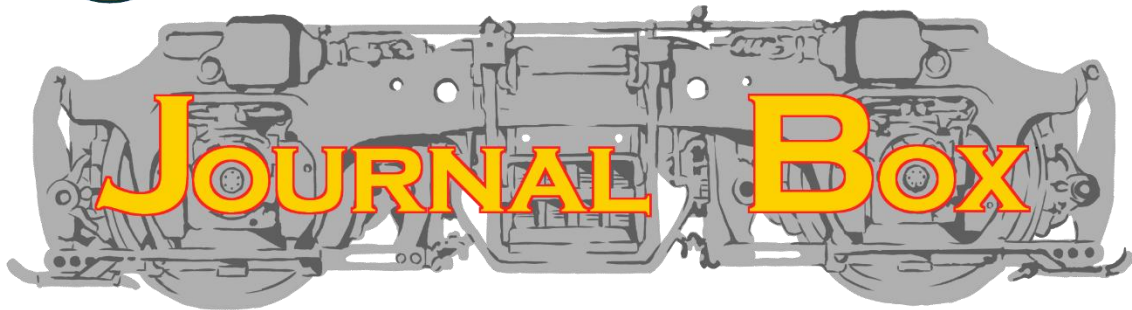




NMRA



OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF THE SUNSHINE REGION, NATIONAL MODEL RAILROAD ASSOCIATION
"THE BEST REGION UNDER THE SUN"



AMERICA
250 YEARS OF INDEPENDENCE

The Journal Box

Volume 67

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Front page: Celebrating the Semi quinentennial! Have a safe and happy 4th of July!

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From the President's Corner

President's Update: Reflecting on the Last Quarter

***Editor's Note:** To eliminate redundancy and to give the president a break I will take some of the highlights the president has passed on in the Telegraph Key and create a synopsis of those highlights and issues for the Journal Box. In my opinion it is unproductive to provide the same content for two separate publications, hence my approach for the upcoming President's Corner column. I will continue to do this for all of the upcoming quarterly publications.*

*For the month of **April** our President welcomed the coming of Spring and the following thoughts.*

He noted with some nostalgia those who preceded the current membership. In a hobby as active and engaging as ours, it's easy to stay focused on what's next, the upcoming meet, the next clinic, or the excitement of a regional convention. He chose to take pause and look back, not out of nostalgia, but out of respect. Respect for those who helped build the foundation of model railroading as we know it today. Respect for those who shaped our experiences, shared their knowledge, and gave freely of their time. To realize just as importantly, appreciation for those who continue that work right now, often quietly, but always meaningfully. He reminisced that over the past few years, we have said goodbye to members of our community who made a lasting difference. Some recognized across the NMRA and beyond, others were known primarily within their divisions, their clubs, or their circle of friends here in the Sunshine Region. Regardless of where their influence was felt, each contributed in a way that mattered. Each helped strengthen the fabric of this hobby. "A legacy isn't something you plan for and then forget about; it's something you actively build every single day."

At the same time, there are many among us today who are carrying that legacy forward. You won't always find their names in print or attached to national titles. But you will find them setting up layouts, leading clinics, mentoring new members, hosting operating sessions, and making sure that others feel welcome and included. These are the individuals who keep the heartbeat of model railroading strong at the local level, where it matters most. As a Region, we want to recognize and honor both groups, those we have lost and those who continue to serve. Together, they represent everything that makes this hobby special:

- Leadership at all levels
- Creativity and craftsmanship

"Don't wait for a position to validate your leadership. Begin where you are, serve with what you have, and let your impact speak for itself." This is where I would ask for your participation. We want to recognize these individuals properly, and that starts with you. Tell us about the people who have made a difference in your experience, past or present. Share the stories of those who mentored you, inspired you, or helped build your local modeling community. The more we share these stories, the more we all gain a deeper appreciation for the people behind the hobby. Who comes to mind for you? As we prepare for the Sunshine Region "Iron Horse" Convention in Ocala, take a moment to reflect on those who influenced your journey. Reach out if you can. Say thank you. And if the opportunity presents itself, step into that role for someone else. Because in the end, it's not just about the trains, the layouts, or the craftsmanship. It's about people. It's about connection. And it's about continuing a tradition built on mentorship, fellowship, and community. Press on, and Bravo Zulu to all of you who continue to make a difference. Respectfully, Dear Members of the Sunshine Region,

*For the month of **May** Andy commented on the upcoming convention*

Both conventions, the one in Chattanooga as well as ours in Ocala. He said it would be a new experience in Chattanooga considering the time and effort that everybody has put into it and that centrally located it would probably pull more people from across the country. He commented on the different directions by the organizers that are being taken, new concepts generated to provide a different experience of the event and additional offerings to make the event more family oriented. These gatherings strengthen not only our Region, but also the relationships and sense of community that make model railroading such a rewarding experience. The excitement surrounding T-TRAK's 25th Anniversary and preparations for the massive record-breaking layout planned for the 2026 National Train Show in Chattanooga are also perfect examples of what can happen when

people come together with a shared purpose. What began as a simple modular concept has grown into a worldwide movement that brings model railroaders together across clubs, regions, and even countries.

Here within the SSR, there are important discussions and developments underway that are focused on creating more opportunities for members to do what we enjoy most: running trains, participating in operating sessions, learning new skills, sharing knowledge, and enjoying the full model railroading experience together. One of the highlights on the horizon will be our 2026 SSR "Iron Horse" Regional Convention, taking place Thursday, October 15th through Saturday, October 17th, 2026, with our All Hands Member Meeting scheduled for Sunday morning, October 18th. Events like the Iron Horse Convention represent exactly what the Sunshine Region is all about.

*His thoughts for **June** and a reiteration of the following precepts of the purpose of the NMRA.*

As summer arrives and the pace of activity across the Sunshine Region continues to grow, I find myself increasingly encouraged by what I am seeing throughout our Region and the hobby as a whole. Everywhere I go, I see model railroaders coming together, sharing ideas, learning from one another, and most importantly, building community through a shared passion for trains. That spirit of mentorship, fellowship, and community remains at the heart of everything we do in the Sunshine Region. Over the past several months, I have had the opportunity to attend Division meets, club events, operating sessions, and gatherings where members from all walks of life came together around the hobby we love. What stands out most is not simply the layouts or the trains themselves, but the people. Experienced modelers helping newcomers. Clubs opening their doors to visitors. Conversations between members who may model different scales, eras, or railroads, yet instantly connect through a common enthusiasm for model railroading. At a recent meet we had NMRA members, non-members, local club participants, and even curious walk-ins all participating side-by-side. It was not about titles or positions, it was about participation, engagement, and enjoying the hobby together. That experience reinforced something important: the future success of the Sunshine Region depends on involvement from all of us. Our hobby is evolving, and the Sunshine Region is evolving with it. Across the NMRA, there is renewed focus on growing participation, modernizing engagement, and ensuring that model railroading remains relevant and welcoming for future generations.

As we move into the busy summer season, I encourage each of you to stay engaged and involved. Attend a Division meet. Visit a local club. Participate in an operating session. Share your knowledge with someone new to the hobby. Invite a friend to an event. Volunteer where you can. Every conversation, every clinic, every train run, and every helping hand contributes to building a stronger and more vibrant Region. The Sunshine Region continues to move forward because of you. Thank you for your continued passion, support, and dedication to the hobby and to one another. Together, we are building more than layouts and operating sessions. We are building friendships, preserving traditions, mentoring the next generation, and strengthening a community united by the love of model railroading. I look forward to seeing many of you at upcoming events, Division meets, and especially at Iron Horse 2026 this October. Until then, keep the trains running!

See you on the rails,

Andy J. Zimmerman
ATCS AW USN Ret
President, NMRA Sunshine Region

So, that is what was on the mind of our President during last quarter.

