

*The
Journal
Box*



"The Best Region Under The Sun"

Fall Issue 2023

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The Journal Box

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| | |
|--------------------------|------------|
| Total Subscribers | 223 |
| Florida NMRA Members | 519 |



SSR on the Web

Looking for the latest Region activities? Check us out on website at <http://www.nmrasunshineregion.org>. You can also get there via links from the NMRA website at www.nmra.org. Thanks to Glenn Kopriva, our Webmaster, for keeping the site up to date.

Journal Box Submission Deadlines

| | |
|--------------|-------------|
| Spring Issue | February 15 |
| Summer Issue | May 15 |
| Fall Issue | August 15 |
| Winter Issue | November 15 |

The Journal Box will be in the mail 2-3 weeks after these dates. Please do not include events with dates close to mailing dates as information will not reach readers in time.

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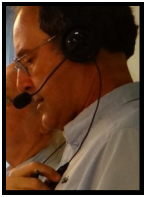
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To have news from your club appear in the Journal Box
Send an article and photos to
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On the cover: Sometimes it's a little easy to forget the thrill kids (and we, ourselves) used to feel about those railroad workers, the excitement and dream of working around heavy fastmoving equipment. This old pulp cover caught it all for me, the idea of a railroad as a sprawling, dynamic organization. I just had to use it.

And I've never quite been the same since I read (in Brian Solomon's *Railroad Signaling* book) that the spike on the top of old signals is to keep the birds from alighting atop the mast and pooping into the inner workings. The things we learn in this hobby...



**Journal Box
Editor**
Robert Raymond

So I was out at the clubhouse last night. Was I running trains? Talking about trains? Relaxing? No, I was changing out the guts of the toilet with some hardware I'd run out to buy.

The other week, I had to kill a spider (this thing was big!) that had the members screaming like little girls.

And then there was my vacation the other week, hundreds of miles away, up in a mountain retreat. Working. I'm retired, but being the secretary for a club is a fulltime job. We had a member pass away (had to get the info to the club and promise his widow we'd bring my Tuscarora layout to the service). And we had the VP resign (to care for his ailing wife) and that lead to rounding up the board to consider replacements and to collect the email votes. And then there was the disciplinary fuss at the club that had to be resolved. There were motions to record, votes to record, and various other paperwork.

Are trains involved in any of

this?

I once heard it said that in a club, 10% of the people do most of the work, 80% of the members just hang out, and 10% of the members you'd wish wouldn't touch anything. Possibly true. But not fun for the first 10%.

The ops committee at the club (which I am on) is facing a small problem. On ops nights too many of the members just want to run an extra (which usually don't switch or do any work, just coasting on warrants). This causes a ripple dilemma: if all the freights don't run, the yard crews end up with light duties. Not as many cars are shifted to the locals, so their fun is diminished too. So we're looking at ways to credit the freight runners, enforce that no extras run until the signup is complete, or alternative ways to get the left-behind cars in the central yard early the next session.

I don't get this at all. Since I help clean, card, and ready the layout for ops, I'm in it for the entire 2.5 hours. Often I'll run two locals and possibly a freight. I don't fight through rush hour traffic just to putter around like Thomas the Tank Engine.

So what is this carping about?

Well, often you need to really take charge of your own hobby. You need to push yourself, doing things you really

don't want to do (as I approached that mondo-spider and it moved a leg, I nearly peed in my pants). If you are a member of a club that doesn't have ops, make it a point to develop it. Or get your group to visit another operating layout and learn how it's done. Look at the part of your layout that is the most shabby and consider refreshing or even redoing it. Chip an engine. Host an open house. Sweep the floor at the club. Put in a new roll of toilet paper (I'm looking at you, Orlando-NTrak Club).

