



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



Volume 67   Winter 2025

## The Journal Box

### Volume 67

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Sunshine Region Members 426

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Front page: To all the members I reach with this publication **HAPPY NEW YEAR!!** I hope the future holds health and happiness in your lives.

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## From the President's Corner

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### 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 October our President encouraged the membership to attend the upcoming convention, promoting it with the following.*

Dear Members of the Sunshine Region,

Well, it is finally upon us, October is here and that means it is Convention Time!! Time to show off the team's hard work and dedication to bringing you the best the Sunshine Region has to offer. We've gone the extra mile to create an environment that emphasizes our Region's core values of Mentorship, Fellowship, and Community.

He went on describing the facets of the convention, the inclusion of the ECHOES modular group, the emphasis on operations and a cursory schedule of events. The Friday Meet & Greet, Saturday evening banquet, All Hands Membership meeting Sunday morning and the Sunday Layout Tours. The closing statement FOR October was, "This is your chance to be part of something truly special—an event that celebrates everything we love about model railroading while building the future of our Region. Let's keep the momentum going: support your division meets, bring a friend, and join us in Ocala. Together, we're building something extraordinary."

*In November Andy followed up with a report of the convention activities and it is worth repeating.*

Dear Members of the Sunshine Region,

Over 85 attendees came together to celebrate model railroading, fellowship, and fun at what many have called the best Sunshine Region convention in years — maybe since the 2017 National in Orlando! The ECHOES group absolutely blew everyone away with their operations sessions on their massive layout — a true highlight for both seasoned operators and newcomers alike. Clinics were nothing short of spectacular — both in-person and virtual. Presenters from across the U.S. and Canada shared their expertise, creativity, and passion, covering every aspect of model railroading imaginable. The Contest Room was packed — in fact, it hosted more models than Novi! Add to that a huge raffle with generous donations from Trainz, ScaleTrains, and many others. Saturday night's Banquet was sold out! It was a celebration of achievement, fellowship, and recognition. We presented numerous awards — including the President's Award, a Meritorious Service Award, and even crowned another Master Model Railroader! None of this would have been possible without the hard work and dedication of your Sunshine Region Board members and volunteers. They worked tirelessly behind the scenes to ensure every detail came together — from registration and logistics to clinics, awards, and everything in between. The feedback has been overwhelming — words like "fantastic," "best in a decade," and "inspiring" keep pouring in. New members and first-time Conventioneers commented that this was well worth it and were glad they experienced it! To everyone who attended, thank you for making it special. And to those who didn't... well, we'll see you next year. Mark your calendars now — October 8-10, 2026 — and get ready for another Sunshine convention.

*For December Andy wished us all the best.*

Dear Members of the Sunshine Region,

As we move through this season of gratitude, I hope each of you enjoyed a wonderful Thanksgiving surrounded by family, friends, and the people who matter most. Model railroading brings us together, but it is the fellowship, the shared stories, and the support we give one another that make the Sunshine Region truly shine. Now, Christmas is right around the corner, and with it comes the excitement of the holidays, year-end traditions, and a moment to reflect on what we've accomplished together. Before we know it, we'll be welcoming a brand-new year—a year filled with new opportunities, new challenges, and new innovations. 2026 is shaping up to be an exciting time for model railroaders across the country. Many of you are already planning trips to Cocoa Beach for Prototype Rails, and of course, January brings the massive Amherst Railway Society Railroad Hobby Show—one of the largest shows in the United States, if not the largest. It's always an incredible experience and a great way to kickstart the year with inspiration, ideas, and camaraderie.

You may have also heard about the NMRA's rebranding efforts currently underway. This process is active and ongoing, and you'll begin noticing changes across our websites, publications, and general organizational materials. A key part of this effort is the newly introduced NMRA logo. Do you like it? What are your impressions? We want to hear from you—your thoughts, your ideas, and your feedback matter as we move forward together. Please don't hesitate to share your opinions with me directly. As always, I am here and welcome your comments at [SSRPrez@nmra.org](mailto:SSRPrez@nmra.org). Thank you for your continued support, your enthusiasm, and your commitment to both the Sunshine Region and the NMRA. May this holiday season bring you peace, joy, and time to enjoy the trains under your tree—or running around your layout. Wishing you a Merry Christmas, a joyful holiday season, and a bright start to the New Year!