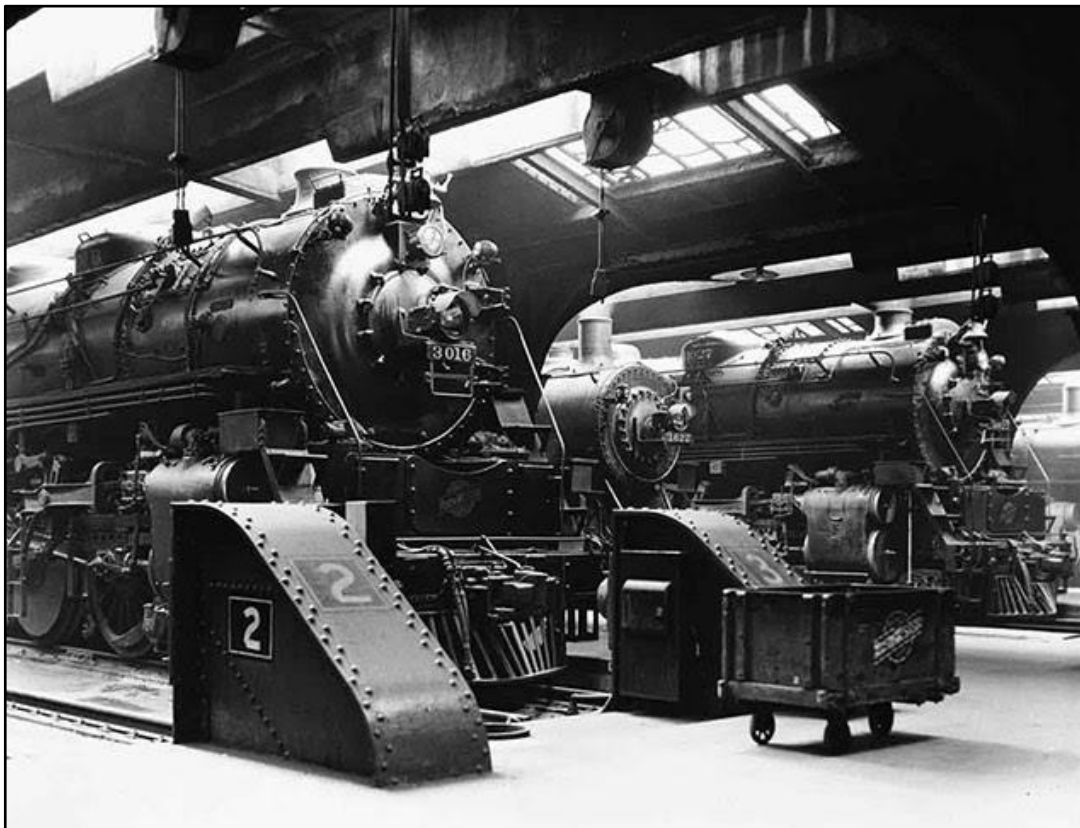
From the Editor's Desk

It has been a busy first half of the year, busier than I would like, but there are more things to get accomplished, so one cannot be too negative. I was hoping to have an article describing the trials and tribulations, chaos and meltdowns associated with a ground up layout build. But I thought it wise to abandon that idea to protect the innocent and not push anyone over the edge. I am being thoughtful of feelings, cognizant of the repercussions, one could say humane. But, oh what a story!

Back to the Journal Box, you will notice on the second page, typed in the Superintendent's block, that I have entered the Northern super's information is in red. This is to indicate the position is looking for a permanent leader, Allen Scott is looking for a successor to fill his position. Life and situations rise above the volunteer work of a superintendent and relief is sought for this position. If you feel you have the qualifications to lead, organize and mentor and you reside in the Northern Div. by all means step forward.

Another change, you will see as you read on there is no Showcase section in this edition, no one bothered to showcase anything. Hopefully, going forward more folks will be interested in providing something of interest. This continues and remains a challenge getting folks to provide information that can follow the edicts of Andy, We certainly have enough people with the skills to be featured in this section, maybe an incentive would get folks to participate. Any ideas??

Robert Leonard



Hefty Bumpers

This Quarter's Contributors

Mike Collins MMR - Another Collins' column for this edition, this time around Mike takes us back to his mancave, removed some of the Wayback machine, or at least reconfigured it and built a small layout. So in one room, a room festooned with memories

John Crellin - John has provided a method he uses to create signs for his structures in scale. Most commercial signs that come with kits are too thick and look too thick when attached to a structure. John uses tracing paper to reduce the thickness and create a more scaled to the structure look. Once again, he explains it Step by Step.

Bill Koster - This quarter we have two articles from Bill both written about the 7½ inch gauge he once manufactured. Bill describes the layout that he and friends built on his property, from grading the mainline to constructing bridges, trestles and tunnels. All methods are unique! His other offering is a look at the rolling stock, motive power he manufactured, promoted and sold. The product catalog is quite interesting.

David Leider MMR - David has been traveling again, this time I believe he was trying to take advantage of all the high-speed trains he could ride in a 500 mile radius. The destination this time, Europe, luckily, he took many photos of them and a few slow trains also. So, a photo journey awaits under David's article.

Frank Pecere - Chip to those close to him. Frank has written about his perspective and involvement in the NMRA, how he sees the Mentorship, Fellowship, and Community aspects of the NMRA goal. He gives a background to his journey, what he sees for the future and how he intends to carry himself and promote the hobby.



Pennsylvania Q2 Duplex, more horsepower than a 4-8-8-4



Probably one of the homeliest diesel designs to hit the rails, the Baldwin "Babyface", it came as a B-B and a C-C configuration, but neither improved its looks. Unlike last quarter's when I deemed a EMD F2 as pretty!



It isn't handsome, then you add insult to injury and make it look even worse.



E.C.H.O.E.S is a modular model railroad club located in Miami-Dade, Florida, dedicated to building and displaying our HO scale model railroad layout. Our purpose is to enjoy and promote the hobby of model railroading and preserve the history of railroading in South Florida. The club was started in the summer of 1985, with the goal of presenting a HO scale modular model railroad layout for display at "The Harvest Festival". Throughout the years, the layout has been displayed at regional conventions, four NMRA National Train Shows (Atlanta twice, Ft. Lauderdale, FL and Orlando), and other events in Miami Dade and Broward counties. We do running/operating sessions several times a year and welcome guests to join us. Membership is open and we welcome anyone who shares an interest and passion for Model railroading. For more information, please contact:

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“Painted On” Structure Signs with Tracing Paper

By John Crellin

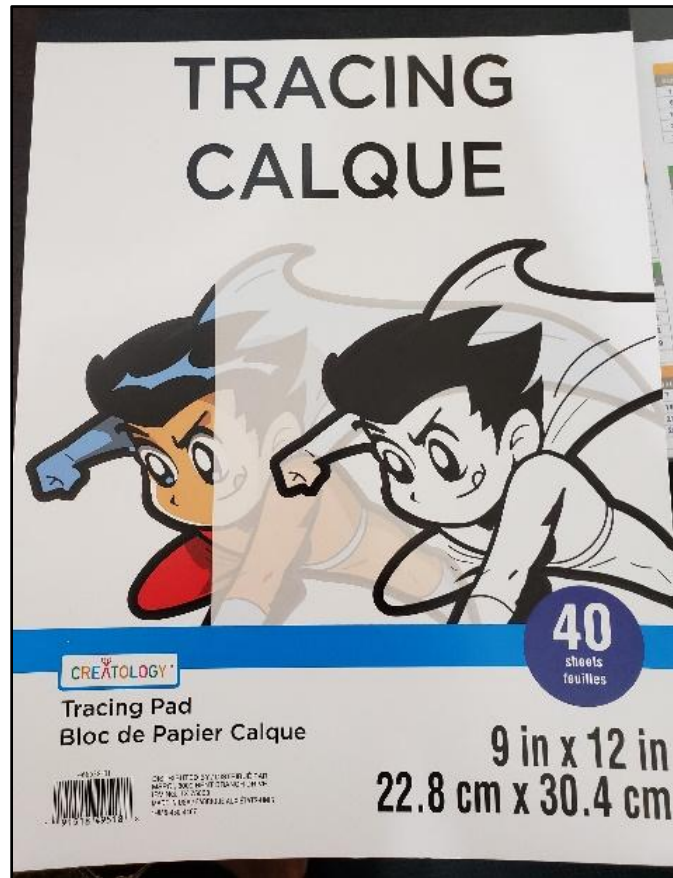


When building a structure, many times you want a sign to look “painted on”.