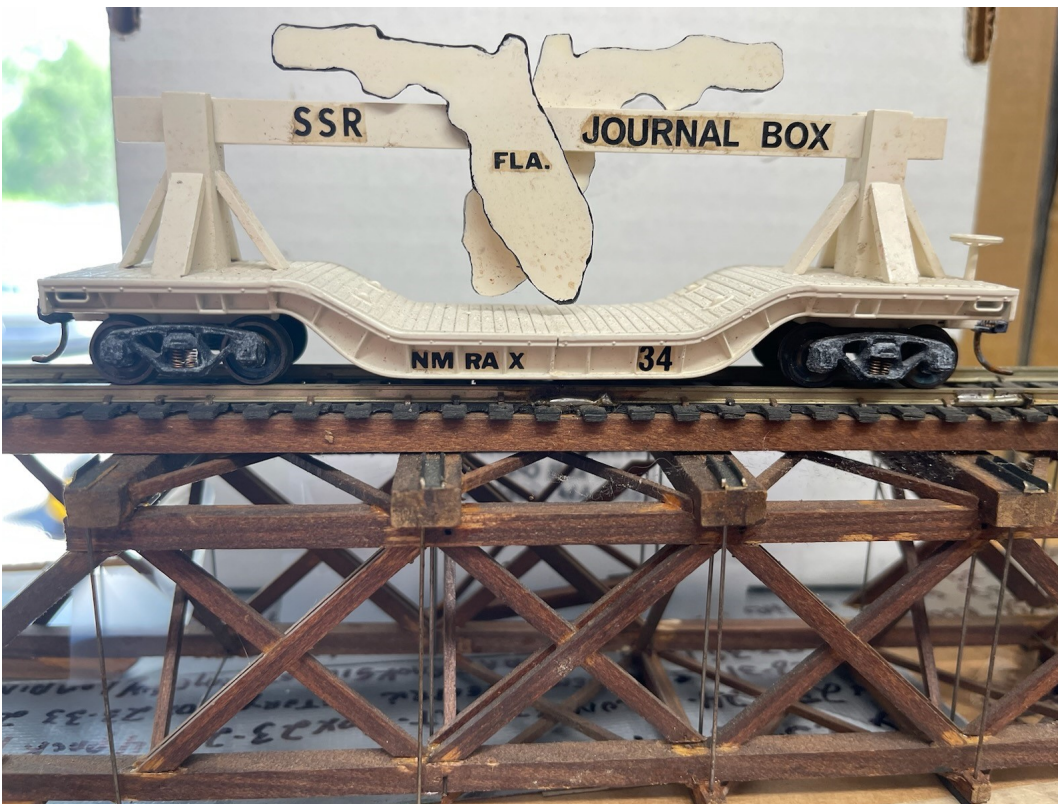
On this note, there are several good articles in this edition of people going above and beyond to make their home or club layouts even better. In particular, David Leider talks about how a hurricane-ravaged club of snowbirders actually got to work on their AP awards through some crafty microlayout constructions. It's worth a look, and even more, it's worth emulating.

So put yourself into the mix and get something done. After all, that's why we are all members of the Sunshine Region of the NMRA, to go beyond the plywood playtoys and make or do something truly noteworthy.

Like editing a magazine.

Or killing spiders.

Ugh.



Former President and wise-acre Ski Guzowski sent me this shot of a scratch-built depressed-center flatcar with a cool Florida/Journal Box icon. I must say that we might consider retiring that battered, crusty and somewhat radioactive covered hopper and maybe tool this around various Florida railroads instead.

And be advised—Ski and the board are considering coming to more home layouts to expand the *Rolling Hot* series. It might even involve some breaking & entering for the more reluctant.

Anyway, thanks to Ski for the preview!



Rolling Hot Treasure Coast Model Railroad Club

After being filled at the waste-waste loader at Svendsen Fine Fertilizer on the C&A line (last issue) with below-fertilizer-grade waste, the owners of SSR 1980 found a perfect place to ship the car—apparently the small town of Brill was looking for a way to put the green into the grass around their park and the low, low price resolved any biological/ecological/ethical questions. Brought in by a boxcab electric motor beneath crackling catenaries (the crew hoped the discharges would not ignite the pungent load), it was spotted just off the band shell. City workers labored with shovels through the night, spreading the by-product across the park. (Right)



Picked up and pulled away from a park of crying children, SSR 1980 is shunted to Port Yard. The empty yet reeking car seems to be getting expedited service off the railroad (Above)

