

# The Ponchatoula Times



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## Train buffs

Jeffrey Fowler (left) is pictured with his friend and co-worker Huey "Mule" Husser inside Fowler's Electric Train Depot. Popular car dealer, Hall of Fame SLU football player and longtime model train enthusiast, Husser, 79, feels right at home working part time at the local model train emporium. (Times Photo)

## All Aboard!

By BRYAN T. McMAHON

Is there a child anywhere in the world who doesn't love a train?

That's a bit of a trick question because there is a child in everyone and no matter the number of birthdays they have had, that inner child comes out quickly upon entering Ponchatoula's Electric Train Depot located on Tower Road at South-

west Railroad Avenue.

The shop offers room after room of model trains set up and ready to run. You can find children of every age at the controls, or just admiring the miniature landscaping, entire villages populated by people the size of passengers on the trains, regardless of the size of the locomotive and passenger cars.

Ponchatoula legend Huey "Mule" Husser, 79, is one. That fine model train at the Children's Discovery Center in Hammond was donated to the kids museum by Husser, and the alpine village with its N-scale mountain trains that takes up most of one of the Depot's large rooms was built by Husser, a 1953 graduate of Ponchatoula High School.

He earned the nickname Mule during his college gridiron days at SLU.

"Depending how much room you have determines the scale train you want," the former SLU Hall of Famer and Chicago Cardinals player told The Ponchatoula Times during a recent tour of the Electric Train Depot.



## Husserville

Huey Husser designed and built this model train mountain village on display at the Train Depot. (Times Photo)

## Trains

FROM PAGE ONE

Husser, from the family that gave the North Tangipahoa Parish town its name, has always been an entrepreneur. The Mule's Hitch on Range Road was a business he started and sold long ago. And Husser played clarinet in the late Stanley Cowen's legendary Jazz band, before turning to boat racing, and a long career with cars and campers. But these days it's all about the trains.

"When I build a layout I do it all, lights, landscaping, people, and buildings. I was 31 years at Dixie, 21 years before that in the car business. When Jeff heard I retired he asked me to come here part-time. That was two or three years ago, and I have been here ever since."

Of course, the Jeff he was talking about is one of the biggest kids in Ponchatoula, Electric Train Depot owner Jeffrey Fowler, whose wife Pam also works with him part-time. Rounding out the family train crew is the couple's dachshund "Lionel," who has his own following at the shop.

And what a shop it is!

"If you want to buy trains you can't just go to a shopping center. They come here from all over Ohio, Utah, Massachusetts. That gentleman is from Germany," Fowler said, indicating a man engrossed in a nearby model train display.

"We opened the store four years ago after I bought several trains for my grandson. I bought a collection and started to sell them on ebay. A lot of these trains come from dead people whose wives don't know what to do with them, so we sell them. Saturday is a big day for



## Big train owner at 2

Patrick McMahon turned two this past week and to help the young train enthusiast celebrate, his grandfather presented him with this big locomotive that makes real train sounds, one of his birthday presents from Ponchatoula's Electric Train Depot. (Times Photo)

us. We are packed!

"There is a train collectors association, the Baton Rouge Model Railroad Club. Jackson, Louisiana has a train museum that is hosting an open house Friday, March 22 and Saturday, March 23. Some run on live steam. And there are a lot of ladies involved," said Fowler. He said the ladies tend to gravitate to creating train layouts with trees and lakes.

Fowler went on to explain, "I had a business in Kenner but in 1997 we came up here and built our house in 1998." He brought with him his aluminum anodizing (a process that prevents rusting) business which operates next door to the Electric Train Depot.

Sam Hodges, his Internet and ebay expert works in both businesses. You can see Hodges' work by visiting electrictraindepot.com where a lot of electric

train business is conducted.

Or treat yourself to a visit to the Electric Train Depot where an entire room of carefully refurbished electric train cars in various sizes sell for \$10 apiece. Or you can buy a new set, some selling for hundreds of dollars.

"The new sets have all kinds of sounds and digital controls so you can run five or six trains off the same handset. You can run any scale train here. Everything here is on display," said an enthusiastic Huey Husser. "You can see it!"



## Trains on the Internet

Sam Hodges is the in-house Internet and e-Bay expert at Ponchatoula's Electric Train Depot, which does a brisk business in model trains of all sizes. (Times Photo)