Many folks simulate this on their structures by printing the sign on regular copy paper and then sanding the back of the paper to make it thinner and then finally gluing it to the structure. The downside of this is you could sand through the sign and must print another one, or worse if you use the original paper copy and don’t copy or scan it for safety then you are out a sign.

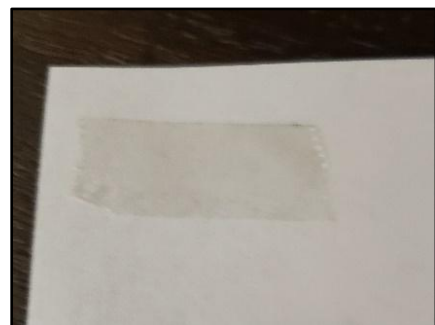
One solution I use is tracing paper. I print the sign on tracing paper, cut it out and glue it to the structure.... Looks painted on right away. Here are the steps.

1. It is best if the sign has been scanned as a PDF file into your computer or you can use the copier option on your printer.
2. Take a piece of tracing paper and cut it to fit 8 ½ by 11, equal to a sheet of regular paper.



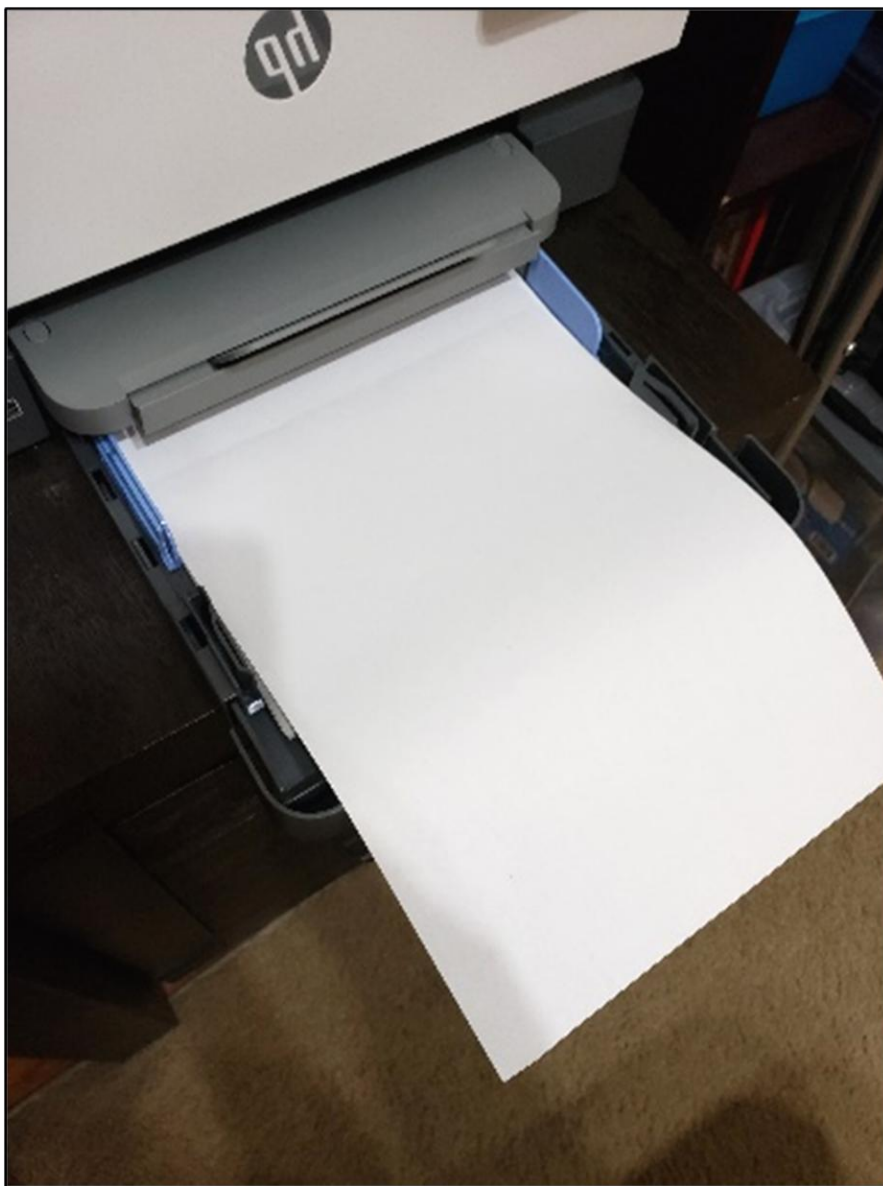
Most tracing paper is larger as is the brand pictured.

3. Attach it to a regular sheet of printer paper with double sided scotch tape.



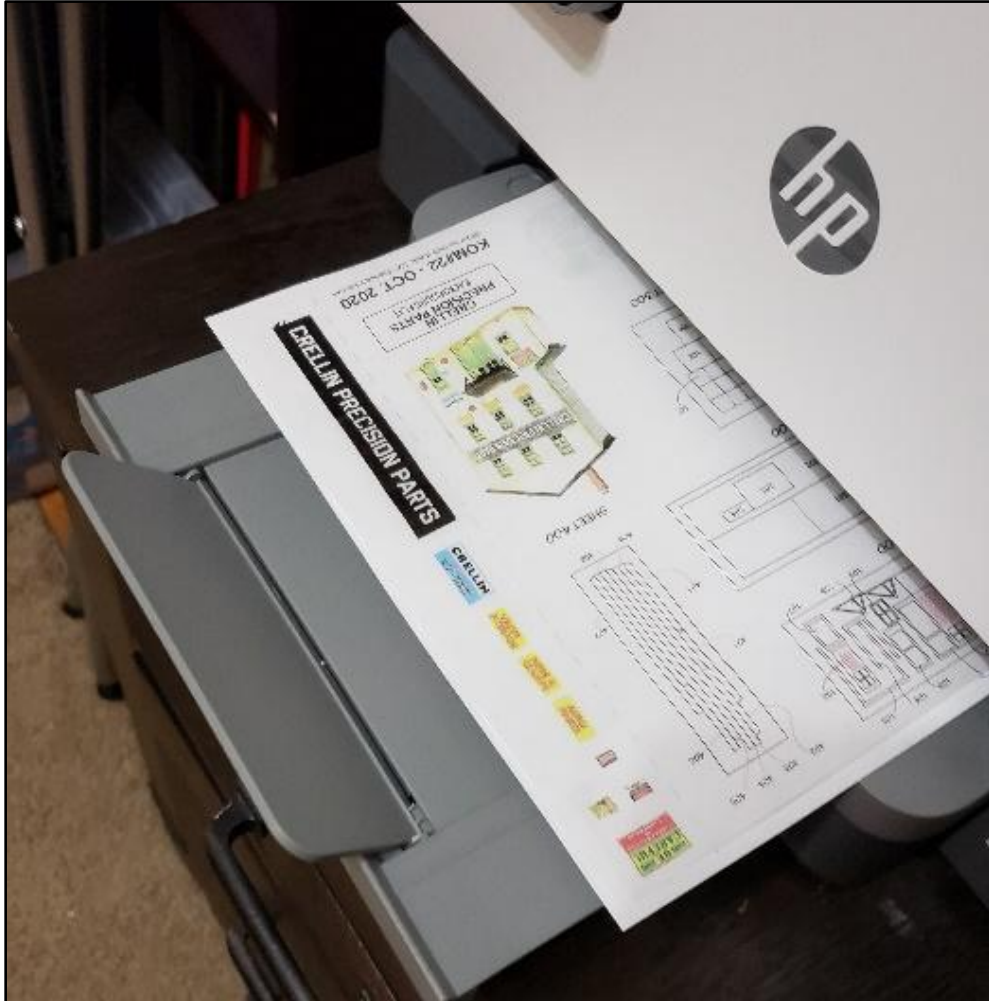
Tracing paper is usually too thin to be picked up by the printer rollers by itself. Therefore a bit of tape will hold everything in place.