Ordered by the city officials of Port Yard to expedite the hapless covered hopper out of city limits, our luckless covered hopper is shifted to Prairie Junction where a passing freight pauses in the gathering twilight to tack it onto the end of the string. Engineer Justin is more than happy to put it onto the rear end. The caboose crew is not. (Left)



With night falling, our plucky camera crew drove like mad, only managing to catch this sight of 1890 passing through our headlights as it blurred past. This grade crossing is located under a bridge, and is dangerously unmarked. (Left)



With roof hatches ajar and the car airing out, our hopper car is found early the next morning, bearing past Consolidation Steel. The Treasure Coast RR mainline is extensive, and there were just too many interesting places to take pictures of. (Above)

Aired out and ready for its next load, SSR 1980 rumbles across a dizzy-high bridge backed by the Ifiknow Dam (Right). At least, when I asked a member/trackworker what the name of the dam was, that's what he told me. And with that, SSR 1980 clears the Treasure Coast line, bound for who knows where. Watch for our next issue for the further installments of *Rolling Hot!*



Many thanks to the Treasure Coast Model Railroad club, who graciously allowed me to couple our car to a passing freight and lug it about, with me snapping pictures and asking questions. And a big thanks to engineer Justin Valine, who didn't even blink when I asked him to stop and pick up this car.



You can find out more about this Port St. Lucie club, including open houses and membership rates, on their website at...

www.tcmrr.org

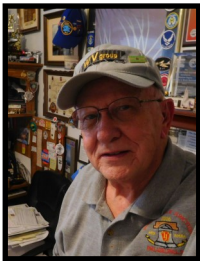


Off The Wire

SSR Plant City Convention: Okay, this one has the telegraph wires dancing. The convention runs from October 12, 2023 to October 14th, 2023. It's a lot of fun with trainloads of clinics, great food, good company, and some fine modeling on display. Rooms are getting booked up quickly and since Plant City is near noplacé besides Tampa, you're looking at a long drive in (trust me—I did three days commuting from Orlando, and I don't want to do that again).

So everything you need to know—rates, costs, clinics—can be found at the website below.

<https://www.nmrasunshineregion.org/category/train-show>



Contributor
 Michael Collins
 MMR 157
 AP Chair—Southern
 Division

Topics

Here is a summary of articles published in the JB to guide you ...

| Topic | Issue |
|--|--------------------|
| <i>Golden Spike</i> , a mixture of model rail-roading aspects..... | Summer – 2020 p.15 |
| <i>Scenery</i> construction..... | Fall – 2020 p.4 |
| <i>Cars</i> , all types..... | Summer – 2021 p.7 |
| <i>Electrical</i> work..... | Fall – 2021 p.6 |
| <i>Structures</i> , various buildings..... | Winter – 2021 p.10 |
| <i>Prototype Models</i> | Spring – 2022 p.5 |
| <i>Service</i> , volunteer and official..... | Summer – 2022 p.8 |
| <i>Author</i> , writing and photography..... | Fall – 2022 p.11 |
| <i>Locomotives</i> , building and modify- ing..... | Spring – 2023 p.9 |
| <i>Tracks</i> , constructing various types..... | Summer – 2023 p.8 |

Improve Your Modeling Skills

All models can use some ‘tweaking’ to look more realistic.

I know some modelers are not interested. I’ve heard it said ‘it’s not that important’, ‘I am happy with my work’, ‘I don’t need anyone criticizing my models’ and so on. However (there is always a however), how about elevating your modeling abilities by judging your own model as it compares to the prototype or get constructive remarks from someone else. Then enter your model in a contest, or write about it (using self-criticism to improve model building) before sending it to the JB for publication, or maybe ask a division achievement program chairman to judge it. You never know until you give it a try. Send him some pictures.

The results may surprise you. We learn by doing. As ‘practice makes perfect’, you’ll see better results.

Purpose

The NMRA Achievement Program is intended to improve your modeling work and provide service to the hobby; then, reward you with a nice certificate to display.

NOTE: For those interested in operation, checkout the two dispatch articles listed on the NMRA.org website, under Education, “The Masters” Articles, Category 7 -Chief Dispatcher. Then check the NMRA website for corresponding videos and clinics. Also visit some operators.