So, that is what was on the mind and thoughts of our President of what took place this last quarter.

See you on the rails,

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



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## From the Editor's Desk

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Let me get my convention comments out of the way at the beginning of this column. My impression of the convention is positive, it was a success in my opinion, I didn't hear any grumbling. The venue, everything underneath one roof was a big plus, an onsite restaurant, a bar, no need to venture out. The variety of clinics and the addition of virtual clinics to the mix was a plus. Audio / visual was at 90%, there are always hiccups. The banquet was well attended, well catered, an appropriate amount of time offered to the different facets of the event, I didn't hear any complaints. Although there was a run on the cheesecake desserts, some took unfair advantage of being close to the doors. The general meeting the following morning of the members provided insight, some comments, some suggestions, that shall be implemented for the next gathering.

All in all, it was an enjoyable weekend, you get to see some people that only a convention can bring together. You get to learn something, you get to view the skills and expertise of those who enter into the contest room, or listen to at the front of the room. I personally appreciate the time and effort they put into the hobby, whether it be psycho-motor skills, or verbal skills utilized. For those who use their hands, you get to join in with them in their moment when the rewards of their efforts are acknowledged at the award ceremony. Those who put themselves in front of the room spend as much time putting a presentation together as they would if they were building a model. With all of that said, I believe the coming convention should be as successful as the last, therefore those of you who missed it, I hope you are inspired by the positive reports that you have heard and read and find yourself at the next convention, again in Ocala.

Last month I commented on the incorrect volume number on the cover of the Journal Box and that it would be corrected at the turn of the year, well here we are. Remember the Volume 67 issue, not Volume 87 confusion of the current year, opposed to the volume year? The region is not 87 years of age, so this edition of the JB is numbered 67 and for each year the Sunshine Region is in existence it shall follow with the corresponding year on the cover. Or, at least as long as I am doing it! So, for those of you who print this and archive it with the past 66 years of the Journal Box on your bookshelf, leave a space and a note!

Speaking of the volume number of the edition, I wrote a piece on the first five years of the region in the last quarter. From this I get an email addressed to the editor, my first "Letter to the Editor" (it's framed) from a charter member of the region, a Mr. Bill Koster. Bill said the history reminder took him back and he provided his own recollections. Which I am going to reprint because he speaks of more history of the region within his letter. Also, he provided an article describing a layout visit to his home and how the visitors arrived.

On another note, it would be interesting to know how many of the charter members are still with us, considering their age when they got the region off the ground in the early 60s. I spoke to Larry Weigel of the ECHOES group about Bill Koster and he well remembers the influence Bill had on the region. Also, speaking of Bill, I will be writing a book review of Bill's publication "Folkston and *The Funnel*", a spiral bound offering, that looks at more than just rail fanning opportunities, but also some history and local color of the town.

With this year coming to an end I hope all of our members who had projects in the works finished their projects. Along with the projects, hopefully they accomplished all the goals they envisioned, completed all their New Year's resolutions and have new goals envisioned for the coming year. Now is the time to get the juices flowing and plan your models for evaluation at the next convention. I know the paperwork is a PIA, but you have got to tell those evaluators what you did and how you did it, you can't let them guess your work. HAPPY NEW YEAR!