4. Place the tracing paper/copy paper combination into the printer tray (usually tracing paper side down). If you are not sure. Mark a piece of paper with an X on the “up” side of a piece of paper and print a document. Where the X shows up will tell you which side the printer prints on.



Paper Alignment

5. Once the printing is complete let the documents sit for a while so the ink can dry.



Printed Copy

6. Cut out the sign. I use a small metal ruler to make sure my cuts are straight.



The finished sign

7. Using white glue (not school glue) and a little bit of water (basically dip the brush in water) to make the glue slide better, brush on glue to the back of the sign
8. Place the sign and GENTLY burnish the sign into the structure. I use a small burnishing tool, or you can use a toothpick. But be gentle and slow. The tracing paper can expand if you push too hard in any direction. The burnishing tool or toothpick also gets the sign to sit into the clapboard or other type of siding.
9. I also generally wet a paint brush with water and again GENTLY wash over the sign with the wet brush. Here you need to be very careful because it can pull up ink from the paper. Sometimes it works to your advantage as you can see in the final picture the burnishing made the sign look weathered.



Notice the clapboard seams exposed.



The Western Bay Railroad is a 950 square ft On30 layout in Port St Lucie. We meet almost every Tuesday evening. We are looking for new members to join our group. There are OP sessions & scenery that we are still working on. If you're a modeler and serious about learning, give us a try! Go to our website or contact Al Sohl MMR als0622@yahoo.com

'No dues, just a great experience'
westernbayrailroad.org



Observations

Half of the year is behind us, as I get older, so does time go quicker.

It was just yesterday that my children hit their 50s, and my granddaughters are in their very late 20s. It was just yesterday that I was in the midst of a blizzard in Massachusetts, time is flying. But, to the reason I mention this.

Have you ever thought, when running things through your mind, "I should have done that when I had the chance.", or "If I had only known, I would have done it before today.", "Snooze you lose." All things we could have done, should have done, but because of whatever the situation you changed your mind, the opportunity is lost, never to be recovered. If you have opportunities, if the opportunities are positive, take advantage, do not put them off. The one thing we can never change is time, if we lose that time now, there is no recovery, no turning back.

Mortality, how does that affect us, does it create a feeling of, I can do whatever I choose, whenever I choose. I can go on without remorse; there is always tomorrow. This past quarter, I realized that mortality is an inconvenient reality! We do not live forever, our surroundings today are not what they will be tomorrow, therefore take advantage of today. When the opportunity arises, we should take advantage and share, if possible, with others. Whether it be taking a trip, taking in a conversation, or merely sharing something, helping someone, take advantage. Most opportunities come around once, take advantage. If it comes around twice, you best damn well do it! What I once thought I could do is no longer a possibility, time has changed that, I cannot get back what I have lost.

How does this subject affect us in this hobby. Well, we all have knowledge, we all interact, we all are mortal and hence, what we do not share will not be shared, it is a loss. If you have the opportunity to share your knowledge, to share your abilities, your skills, take advantage. We have much to offer to each other, we have a curiosity of the unknown, and we all have the opportunity to listen, learn and share. We have the opportunity to address others, support others, mentor others. Take advantage of those around you who are close, or not so close, or curious, everyone has something to offer. Our coexistence is important in our daily life, in our hobby. One individuals' knowledge and guidance can help many, one is not above the other, we all have something to share. Take advantage!

That is my only observation this quarter, an observation driven by a loss that is very prevalent and prominent. Do not let time slip away, take advantage! Until the next time, enjoy life, Model 60.

Robert



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Mentorship, Fellowship, and Community

By Chip Pecere

I'm a big supporter of the NMRA. I was originally a member about 50+ years ago when it was just a simple magazine which was interesting to see what others were doing, along with Model Railroader and Railroad Model Craftsman. I'd spend a few hours in a local hobby shop; they had a coffee pot going and the longer we stayed the more we spent. Then, life got in the way and railroading took a back seat. A house and family kept me working seven days a week (I'm a retired photographer). I never stopped loving my model trains. I had an HO layout in the basement but just didn't have (or make) the time to get involved with a group or club. Standing



on the soccer field cheering on the kids was priority.

Retiring to Florida about 14 years ago I got involved with a model railroad group here in Vero Beach and had lots of fun all over again. We met weekly for lunch and helped each other with our railroads. One of the members told me about our upcoming Sunshine Region convention. I had to see what it was about. The clinics were good, people were great and I definitely walked away knowing more than when I arrived. That January was the Cocoa Beach meet with more clinics and an overall great experience. Once again, I couldn't get enough! Back then the SSR held a meeting on the last day of the convention, and I was able to sit in. I wanted to get involved and within weeks I was their web designer, building a new website. This was fellowship, working together for a common goal. I added an e-commerce account and pushed to get it done before we began advertising the next convention. We were on a roll. I attended a few division meets and always made new friends.

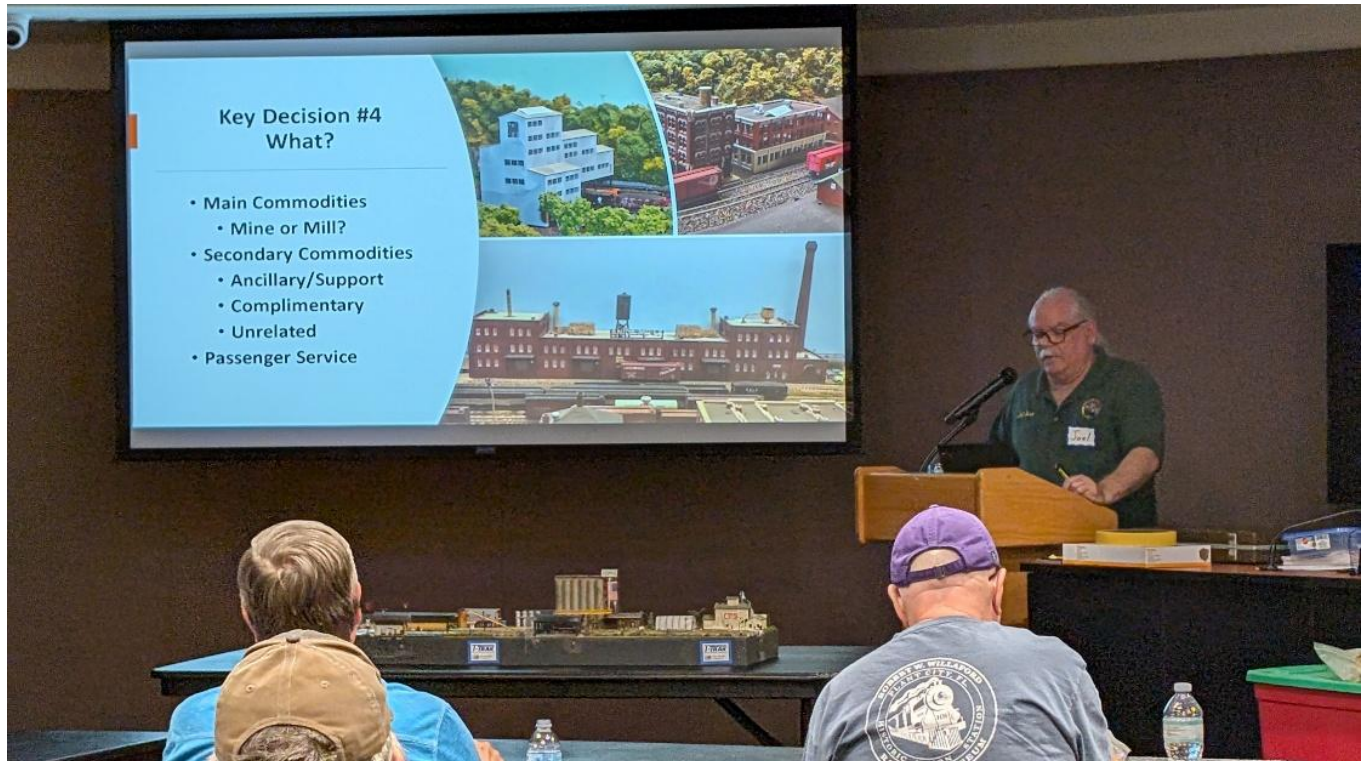


After a few years of my not being involved and no division meet scheduled, it was time to actually listen to what Gordy (NMRA Prez) and Andy (SSR Prez) had been preaching, you don't have to be a board member to get involved. I decided to hold an eastern division meet. Anyone can do this. Find a location (my local library rents a room with a projector and PA system). Try to calculate your cost and divide it by the amount of members you expect to attend. My thought was to keep the cost as low as possible. After all we are modelers who go to swap meets looking for a bargain! I did Publix hero rings, snacks, and drinks.