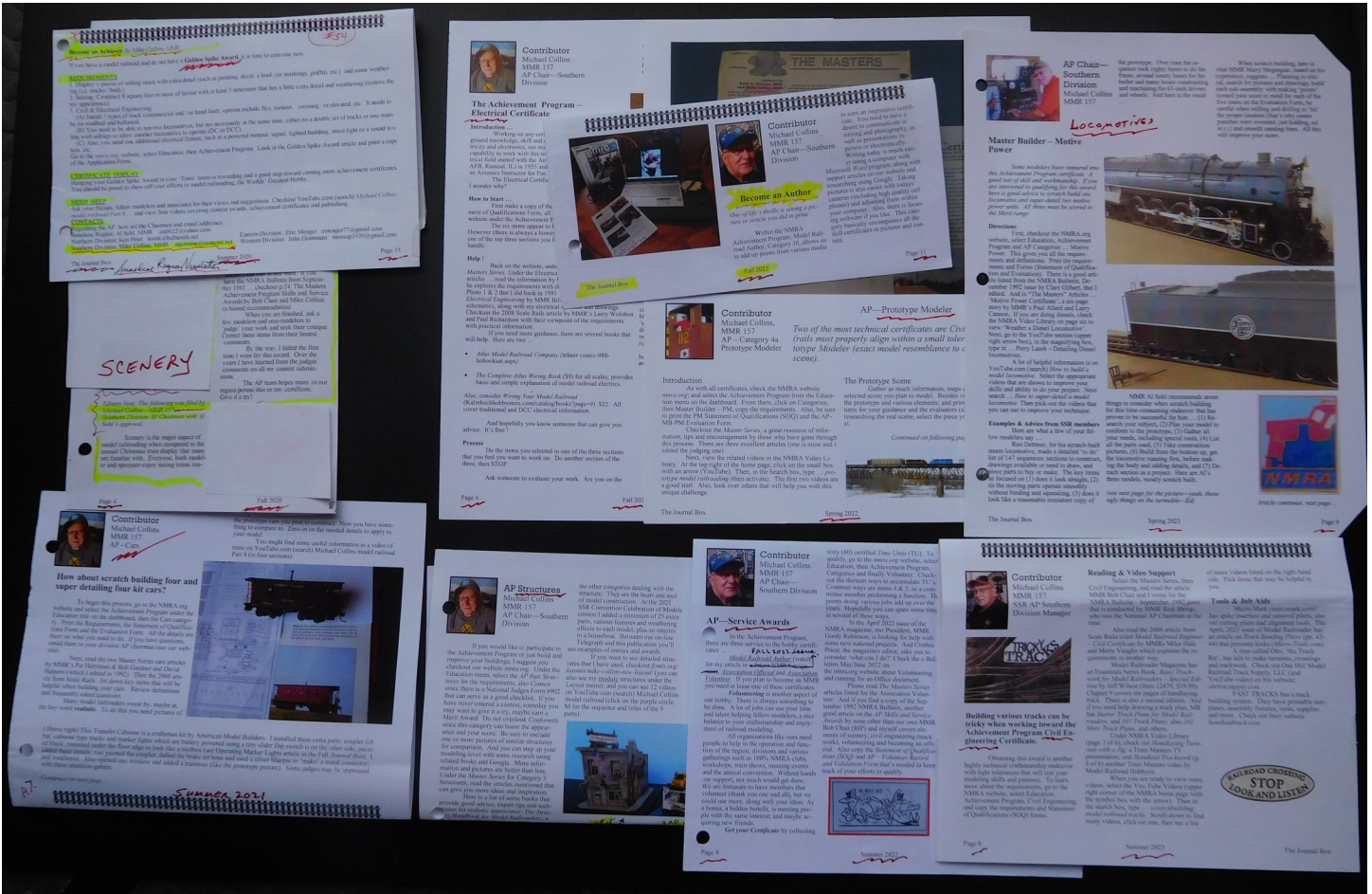
The pen is mightier than the sword, sometimes sez Michael.

Article concludes next page...

