission by the Liberty County Board of Commissioners to use part of the newly constructed Veterans Memorial Park to build Thomas' vision. Liberty County, known primarily for its fishing and hunting tourism, suddenly had a new cultural attraction.

"We realized then that we had something families could enjoy and do together," recalls Gloria, who watched attendance and interest blossom, especially when the trains transformed for the holidays into "The Polar Bear Express."

Originally born in Quincy, Gloria grew up in New York City, though she always looked forward to taking the train back to Florida with her mother and sister, before eventually moving back to her home state as a teenager. Speeding on the Silver Meteor from Pennsylvania Station to Jacksonville, her affinity for trains grew from the time she was 8 years old.

"I loved to go sit in the dining car to have lunch," says Gloria. "Everything was so upscale at that time with tablecloths and the servers all dressed up. I just felt like a princess."

Wanting to provide a similar feeling to local children, the Keenans continued to grow their fleet. Thomas bought a refurbished, coal-fire steam train in Boca Raton, and braved a blizzard in Chicago to bring back their "No. 59" steam train replica. In 2007, they received a grant from the Federal Highway Enhancement Fund to expand the track to keep up with demand.

Gloria can remember her husband working tirelessly to draw up the plans for the track expansion, the 2,600 square foot train depot modeled after the St. Charles depot in Missouri, the museum, the maintenance building and workshop, the water tower for the steam engine, a playground and gazebo, a paved trail with lights, and of course, the trestle he had originally envisioned.

"The trestle is hidden by shrubs and trees so you don't see it when you first come into the park," says Gloria. "To top it off, he put a bridge off the walking trail through the cypress swamp that winds close to the train tracks. From the bridge you can see where the cows are grazing through the trees. It's just a very small piece of Florida right there that's been untouched and you can walk through."

Labor was made possible with the aid of the Liberty Correctional Institution, the Liberty County Road Department, and the C. W. Roberts Construction Company of Hosford, in addition to an outpouring of support from local volunteers. While Thomas sat in the conductor's seat, Gloria provided school trips and visitors with educational programming on the unique history of each train.

A caboose sporting the phrase "Freedom is Not Free," honors the troops of the armed forces and represents the heart of the Veterans Memorial Railroad — not only to preserve these trains, but to provide a space for families to come together for a one-of-a-kind experience.

"My husband said what made him so happy was when he would engineer the red, white, and blue train, look back, and see those smiling faces," says Gloria. "I work out there on the platform every night, loading and unloading trains, and it does make you feel good to have been part of something that contributes to these families. You get a passion for the joy of seeing them enjoy the scenery and the landscape."

Gloria is grateful to the community members who donate their time, energy and creativity to keep the railroad, and Thomas' legacy, at full-steam ahead. She shares stories like that of Harold and Barb Sandy, two visitors from Canada who have continued to return and help decorate and maintain the trains and tracks; Ross Jackson, the engineer who fell in love with the coal-fired steam train and comes back to run it each holiday season with his logging crew; and of course, Melissa Durham the leading artist and visionary for "The Polar Bear Express," since 2014.

She says visitors should prepare themselves for Durham's life-sized Santa's Village, Polar Bear Mountain, Candyland, a dazzling array of lights, and music synced with each scene. All ticket proceeds go to the maintenance of the track, the train, and the materials used in the decorations and the lights, and trains run from 7pm-10pm, Thursday through Saturday.

"I am awed by it myself, and can't believe what the volunteers have done, coming together and making this a spectacular event," says Gloria, who notes the railroad's continued symbiotic relationship with the community. "My philosophy in life is that we must learn to share our love for people and children so that we can contribute to the future of their lives and our country in a meaningful way."

No image embodies that better than the Keenans' little trains that could—vestiges from the past chugging into the future and making history for the panhandle.