Make up flyers, post them in hobby shops, library, schools, grocery stores, have it posted in the Telegraph Key and Journal Box. When in business there's a three-foot rule! Everyone within three feet should know what you do. This is no different! I went to all the local train shows talking to fellow modelers and leaving flyers on the tables. I called friends and put together clinics. The next thing I knew, my first meet attracted over 30 attendees.

This can be done! Don't wait for someone else to do it. You don't have to say or think there's nothing happening in your area. You can do it! I'm having another meet on August 1st, 2026. (a little advertisement) Soon I plan to host op sessions on my Delaware Valley RR at home. For the little time it took to plan and publicize this event, I met new friends and once again learned more than when it began.



If you think hosting is not for you then go to a meet, or a local club and say hi to the members, ask questions. There's always someone doing the same thing that you're working on. There's always someone struggling with the same problems you have. With the technology that we now have available in model railroading, we all go through a learning curve. have questions understanding the new tech. Let's share ideas and encourage each other. I hope you get involved.

My European Vacation

By David J. Leider MMR

I just returned from Europe a short time ago. We (my wife and I, brother Dan and his wife) had been planning this for over a year. We visited the major cities in northern Italy before taking a Mediterranean cruise out of Livorno. Of course we traveled by train from city to city. Everyone has heard of how wonderful the European Railway system is and, although I have been to Europe many times, it keeps getting better.

All of our tickets were purchased online before we left and there were options between cities. Several different companies operate trains between the same cities, so depending on how much of a hurry you are in, you can choose which train you want.

We opted for high-speed and mainly used Italo. Italo Evo is Italy's first privately run high-speed service, established in 2012. Their newest train sets debuted in 2017 and are made of 95% recyclable materials. Top speed is 250km/Hr. and it can hold up to 480 people in its seven cars, Alstom SA built them. As of 2024 the company covers routes to 54 cities within Italy.

Trenitalia Spa is the primary train operator in Italy, established in 2000. It operates slower regional (think states) trains and as well as long distance high-speed trains. We took several of its trains for short distances. There are also a lot of commuter trains in each city.

When you enter the station, you find your train number and track. You already have your car reserved, so you look at the monitors along the track to see where your car number will stop. Once the train arrives, you throw your luggage aboard, find your seat and are all set. The windows were spotless, so I was able to take many photos with my I-phone. Fortunately, the sun was usually on the opposite side of my seat, so I had good lighting. I also took photos from inside the stations. These are just a sampling of the photos I took. Enjoy!



Commuter train at the Porta Nuova depot in Verona.
Nearly 77,000 people pass through Verona daily.



Another Italo train set at the Porta Nuova depot in Verona.
They run push-pull, an engine at each end.



I was surprised to see several vintage streetcars in Milan along with more modern ones.



Mak G2000BB freight locomotive at the Porta Nuova depot in Verona.
Built by Vossloh in Kiel, Germany.



Siemens freight engine at the Ferrara depot. It is owned by Deutsch Bahn, the German railroad.



Switch engine at the Livorno depot. Being a seaport, traffic is heavy.
It says Mercitalia Shunting & Terminal on the side.



Several trains in the Florence, Italy station. Santa Maria Novella is in the background.



Front of Italo train set at Milano Centrale station. It was designed to resemble a sleek, Italian sports car. Several other Italo train sets are in the background.



Italo train set at Bologna Station. They usually have seven cars.

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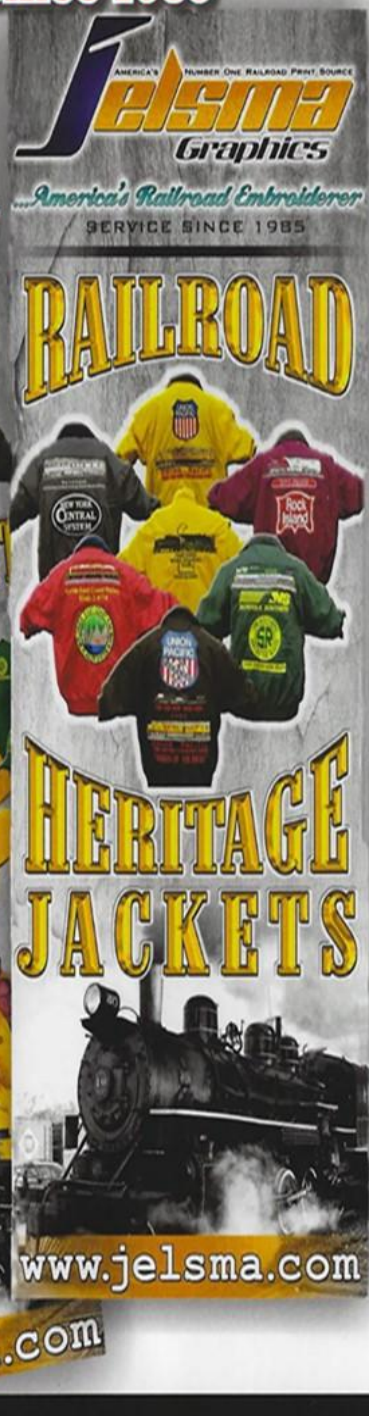
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I Enjoyed a Larger Scale

By Bill Koster

I have been a model railroader my entire life, starting in the 1930's when my parents bought me a Lionel train set. I have experienced many gauges and scales. I remember in the 1940's wanting the war to get over so that more model trains would be available. I joined a local OO gauge club. In 1946 I bought a Mantua "8 Ball Mogul" in HO gauge. I worked in a local hobby shop as a Lionel and American Flyer repairman. I remained in HO gauge and later I built an N gauge layout for our son. In the back of my mind were the thoughts of something bigger.

Attending the NMRA National Convention in Philadelphia in 1964 I visited the Pennsylvania Live Steamers, then in Paoli, PA. They were running $\frac{3}{4}$ " and 1" to the foot scale. I also stopped by the Bethlehem Pattern Shop where they were selling $1\frac{1}{2}$ " scale equipment. The larger size provided by the $7\frac{1}{2}$ " gauge appealed to me. I left their shop with a pair of trucks and other items with big plans. Returning home I went back to work on my HO layout in Homestead, FL. My layout had to be ready for the 1967 NMRA National Convention on Miami Beach. My layout was included in the layout tours. Finally in 1968, while attending the Sunshine Region Convention in Winter Haven I met Ed Pruitt, who was building a commercial $1\frac{1}{2}$ " scale railroad in North Palm Beach. With an invitation to his Flat River & Southern Railroad, upon the visit and soon after I started helping him with his railroad.

My first $7\frac{1}{2}$ " gauge project was a 4-wheel switcher and gondola. I tested it on Ed Pruitt's railroad, and then I laid a loop of track around my back yard. This ended my having to make the 115 mile trip to North Palm Beach to run my locomotive. Ed wanted me to make some items for his railroad, they included a signal system, powered switches, detailing a box car, a water tower and repowering his switcher. I started making patterns and having castings made for items that were not available.

I should explain a few things about this size of the hobby. We call it $1\frac{1}{2}$ " scale and in most of the USA the gauge is $7\frac{1}{2}$ ". New England, New York, New Jersey and Pennsylvania are using $7\frac{1}{4}$ " gauge. Neither are the true $1\frac{1}{2}$ " scale and many use 1.6" scale to make their $7\frac{1}{2}$ " gauge models more accurate. In the early 1960's there were no known tracks of this gauge in Florida. Suppliers of equipment were few and most modelers built their locomotives from scratch. The cars that were pulled behind the locomotive had little detail. A riding car might have consisted of a stout board on top of a pair of trucks. Also most models were live steam locomotives. Some of the live steamers frowned upon seeing a diesel type of model show up at a track event. Much of this has changed in the 50 years since, prototype details have become more important. The rolling stock receives accurate lettering. We now have more than a half dozen club tracks in Florida, and many suppliers are offering ready to run equipment. Diesel locomotives have become very popular, some with radio control and many with simulated diesel sound systems.