Summary

Like anything worthwhile, it takes time and effort, but it's worth it. Give it a try ... see how it goes. After reading the related articles, if you need further help, ask. There are folks able and willing. By the way, it is what MMR's are suppose to do for fellow modelers. Contact the Webmaster on seeking permission for email addresses.

On a personal note ... I trust my forty some years of model railroad experience helped with advice found in this series of articles. I never dreamt of what I've accomplished in *the world's greatest hobby*.



The Journal Box wants to share your Thoughts! Photos! How-tos! How-nots!

If you have anything that can help me burn white space, please don't hesitate to contact me, Robert Raymond, at...

RobertRaymond@bellsouth.net

We pay a generous royalty of NOTHING except the prestige of seeing your words and images here in print. Don't delay! Our next deadline is November 15th!



Contributor
 Al Sohl
 MMR 305

Open Loads in Operations

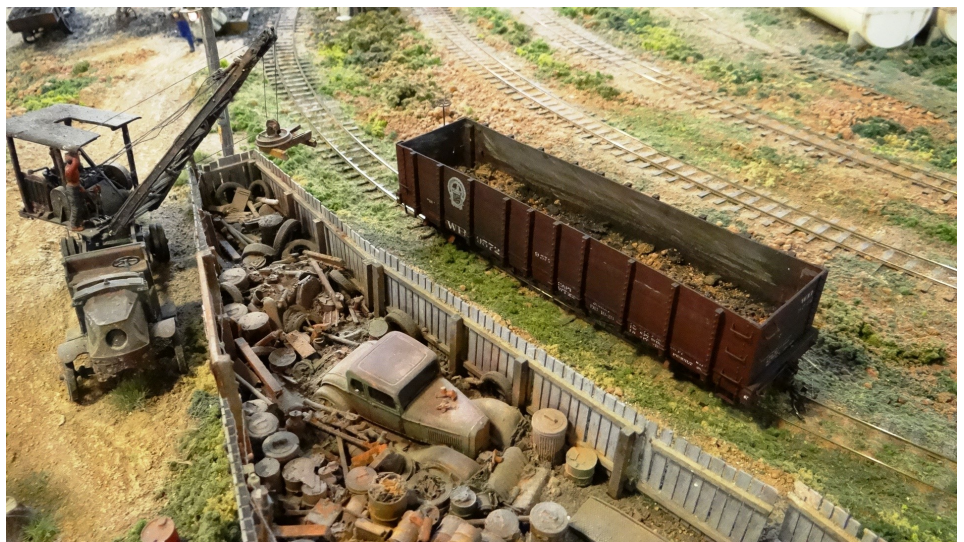
Our Western Bay O narrow gauge 950 square foot Railroad was designed and built for operation. Our all-day Op session takes place here in Port St. Lucie about every two months. We operate with a (JMRI) computer generated switch lists as per our published article in the On30 2019 Annual edition. These are provided for our seventeen plus operators, conductors and station agents. But this article is NOT about operation however, but about how the WB handles **open loads!** Most of our flat cars and gondolas have removable loads. These are designed to fit and labeled a specific type of car. Prior to an op sessions, members (this is a privately owned layout but we run it like a non-dues paying club) go around and either load up the MTYs or remove the loads as per the switch lists printed out for each freight train.

(Below Left) shows three different types of gons sitting MTY under the UTE Coal & Coke Co. chutes waiting to be loaded. Note the labeled loads designating which cars they are to be inserted in.

(Top Right) shows the three loaded gons ready for P/U. No, the stock had not mistakenly been dropped there. It is an MTY waiting to be loaded with coke.



(Below) Is an MTY gon dropped at Placerville's Scrap metal dealer waiting to be loaded.



Article continues on the following page...





(Left) the same gon is ready for P/U by tomorrow's local scheduled to work this town.