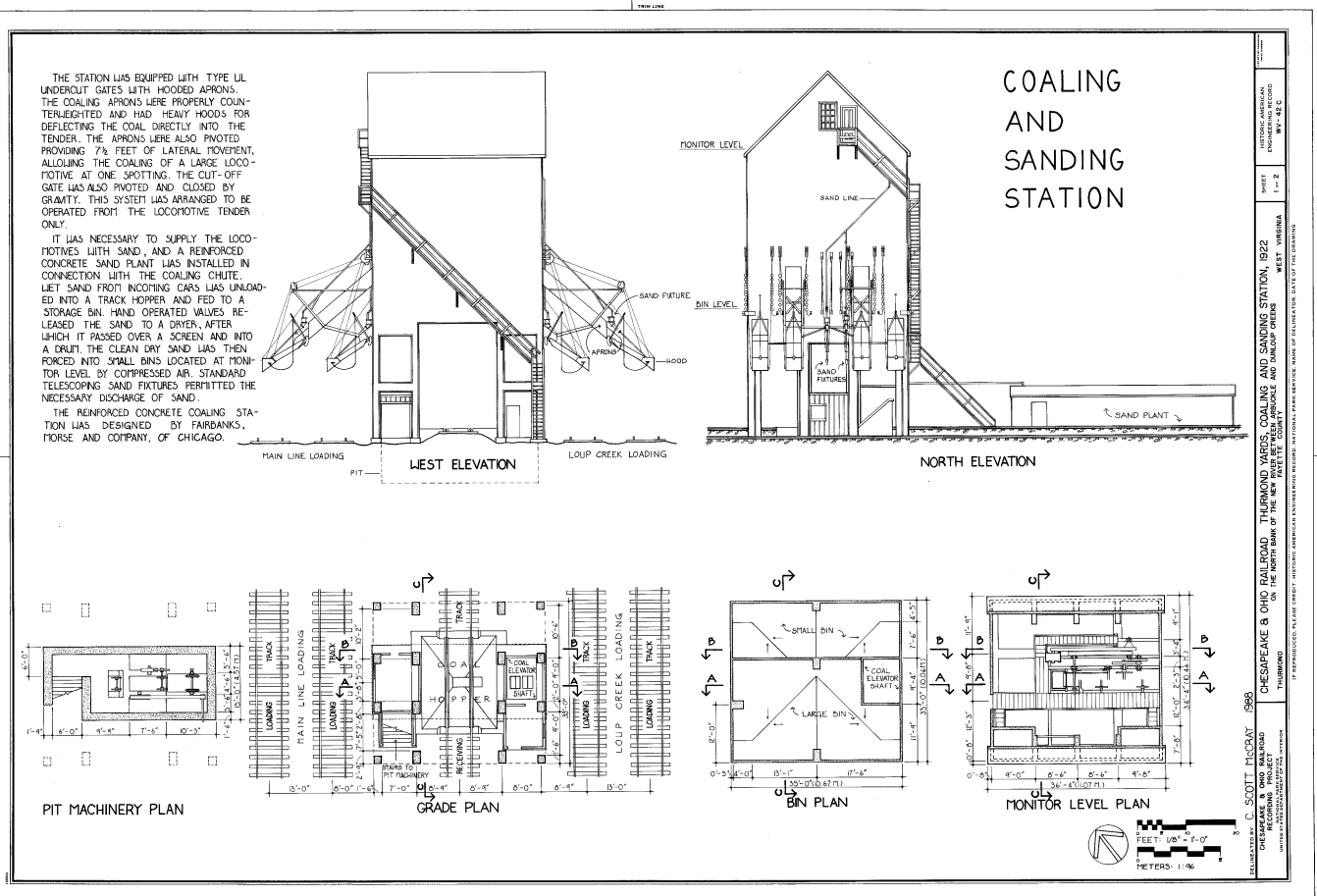
Robert Leonard

## This Quarter's Contributors

**Mike Collins MMR** - Mike writes this quarter of different facets of model railroading, not detailing a model, or weathering it, rather he speaks of documenting. With his article "How to Write a Story ,,,," focuses on preserving the process, both in words and images. He explains his way of writing a story for a publication, from concept to manuscript. He also describes the parameters he follows in his photography with "Model Railroad Photography – 101" and provides suggestions and sources for guidance in getting that picture, just right.

**David Leider MMR** - David has gone off on another trip, another tick mark on his "Bucket List". This time he traveled out west and has once again taken a visual record of the trip. His story of the Durango & Silverton railroad is a good look, once again I thank him for his participation.

**Bill Koster** - Bill gives us a view of the past, past SSR that is. The last edition of this publication I wrote a reduced history of the first five years of the region, well Bill Koster read it and it brought back memories. So, for this edition, he will, via text and pictures, give us a look of his involvement with the region. He has provided a short recap of the early days as well as a one-off event that probably has never been replicated anywhere but here.