I felt the desire to build locomotives. I named my business Koster's Miniature Railroad Supplies. The word got around and I had a prospective customer. He wanted a steam locomotive. I explained to him that live steam locomotives require a lot of time building the fire, getting the pressure up and a lot of time shutting down. With an electric drive, he could operate immediately. He had an O gauge Santa Fe Hudson (4-6-4) and I said if you like I will build that with an electric drive system! That was quite gutsy on my part since I had little experience in that scale. Also my only machining experience was in high school shop class.

Building that locomotive was an experience! My plans were to build two locomotives and keep one for myself. I had a local shop weld up the frame. I made patterns and had castings made for the drivers, trailing truck, tender trucks, domes, smoke box front, side rods and more. I designed a drive using a 3 ¾ hp motor with chain drive to the rear axle. I installed a 1 hp motor running a compressor producing air to blow the whistle. To my amazement when I asked the owner how he wanted it painted, he specified Pennsylvania Railroad! I kept the second locomotive for several years until a customer talked me out of it. On his locomotive he wanted a larger bell, stainless steel banding and painted blue for Lehigh Valley.

Meanwhile with my interest in diesel types, I first built a GP-7. By 1972 I made an F-7 type locomotive. All of the bodies were 16 gauge steel and the curved nose took a lot of additional work. I needed a drive system and found surplus motors that were 3" diameter and 6" in length. Next, I made a gearbox to allow the motors to be axle hung like the prototype. As the business grew, I hired a number of local teenagers to help in manufacturing.

To meet customer demands I made many types of locomotives including New York Central tunnel motors, other diesel types and even a toy FA type locomotive. I made freight cars of many types including gondolas, hopper cars, box cars, tank cars, flat cars and cabooses. I made a few passenger cars including stainless steel cars and standard steel type.

Finally, after a dozen years in business, I decided it was time to retire. My retirement from AT&T after 30 years would be in just a few years and I wanted to get ready for that. I sold the business to one of my customers in Oklahoma City. He combined my business with another supplier under the name Cannonball Enterprises. Sadly, I believe this business has closed.

This did not mark my exit from the hobby since I had plans to build two new railroads, one in Sebring at my retirement home and one near Boone, NC at my summer home. Both railroads became quite extensive with 32 switches and 4,000 feet of track in Sebring and 24 switches and 3,000 feet of track in North Carolina.

Finally, with age taking a toll on me, in 2004 I sold our summer home complete with track. Later in 2014 I sold our Sebring home and railroad to another railroader. About that time I had a number of ankle surgeries which resulted in a staph infection. I couldn't fight the infection and lost the ankle. I could no longer work on the larger scale trains and have returned to HO gauge at my Wildwood, Florida home. Looking back I find it hard to believe that my small company produced so many cars and locomotives.

I will say that constructing railroads in 7 ½" gauge provided me with some of the most enjoyable times of my life. The hobby, as with most hobbies, can be expensive. On the other hand, I have run into people who have built locomotives with scrap parts for very little money. You tend to spend no more than you can afford. One inexpensive way to get into the hobby is to join a local club. You will be welcomed, even without a locomotive. This gives you a chance to partake in the enjoyment our great hobby has to offer. For the location of the tracks and equipment for sale, you can go to Discoverlivesteam.com. Should you want to contact me I can be reached at Purlear@AOL.com

Following are pictures of some of the equipment that my company built. The girls are included in the photo to help you realize the size of this scale equipment.

Editor's Note: I am sure the sole purpose of putting a girl lounging in a gondola, or stretching across the length of a passenger car. Or perched upon an EMD F3, GP 40, GP 7, or a caboose, was to illustrate dimensions. Sure, it was!

Locomotives by Bill Koster



Our son running my first locomotive



My first GP-7



A later GP-7 with Tara Archer



Foster Bond & Fred Clark with 4-6-4



ATSF 4-6-4 lettered PRR per request

KOSTER'S MIMIATURE



ATSF 4-6-4 repainted Lehigh Valley



My first F-7, ATSF #308



Second ATSF #308



ATSF #312



ATSF #314

RAILROAD SUPPLIES



First 3 unit F-7's



Second 3 unit F-7's



Clinchfield F-7



Pennsylvania RR F-7



C & N W E-8



New York Central GP-7



Santa Fe GP-40 #3456



Family Lines GP-40 #1699



Clinchfield GP-7



Bill with Santa Fe GP-40 #3457



Mountain Valley Line GP-40 #655



Norfolk Southern GP-7



Santa Fe GP-40 #5838



Lake Meauwatika & Wildwood GP-40



Santa Fe GP-40 #3455



Chessie System GP-40 #4128



Lake Meauwatika & Wildwood FP-7



Santa Fe GP-40 #3456



Florida East Coast GP-40 #415



Santa Fe 4 wheel switcher #1277



SDP – 40



Blue Ridge Summit F-7's built 1996



Tropicana Reefer



Soo Line 70 ton Switcher



Seaboard Alco S-4 built 2008



Hawaiian 4 wheel cane car



New York Central S-1 #144



One of 6 FA's built as a group 2008



Pennsylvania Railroad Flat Car



New York Central S-1 #3408



DL&W Box Car



Missouri Pacific Gondola



Toy FA NYC Diesel



Pennsylvania Box Car



Molly Railroad Gondola



Union Pacific 40 foot Gondola



Union Pacific 50 foot Gondola



Atlantic Coast Line twin Hopper



6 Gondolas for the AR&SE Railroad



Pine Valley 50 foot Gondola



Southern twin Hopper



Chicago & Northwestern Gondola



Rock Island 50 foot Gondola



Family Lines twin Hopper



Missouri Pacific Gondola



Unlettered 50 foot Gondola



Baltimore & Ohio twin Hopper



Santa Fe Gondola



Katy twin Hopper



Chesapeake & Ohio triple Hopper



Santa Fe quad Hopper



Gulf Oil Tank Car



Santa Fe Caboose – full detail



Weyerhaeuser triple Hopper



Riding Car built 1995



Santa Fe Wide Vision Caboose



Texaco Tank Car



Toy Box Caboose



Chessie System Caboose



Warren Tank Car



Santa Fe Caboose – no rivet detail



Chessie System Caboose



Mountain Valley Tank Car



Santa Fe Caboose – full detail



Canadian National Caboose



Mountain Valley Caboose



Erie Caboose



Observation Car



Passenger Car – Steel Frane - Aluminum



Passenger Car – Steel Frame – Stainless Sides



Observation Car – Steel Frame – Stainless Sides



**Business Observation Car – Stainless
Custom 6 wheel trucks**

NOTE

The preceding pictures show some of the production of KOSTER'S MINIATURE RAILROAD SUPPLIES from 1970 to 1982 and other work by Bill since then.

The Blue Ridge Summit

By Bill Koster

OK, I will admit it, though I have lived in Florida over 70 years, the heat of summer still gets to me. That is why in the 1970's I thought of a summer home in the Carolinas. During my meet in Homestead in 1980 Bob Fink's wife, Helen, mentioned a cabin on three acres next to where they were moving. The price was right and I bought the place.

Our summer home was on the side of a mountain, with most of the property sloped anywhere from 30 to 45 degrees. Even so, I dreamt of building a 7 ½" gauge railroad on the property. I mentioned that to Thomas Bissett when he visited and he looked at me and said "Bill, you can't build a railroad here." That comment made me think even more about the possibility.

I realized steep grades and sharp curves would be needed. Operating diesel locomotives with 4 wheel trucks, sharp curves can be used. If the train is not too heavy, the locomotives will handle steeper grades. I had already modified my cabin by building a basement under it. I made an opening into the basement and ran a track into it. This worked for a year or two. I knew I needed a separate building to store the trains.