## **Old Capitol Thank You for Holiday Lionel Set-up**

From Tiffany Baker, Museum Director, Florida Historic Capitol Museum

Dear Model Train Club Members,

THANK YOU SO SO SO MUCH for the beautiful set-up during our Members Party (in early December). We have heard nothing but wonderful things about your participation and it added such a special element to our festivities. We are so lucky to have wonderful partners like you in this community. We appreciate all of your support and look forward to working with you in the future.

Please do not ever hesitate to reach out if we may be of service to you in any way. Again, thank you.

Warm wishes for a joyful season and peaceful and prosperous new year,  
Tiffany



**April 20, 2018: 7:30 p.m. "Third Tuesday" BBMRA Meeting.  
"Old" Tallahassee Antique Car Museum, 3550 Mahan Drive. Program being developed.**

**May 15, 2018: 7:30 p.m. "Third Tuesday" BBMRA Meeting.  
"Old" Tallahassee Antique Car Museum, 3550 Mahan Drive. Program being developed.**

**June 2-3, 2018: 19th Tampa Model Show, Saturday & Sunday, Florida State Fairgrounds, Tampa, FL.  
Golden Spike.**

**June 19, 2018: 7:30 p.m. "Third Tuesday" BBMRA Meeting. "Old" Tallahassee Antique Car Museum,  
3550 Mahan Drive. Final planning for the Annual Show & Sale.**

**June 23, 2018: Saturday, BBMRA 27<sup>th</sup> Annual Show & Sale; 9 a to 4p at North Florida Fairgrounds in  
Tallahassee. Set-up is Friday, June 22.**

**July 14, 2018, Saturday: 64<sup>nd</sup> Florida Rail Fair, DeLand, FL, Volusia County Fairgrounds. Golden  
Spike.**

**July 17, 2018: 7:30 p.m. "Third Tuesday" BBMRA Meeting.  
"Old" Tallahassee Antique Car Museum, 3550 Mahan Drive. 2018-19 dues and election of officers.  
Also debriefing on June 23 show.**

**August 5, 2018: 55<sup>th</sup> Atlanta Show, Infinite Energy Center, Atlanta, Golden Spike.**

**August 18-19, 2018: The Villages Summer Train Expo, Show, 9a to 4p on Saturday, 10a to 3p on  
Sunday. The Villages near Leesburg.**

**August 21, 2018: 7:30 p.m. "Third Tuesday" BBMRA Meeting.  
"Old" Tallahassee Antique Car Museum, 3550 Mahan Drive. Program being developed.**

**August 2018: The Villages Summer Train Show. Dates and times to be announced. The Villages near  
Leesburg.**

**September 18, 2018: 7:30 p.m. "Third Tuesday" BBMRA Meeting.  
"Old" Tallahassee Antique Car Museum, 3550 Mahan Drive. Program being developed.**

**September 2018: Wiregrass Annual Model Railroad Show & Sale, National Peanut Festival and  
Fairgrounds, Dothan, AL. Dates and times to be announced.**

**October 16, 2018: 7:30 p.m. "Third Tuesday" BBMRA Meeting.  
"Old" Tallahassee Antique Car Museum, 3550 Mahan Drive. Program being developed.**

**October 2017: Celebrate the Halloween Season at Veterans Memorial Railroad in Bristol. Many of the  
special Halloween trains will be powered by VMRR's two-foot gauge Crown Live Steam Locomotive.  
Dates to be announced**

**November 20, 2018: 7:30 p.m. "Third Tuesday" BBMRA Meeting.  
"Old" Tallahassee Antique Car Museum, 3550 Mahan Drive. Program being developed.**

**November 2018, Saturday: TCA Southern Division Toy Train Show, Jacksonville, Morocco Shrine  
Auditorium, 3800 St. Johns Bluff Road, Jax, 32224. Exact date to be announced. Open to the public  
from 10a-3p. Open to TCA members beginning at 9a.**

**Woodgate Lionel Open House: November 18, a Sunday, 1:30 to 4 p.m. at Sam Miller and Linda  
Medlin's home, 3008 Stillwood Court, Woodgate in Tallahassee. Sunday Lionel Group Therapy folks  
are helping.**

