

***THE ALPINE SUN SHOPPER – June 6, 2009***  
***Tattered Tidbits: Alpine Historical Society***

**HISTORY OF THE DESCANSO, ALPINE & PACIFIC RAILWAY**

Roy Athey, known as “The Train Man” was born in San Diego on August 3, 1931. When he was a young boy his father ordered a second hand Lionel train set from the Madison Hardware Company in New York City. It was a passenger train with a locomotive, tender, two coaches and an observation car. It was an 027 set. That means it was “O” gauge and the circle track was 27 inches in diameter.

A few years later Roy’s father bought him a second Lionel train; no locomotive - just four freight cars and a caboose. He also ordered a circle of 072 track. This meant the circle would be 72 inches in diameter. *“Oh what a difference it made,”* said Mr. Athey. *“The track was longer and you could go so much faster around the curves.”*

His love for trains continued and when he was about 15 years old he traded in the Lionel sets for “HO” gauge scale equipment. After he married and had a son he started collecting Lionel “O” gauge trains with his son.

When Roy retired in 1988, he decided to build a real railroad on his property in Alpine. He needed a locomotive and found one in Hemstead, Texas. It is a 1935, 2 1/2 ton Brookville locomotive. It had been used for hauling limestone in a quarry at Carthage, Missouri. It can haul 62 tons.

Then Roy needed rail and found some in several different places. He found old rail used in the mines of Julian, Ramona, Mohave and Johannesburg California. He found more rail on a Naval Base in Imperial Beach and at other mines in Fallon and Tonapa Nevada. Most of the rail and rail supplies were manufactured in the United States. Some came from Germany, Luxembourg and France.

With the help of his good friend, Casey Derengowski, Roy started laying track and restoring the old locomotive. On February 11, 1992 the old locomotive ran for the first time in many years. Then in June, 1993, the trestle at High Pass was completed. They also built a depot, freight shed, engine house, blacksmith shop, section house and three other trestles. The last spike went in on September 22, 2000.

Five years later the “Two Foot Gauge Owners Association” indicated that they believed it is the longest operating two foot gauge trestle in the United States.

The Railway hauled its first passenger in May, 1990. As of March 2009 more than 10,000 people have had the privilege of riding Mr. Athey’s historic train.

The Descanso, Alpine & Pacific Railroad is open every Sunday afternoon. Mr. Roy Athey, your

conductor, takes you on a train ride in his backyard that you will never forget. Rides are free and donations are accepted. For more information please call Mr. Athey at 619-445-4781.