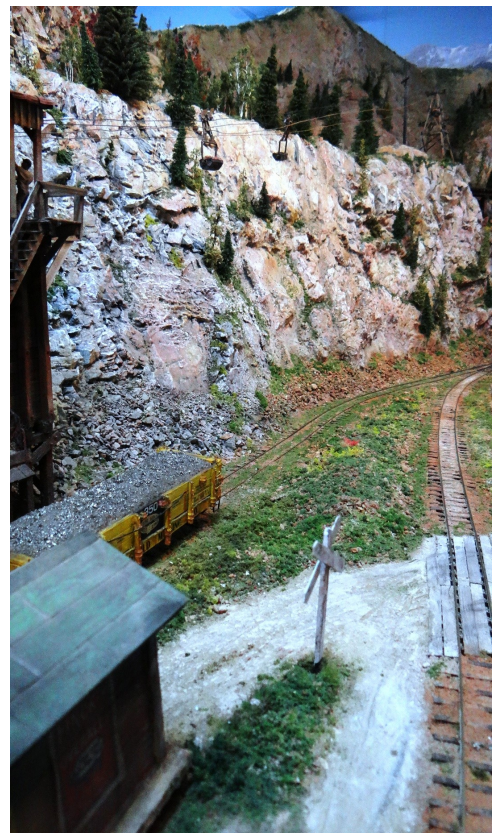
(Below Left) Here is a neat-looking load of cable.

(Below Right) The cable is spotted on the Alpine Tunnel siding, delivered to the 'No Seem' mine ore drop and is waiting to be unloaded. Note the MTY Victor Gon sitting under the ore bin to be loaded.

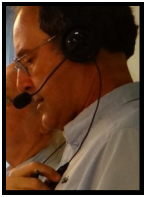


(Above) You can see the label for the cable load as well as the pins which are inserted into predrilled holes in this special flat car.

(Right) The cable is pretty worn out, it seems, and is due to be restrung. The article on the building of the ore dump as well as the ore tramway was published in the Jan/Feb 2018 issue of the Narrow Gauge and Short Line Gazette.



So this is how it is done on the WBRR—nobody needs to explain why coal is going back into a mine. But as we've shown, "there is a better way!"



Contributor
Robert Raymond

A Tale of Two Railroads

I've gone on about my *Tuscarora Branch Line*, a 2x4 foot microlayout. While it's got working signals and an interlocking tower, something new is going on. I've mentioned that my friend Kyle has run an "English" session on my Appalachian coal hauler. And just as I was thinking of really upping my game, he's decided that Tusk Hill (his version) will not just be my operations with English choo-choos but a fully unique operation in its own right.

When you think about it, it's rather exciting. I'm giving him more than trackage rights on my railroad—I've closed my eyes and given full authority to him on this. In other words, it's simply letting two people use the same layout for radically different methods of operations.

On "Tuscarora" (the PRR version), we now run full Time Table and Train Orders. The crews use switchlists to spot their cars, and study their orders and timetable to determine if they should leave the safety of the interlocking plant. There is a train order board, hooped orders, everything I could cram into the session.

And Kyle, he's rejected all that. He uses physical tokens which the dispatcher and tower operators give to the crews for authority on each section of track. His switching is far more intense, so much so that a locally-based switcher does



all the work. And he runs passenger trains (they are gone from my 1962 reality).

The only thing we share are the coal operations. I've produced a "tally sheet" that makes the coal crews have to

figure the most efficient ways to get their black gold to eastern markets. It's a lot of fun and gives the coal crews something to do. The only other thing we share are our rulebooks—both are over 20 pages in length. We take our sessions seriously, no matter what size the pike.

Both sessions have become wildly popular. We've got people driving two hours to attend, and we've actually run with seven operators (with most the crews split with engineer/conductor or tower operator/leverman. Kyle even showed me up by bringing English biscuits and drinks as part of his hosting duties—I'd only brought Oreos to mine!

Possibly you might consider letting a friend do this on your railroad, with his own engines, cabooses and operating methods. And if you do, you might find yourself looking around, making sure the operators aren't getting too much into your opposite's methodologies!





Seven operators (one hidden behind the head on the left) gather for the American version of the layout—Tuscarora. We have agreed to alternate, with Tusk Hill following my session by a half-month. Talk about parallel evolution!



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Contributor
Michael Collins
MMR 157

My current *YouTube.com* video , around 23 minutes long, shows views of my eight-year-old railroad, the New York Harbor – Lehigh Valley, then the disassembly. At some Train Show I plan to sell the remains.