**December 7 or December 14, 2018: 6:30 p.m. BBMRA Holiday Reception, Sam Miller & Linda Medlin, Woodgate. Final date will be selected later.**

**December 2018: Florida Old Capitol Museum. Date and times to be announced. The Large Scale Division will be operating the Disney Layout platform, with some special touches for Christmas.**

**December 2018: Tallahassee Museum Fall Farm Days. Date and times to be announced. BBMRA setups planned.**

**December 2018: 18<sup>th</sup> Winter Tampa Model Show, Saturday & Sunday, Florida State Fairgrounds, Tampa, FL. Dates to be announced.**

**December 2018: Winter MRC Train Show, Pensacola, Hadji Shrine Temple, 800 North Nine Mile Road, Pensacola, FL 32534-1858,. Exact dates to be announced later; 9 to 5, Saturday, 10 to 4 Sunday, Central. Admission \$6 for adults.**

**December 2018: Celebrate the Winter Holiday Season with the Polar Bear Express at Veterans Memorial Railroad in Bristol. Dates to be announced later.**

## **Hiaasen: Brightline High-Speed Trains Have a Dark Side**

From the December 26, 2017 Tallahassee Democrat. By Miami Herald columnist Carl Hiaasen.

MIAMI – Tickets for Brightline, the new high-speed train between Miami and West Palm Beach, would have been a cool stocking-stuffer for the holidays this year. Unfortunately, you can't buy tickets yet, even though service is supposed to begin soon. The company still hasn't announced the price of the ride, or even the schedule of departures and arrivals.

Festively painted trains have been seen zipping up and down the tracks in what is touted as a "simulated" service, meant to spark public excitement for the first short leg of the project, which is basically just Tri-Rail on steroids. The price of the tickets is important because that will determine how much money the Boondoggle Express will lose, and how fast it will lose it.

Every passenger rail in this country spews red ink, and Brightline has zero chance of being the lone exception. Its exorbitant Phase 2 is a nonstop run from West Palm to Orlando, via Cocoa. Eventually, Floridians will all be paying for this doomed folly, falsely promoted as privately funded.

The meat of its financing is government-backed bonds. Originally the high-speed train project was called All Aboard Florida, which as a brand name was more marketable though less honest than, say, Bend Over Florida.



**"Brightline Trainset" from Wikipedia**

Despite the support of Gov. Rick Scott, the rechristened Brightline has failed to attract a stampede of eager investors. In 2015 a state agency, the Florida Development Finance Corp., issued the company \$1.75 billion of private-activity bonds, which almost nobody wanted to buy. That's because running even super-fast trains from Miami to Orlando using an East Coast route is an indefensibly cockeyed plan. If you pitched the idea on "Shark Tank," you'd get whisked off the show.

The sales premise is that thousands of South Florida tourists would love to take a train ride to visit Disney World and the other theme parks. Fine, but Brightline isn't going to Disney or Universal. It's going to Orlando International Airport, a place most sane people try to avoid unless they're catching a plane.

Brightline's parent firm, still called All Aboard Florida, has said the rail trip from downtown Miami will take about three hours. That's two hours longer than a nonstop flight, of which there are many daily offering seats as cheap as \$81 – a price Brightline can't sustainably match.

If you're someone who likes to drive, you can rent a car in Miami and take your family directly to the Magic Kingdom. Or you can buy them all train tickets to the Orlando airport and rent a car there, spending a lot more money to arrive at the theme park in roughly the same time.

The train ride would be shorter if it were a straight shot, but Brightline's bent coat-hanger route will use the Florida East Coast Railway to Cocoa, where it will then hook up with an as-yet-unbuilt east-west connection to Orlando. That would be a marvelous plan if you happened to own some of that future Brightline property between Cocoa and the airport, but otherwise the detour seems puzzling and expensive.