When the track went into my basement

The land near the cabin was relatively level and I built my first track there. Next I planned how I could go through the nearby woods, following the contour of the land. I had a backhoe operator grade the right of way for about 300 feet. The route went to the Northwest corner and curved back. It was necessary to use about a 30 foot radius.

There was a gap that had to be bridged and Bob Fink and I built a timber trestle.

I had a curve on the track and decided it was a good location for a depot. It was 6' x 10' in size and had a working bathroom. We called the station "Big Ivy", a local name.



Big Ivy station overlooking the valley

Another gap appeared before we could get to the driveway. A friend, Tomm Tomlinson said he would help us build a truss bridge. I designed a 32 foot Parker Truss. Tomm, Bob Fink and I built the bridge in Tomm's shop in 5 days. We made the bridge in eight sub assemblies to allow us to transport it to location. We called the finished bridge, Tomlinson Bridge.



Tomm Tomlinson bridge, a 32' span

We crossed the driveway to access a field which was somewhat level. Bob came up with the thought of tunneling under the driveway. I thought it was a crazy idea to begin. I mentioned to Bob that if he could locate two old gasoline tanks we could do it. He found two tanks 5'6" diameter and 24 feet long. I transported them, one at a time, on Tomm's trailer.

We called upon our favorite back hoe operator and he cut a trench large enough for the tanks and placed them. After a lot of forming and concrete pouring we had portals and retaining walls.



Visiting live steamers from the Mid-South Live Steamers

We crossed under Tomlinson Bridge and proceeded through the woods. At this point I did not want to bring in power equipment. The slope was too steep and I did not want to take out many trees. Grading was done by Bob and I, digging into the hillside and using what we dug out to make a level embankment. We went towards the other end of my property and considered a return loop. For that we needed a cut in the hillside followed by a bridge 85 feet in length. Bob and I dug the cut. We can tell you, digging a cut on the side of a mountain with rocks, roots and clay can be a challenge!

For this bridge I decided on trestles until we got above 8 feet, then angle iron deck type with an eight foot through girder span in the middle. This bridge was named after a deceased railroad friend. It became Frushour Memorial Bridge.

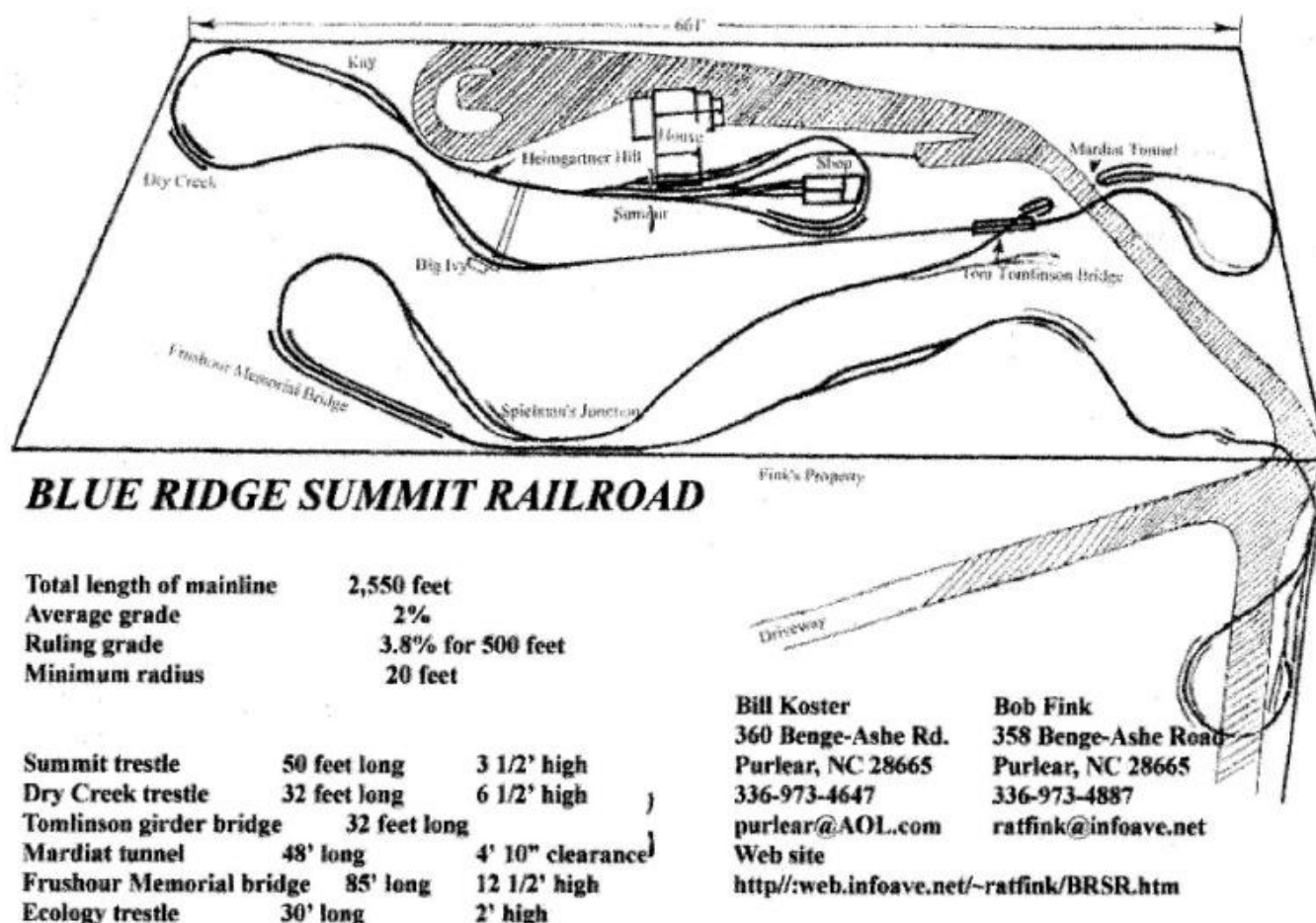


Bob is saying "Are we going that high?"



My diesels with a mixed freight on Frushour Bridge

We followed down the hillside until we got to Bob's property. Then we crossed the driveway, built a small station and a reverse loop. I measured the distances, placing a milepost every 100 feet. From end to end the track measured over 2,500 feet. This meant each round trip was about a half mile in length.



The Blue Ridge Summit track plan

Bob and I spent 10 years of spring and fall (1986-1996) building the railroad. Summers I could be found helping on a 15" gauge railroad in Wisconsin.

The railroad had four passing tracks and Bob installed an automatic signal system. The ruling grade was 3.8% and the sharpest curves about 25-foot radius. We held some small meets there and had visiting steamers as well. I can't remember them all, but I can remember Joe Scales, Bill Hays, Tom Keenan, Dick Tomlinson, Bill Farmer and Steven Marshall visiting. I know there were many other visitors, I wish I had kept a log. I received many nice comments about my mountain railroad.

Finally by 2004 I said to Alice that I wanted to sell the property and railroad. At 72 years of age it was too much to take care of two homes and two railroads. The property was bought by one person who has since sold it to a new owner. I have heard reports that he is making up for deferred maintenance and will have the railroad operating again.

Both Bob Fink and I feel that some of the best years of our lives were when we were working on the Blue Ridge Summit.

South Florida Railway Museum

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Mule RR

South Florida Regional &
Metro



This is after the fact, if you didn't make it, shame on you (hopefully you went to the show)!
Maybe they will keep the graphic and change the dates?



What is the difference between the Virginian RR AG and the Chesapeake & Ohio's Alleghany?

New Special Layout Aka "The Train Room"

Michael Collins, MMR

Here is a combination fact and fiction story for your enjoyment. I am building a revised New York Harbor Railroad – Lehigh Valley 2 after a 30-month shutdown due to taxes, declining business, competition and finally bankruptcy, plus real personal issues.

Editor's Note: This submission of Mike's is his 100th across the spectrum of the hobby publications. From trade magazines, organizational magazines, specialized seminars, clinic descriptions, videos, the gamut. He has been published in magazines that are no longer published, his articles have outlasted the paths that brought the article to reading public.