I did make one mistake, I called the Harlem River, the Bronx River. Also, I should have turned-down or turned off the diesel sound in one of the ‘movie’ parts since it is loud. I got a kick out of using a narrator for the beginning and end. By using a ClipChamp Microsoft program you can type text, then select who you want narrating the words.

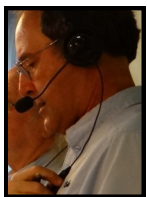
Checkout ... *Michael Collins model railroad Part 12*



To see more information about the New York Harbor RR, refer to the JB Winter 2020 issue.

The Last Run

I’m sure you have watched videos on ‘How to build Layouts’. How many have you seen about ‘tearing one down’? Well, here is your chance.



Journal Box Editor
Robert Raymond

Of course, it should also be noted that I’ve never had a contributor insist on changing his profile picture for almost every article. A piece from Michael ensured that I’d clip down his latest mugshot, ungroup the author titlebox, swap photos, regroup and post.

He was also the post pre-publish self-editor I’ve ever met. But I type this with a smile.

I met him back at one of the conventions when (in my interlocking haze) I saw one of his tower models on display. When I met him in person later that day, I insisted that he give me an article about it (appearing in the Winter, 2022 issue, pages 5 and 6.

And so it was quite the shock when I opened up his latest contributions and discovered that he’d torn down his layout. And that’s a loss for us all, if only for the information and sharing that it’s

brought us.

But I’ve pages to fill every three months. Without him, I need others (besides Al Sohl) to fill this void. So please, please, please, if you have anything about trains or model railroading to share with the region, email your piece to me and we’ll get you in print.

And thanks again, Mr. Collins, for all the contributions you have made!

Shocked, I tell you, Shocked!

Michael had hinted that this was coming (that his series of articles was completing) and like an oblivious editor, I didn’t quite understand what that meant. And then I got this piece.

Not to sound like a eulogy here, but Michael was instrumental in filling the *Journal Box* with all sorts of informative articles. From his first piece under me in the Summer issue in 2020, I’ve used his articles and photographs to fill a lot of white space in this newsletter.

Want to follow on Michael Collins’ high iron? Put together an article (txt or Word file) and some snaps (jpgs are best) and email me at...

RobertRaymond@bellsouth.net

I’m going to make you a star, kid!



Contributor
David Leider
 MRR 413

Snowbirds and the AP

What does a club do when a portion of their membership is composed of "snowbirds"? Snowbirds are members from up north who go down to Florida to escape the cold weather. They bring knowledge and experience, but are separated from their home base, and are only there for a relatively short time.

The Scale Rails Club of Southwest Florida, headquartered in Fort Myers, Florida, is continually upgrading their layouts and rather than eating cookies, watching videos and chatting; they are given jobs to do.

Bruce Lauerman of the club got the idea of having them, plus other members of the ALL NMRA club, get their Golden Spike awards. At first he was met with the usual resistance, members did not think they were good enough, did not know how to fill out the paperwork and who to give it to. Plus, the Sunshine Division only has one AP judge for the entire state. Having him travel down to Fort Myers for every participant would be problematic. An agreement was worked out in which two members who had already gotten AP awards were allowed to look over the paperwork, approve it, and send it along to national, bypassing the usual chain of command.

The next step was to test the system to see if it would work. Some easy award winners, (those that had met all the qualifications - called group A), were pushed through and easily got their Golden Spikes. With the knowledge that it could be done, the next step was to interview all the members to see what previous modeling experience could be applied to the Golden Spike application. Members were surprised to learn that models they had super detailed or scratchbuilt years ago would qualify. If they had home layouts, and had pictures or other proof of completion, this could be used. Many members were surprised that they had completed most of the work, and with a little help could qualify. The interviewee produced photos, testimony, and actual examples of completed work. The interviewer kept written records of the work completed. These constituted group B.