Track upgrades along the Treasure Coast segment are under way despite heated opposition. Residents worry about noise, traffic jams and delays for first responders stuck at rail crossings that Brightline trains will pass 32 times a day.

Another big issue is safety, since the locomotives will be slowing from speeds of 100-plus miles per hour as they approach many towns. Last week's deadly high-speed Amtrak derailment near Seattle has only heightened local concerns.

By opening the Miami-to-West Palm link first, Brightline is at least assured of having commuter passengers on the inaugural trips. Its ridership surveys predict great success and long-term profitability – a wizardly feat of accounting, in the absence of a fixed ticket price.

All Aboard Florida's latest strategy is to split up the finance package, and the state has approved a \$600 million bond sale for the Miami-West Palm leg. Now all they need is somebody to buy all those bonds, along with the remaining \$1.15 billion worth to complete the Orlando connection.

Paying back the investors would require filling the trains every day with real, nonsimulated customers. That's never going to happen. If Brightline still exists in five years, it will be taxpayer-subsidized like all U.S. passenger rails – even the ones that send their trains in a straight, sensible line.

## **Sam is Looking for HO Locomotives – DC and DCC**

Do you have surplus trains just collecting dust and taking up room? I plan an ambitious series of train shows as a vendor in 2018 and am looking for merchandise. For the Prime Osborne Center/Jacksonville Show February 10, I particularly need HO, including engines which run, both DC and DCC.

**Sam Miller**

([sammiller61113@outlook.com](mailto:sammiller61113@outlook.com) or 850-459-3012)

## BBMRA Minutes from the last two months of 2017

### December 15, 2017

Sam Miller and Linda Medlin's holiday reception December 15, 2017, served as the BBMRA meeting for December. No business was conducted, but we sure had a good time and appreciate everyone coming out. Lots of wonderful fellowship, good food and drink and plenty of model trains.

### November 21, 2017

**General:** President Andy Zimmerman called the meeting to order at 7:36 p.m. We had about 15 members present. Treasurer Drew Hackmeyer reported that the club is in the black. Drew also reported on a recent Historical Society open house at the Lloyd old train depot. Several members said they were interested in learning more about activities at the old depot and having BBMRA get more involved with the Historical Society.

Responding to a request, Andy Zimmerman said it is likely that additional progress will be made in 2018 on the train layout and other items that are being established at the restored depot in Greensboro as a tribute to late BBMRA President John Sullenberger. "We have plenty of stuff. We just need to get out there and set it up," Andy said.

### Club Members Getting Name Tags as 2018 New Year's Present



Sam's came early.

Stacey Elliott is producing fine-looking plastic name tags for all current members of the Big Bend Model Railroad Association, with the club logo. These may be available at the January 16 meeting. Several of you have been asking for name tags and it has been years since we had a formal issue. Members present at the November meeting approved a motion by President Andy Zimmerman to pay for the name tags from our budget. If your dues are current, you will get a name tag.

**Another New Member: Bob Parmeter:** Bob Parmeter, an HO modeler, joined the club during the November meeting. Welcome, Bob. BBMRA now has 60 dues-paying members.

**November 21 Program: British Modeling Scales:** Our program was Part Two in a special presentation on British OO model trains by Patrick and Leonesse Shaffer, who recently joined our club. From Leo: "This time our presentation will focus on British modeling scales. There are many difference and similarities between American and British modeling scales. We will be covering everything from Gauge 1 to 2mm fine scale. Also, we will be talking about a few companies that make models for a variety of scales."

Respectfully submitted by **Sam Miller**, who admits these are concentrated and brief and who is delighted that club secretary Ed Schroeder will be back at the January 16 meeting.

The LANTERN” is the official publication of the BIG BEND MODEL RAILROAD ASSOCIATION, INC. and is published monthly just prior to each regularly scheduled meeting. Subscriptions are included in all members’ dues. Submit materials to Lantern Editor Sam Miller at [sammiller61113@outlook.com](mailto:sammiller61113@outlook.com)