Design Notes

4/20/2026
MC

TRACK PLAN
NY HARBOR - LV RR (PART 2)
NOTT HAVEN - THE ARONX (REVISED) RENOVATED
4 CAR SWITCHING LAYOUT

Technical Notes
EACH BLOCK EQUALS 3 INCHES

WORK BENCH LAYOUT
5' x 5' area with 2x4 frame, wood supports, and brackets.

FRAME CONSTRUCTION
2x4 frame with wood supports and brackets.

pen+GEAR

NY Harbor - LV RR - Part 2 - a piece of old wood
Layout 7' x 5' (+ 18" smaller)
Revised Business (due to taxes) + Renovated
Nott Haven, The Bronx, down to 28y, then there +
1. Bolt the 2 shelves together (Backdrop)
2. Sand down cabinet top raised edge
3. Attach Backdrop to the wall (meet base) (will use the gap later)
4. Attach base to cabinet, supports and brackets
5. Add 2 brace supports to ends
6. Paint the base black
7. Install sidewalk/road access
8. Attach Trolley tracks (poster board)
9. Attach fence between road + RR
10. RR tracks (Main line, then road bed) (see Track Plan)
mid/foreground + dirt ballast.

WORK PLAN
5' x 5' area with 2x4 frame, wood supports, and brackets.

Construction
+ Enclose right side 26" road/kid's (Backdrop)
+ Attach wall edge of Hudson River (all water bottom of wall)
+ Paint the floor gaps brown.

Purpose: keep my hand in the hobby and design more of my work.

Prep office so Start building May 1, 2026

Every functional layout starts with a plan, the "Givens and Druthers".

Background

After going through a sad life experience with my wife passing away and continuing some difficult times with my medical problems, I decided to construct a small model railroad display for enjoyment and to keep my hand-in the hobby using equipment that I didn't sell. The previous layout was referenced in a YouTube video "*Michael Collins model railroad Part 12*". Whatever I need going forward, I'll need to purchase to fill-in.

Plan

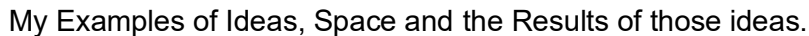
As with every plan, I increased my parameters to do a 2.5 foot by 7-foot renovated area in the Mott Haven section on the Harlem River of the Bronx in New York City.

This actually happened many years ago when three former railroads shut down in this area. This time my railroad will be without the car-float system. The NYHRR-LV 2 will be on a branch line (end-to-end) connected to an off-site railroad interchange. This will be a five-business switching layout, nine manual ground throws (I prefer Caboose Industries N scale for better size), using four or five freight cars inbound and outbound, a Monday to Friday operation without scheduled times during the daytime. I'll use variable inbound and outbound dispatch lists. A small caboose (an old logging award winning unit with an interior) will be attached for the conductor or the trainman to stop traffic at crossings without lights and gates. Sometimes overtime runs on weekends are needed depending on business.



It is still a registered railroad, even though it has fallen.

First, thinking about what to cover. How much area do I have in the Train Room. I then did some sketches, drawing out what it could look like.



After determining what I planned to use for a base, three bookcases. I measured the lumber needed, then went to Home Depot to select the different wood sizes and decided on quarter inch fiber hardboard for the base, which they cut to size. I also ordered track from Walthers and decided to use Walthers code 83 equipment, it was expensive, it was sticker shock! I haven't bought track, or track accessories in nine years.



With the two bookcases screwed together and the third bookcase wedged between the second bookcase and the wall, we have a base. Since the third bookcase is shorter, I used a wood support to level the three. The frame is screwed and glued (premium wood glue), along with two metal braces. Remember, I am not a carpenter, maybe a handyman.



Before securing the top in place, I fastened the backdrop. I am reusing the original background, if it appears familiar, it is and a possible MR magazine article. Rather than unloading the shelves, I screwed the backboard from the inside and left space for the top and sidewalk.



The quarter inch fiberboard in place before gluing.



After applying glue to the fiberboard, I used an eclectic group of weighted items waiting for the glue to set. Since I am not a carpenter, I used what was available, 20 bottles of iced tea, two bottles of pennies (my retirement fund), two, two-gallon bottles of lemon ammonia and a silver anniversary locomotive with a bottle of wine.



I painted the base and frame a brown shade of ground color. Mocking up the track in-place determines placement before the process of 'dig we must' begins. The holes represent the coal delivery pit and an inspection pit for the engine house, the Dremel was smoking.



A top-down view of the actual track plan. Notice the tracks to the right have been changed from the track plan graphic. Plus, you can see the coal pit on the left and the inspection pit on the right before the top is put over the interior.

With temporary power hooked up (DC for the trolley, DCC for the diesel), both units worked.



Time for scenery and structures ... plus streets and roadwork.
 I certainly got my monies worth of the backdrop ... many years, around eight with the previous layout, three clinics (National in Orlando, Division at Fort Lauderdale and a Regional at Ocala).



To represent the road around the streetcar track, I cut cardstock to fit up to the rails and painted it a pavement color before gluing it in place.



My method of building structures ... First, a good breakfast, listening to your favorite music, then taking your meds. Second, take a shower, get dressed. Third, build the kit to the directions printed plus add your touches.

Editor's Note: *The sequence in which Mike builds is very, for the lack of a better word, unique!*



This is the results of a Life-Like structure with Collin's embellishments and additions. The William Penn Hotel sits next to the riverwalk and the seawall (the Harlem River).



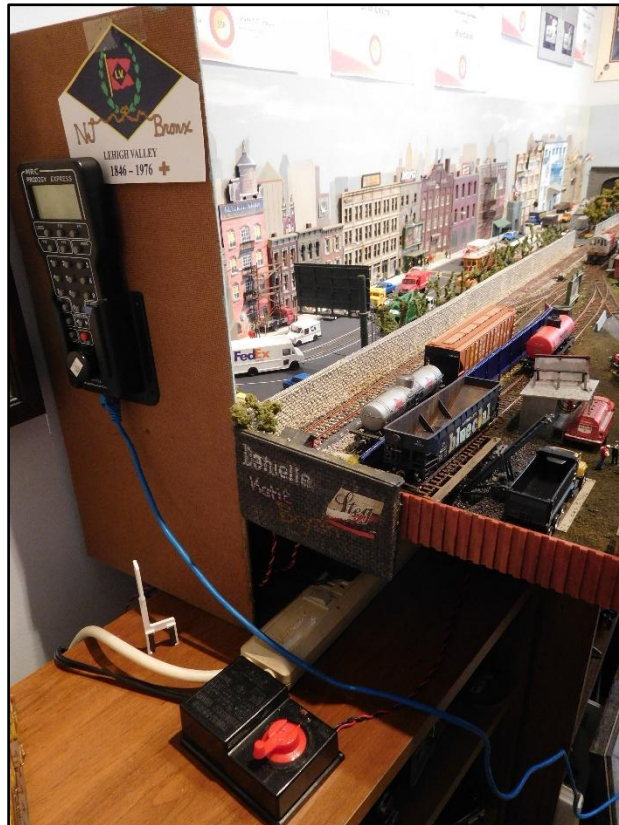
Since the great-grandchildren are not visiting, I am using their crib/toddler bed with a board under the top as a support bench ... very convenient. Back to constructing scenery.



After burning some midnight oil, here are the results. The small trees came from Hobby Lobby, adding something different for the residential section of town. To the left is Fred's Creekside Fuel company and Rex Freight.



The other half of the railroad has Planters & Pillsbury unloading (partially hidden by the engine house). Then the dual team tracks. Overall, the railroad is around 96 percent finished.



Here is the DC powerpack for the trolley. I tell visitors the streetcar runs on battery rather than overhead catenary, the walkaround MRC DCC controller powers all track in front of the wall. I'll be using the RIX magnetic uncoupling device, due to the tight (prototypical) track spacing.



Got to go catch the bus (that NYC bus cost \$75, sticker shock again!).



FDNY just received its new E One ladder truck.



Here is the ladder earning its keep outside of the Penn Hotel

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