Group C was unique. It was those members who suffered damage from hurri-

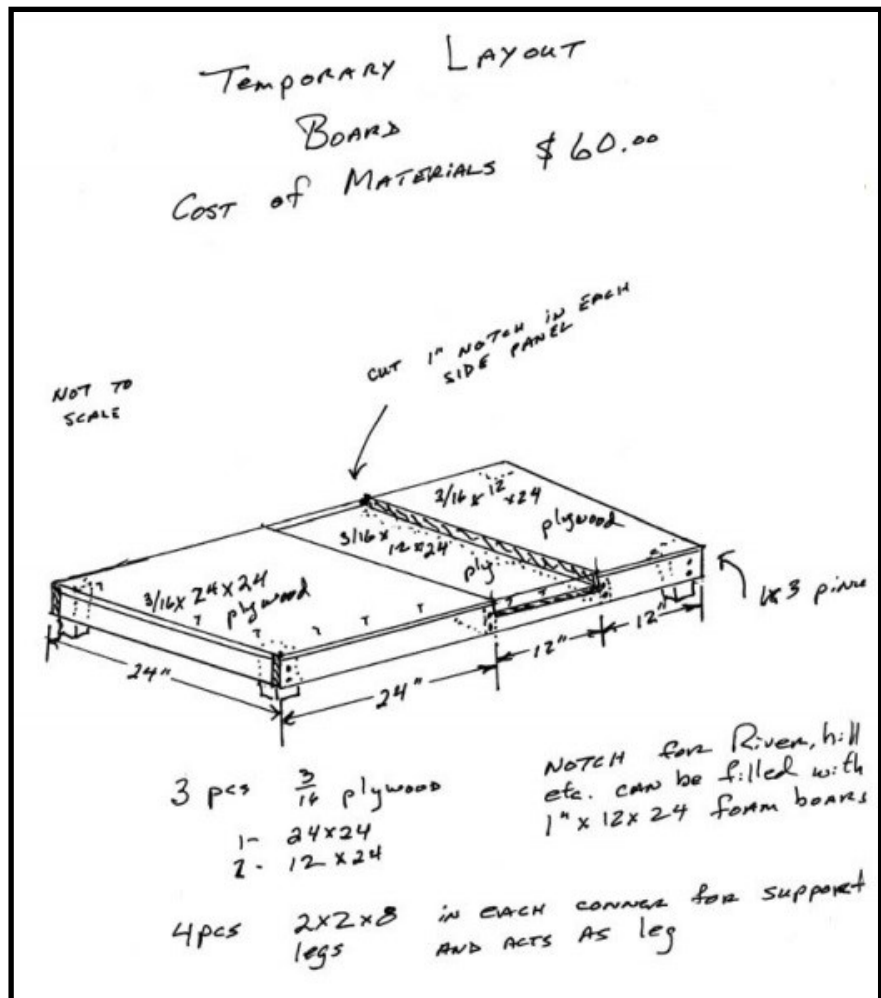
cane Ian and lost their homes, or whose lives were disrupted and had more pressing matters to attend to.

Each individual's needs were assessed for award completion. It was found that the main factor holding up progress was the lack of a home layout for section 2 of the Golden spike. Bruce came up with a simple solution, a temporary layout board that could be used to lay track, do scenery, etc. The club had a lot of cars and structures donated to it that were sold at a nominal cost to members that could be super-detailed to fulfill the requirements. Once completed, the boards were stripped of scenery and reused.

The program was then compressed into 120 days, to allow the snowbirds to participate. Mentors were assigned to members who asked for more help. So far this year, Scale Rails Club of Fort Myers has earned 25 Golden Spike awards, with more to come (The membership is over 50). Bruce emphasized that anyone could do this individually or with club help, you just need to start. He also said that it was a group effort. Once a member got their GS, others became more motivated to get theirs. And since members got their Golden Spike, some are working on other AP awards.

Bruce added that if they can do it, anyone can, and he would be happy to assist. His email is:

brucelaurman@gmail.com



The plan comes together...

More on following page...



Both sides of the completed Layout Board (Above Left and Right)



Bruce demonstrating the Layout Board (Left)

Keith Kramer was one of about a dozen who received their GS that day. Here, Division Superintendent Don Wetmore is presenting it as Bruce Laurman looks on. (Right)





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