I recently traveled to Thurmond, WV, thus the inspiration to place this engineering drawing of the still standing coal tower. One of the New River Sentinels



Here is a weathering challenge



Another

**Editor's Note:** *The following is the letter I received from Bill Koster acknowledging the article I wrote covering concisely the first five years of the region. Following his letter is the article he wrote about the event in Homestead of his layout tour.*

To the editor,

I thoroughly enjoyed your review of the first five years of our region. Since I happened to be there at the time, it was very interesting and I will comment that it was well done. I might explain where I fit in on this. I have been a member of the NMRA since 1946, I am Life Member #435. I moved to Miami in 1956 and soon after heard of Don Darby starting the Everglades Model Railroad Club. I joined and attended the meetings and work sessions in Hialeah. I understood that I happened to be considered a member of the Southeastern Region.

Then, our club thought it would be great to visit the Saint Petersburg club as a group. We visited their layout which was on the second floor of the Atlantic Coast Line depot in Saint Petersburg. The layout though not yet completed represented a lot of construction. While there I could glance out the window to observe prototype passenger train operations. I am not sure if it was part of this trip or a later convention but we visited Bill Lenoir's shop (custom builder of O scale locomotives) and the layout of Jim Coulter. During a meeting with the Saint Petersburg club, we discussed the fact that we were considered Southeastern Region, but the region was inactive. That was why we decided to go ahead and form the Sunshine Region, as soon as the region formed I became a Charter/Life member.

A new club was formed in Miami, the South Florida Society of Model Engineers. They were building a layout in the loft of Orange Blossom Hobby Shop, on NW 36<sup>th</sup> Street in Miami. By then, having moved to Homestead, I joined this new club. I attended a few national conventions as time and income permitted including Cleveland in 1961, Philadelphia in 1964, I helped to host Miami Beach in 1967, and Minneapolis in 1969. After that, due to the commitments of raising two children and starting a business manufacturing 7 ½" gauge cars and locomotives I missed national conventions until Milwaukee in 1985.

My role in the 1967 Miami Beach convention was to host a layout tour of my 25' x 26' layout. Bob Harris set it up with the Seaboard Air Line to have a special train to bring the convention attendees from Miami to Homestead. The Seaboard track was located behind my back yard fence. While there, in addition to visiting my railroad, we had a bus to take them to a nearby railroad museum and an Italian restaurant. I had over 200 people visit my railroad that day.

I have tried to help statewide when possible. I well remember the convention we held in Clewiston somewhere about 1965. I had various assignments then including giving a clinic. While still involved with the 7 ½" gauge, I became a member of the Sebring Model Railroad Club and helped with the state convention in Sebring in the 90's.





Bill test running a locomotive he had just finished on his trestle circa 1980

Looking back at the past, I have to agree with your leaving out the names of the members from that era. Many have passed away, moved, or dropped out of the hobby in the past 65 plus years. It would not surprise me too much if I were to find out that I happened to be the only person still alive from that first meeting in Saint Petersburg. At times I wonder whether any living members of the NMRA joined before me in 1946.

You might wonder about my lack of attending conventions for an extended period of time. First, as mentioned, my life became busier after adopting two children. Then in 1970 I started Koster's Miniature Railroad Supply. I became a manufacturer of 7 1/2" model railroad equipment producing about 40 locomotives and over 100 freight and passenger cars. I built four 7 1/2" gauge railroads. Three were located on my property in Homestead, Sebring and near Boone, North Carolina. I built a layout for a customer in Fort Lauderdale.



Blue Ridge Summit #10 on Frushour Trestle on my railroad in Purlear, North Carolina

After retirement I started helping at a 15" gauge steam railway in Wisconsin Dells. As a volunteer I did everything from Gandy Dancer (track worker) to President of the non-profit organization. I am still interested in the 7 ½" railroading but due to health and age related problems have switched back to an HO gauge railroad. This is something I can do in my spare time.

Railroading of any size has been a big part of my life for close to 90 years. I have always found the hobby of model railroading to be an enjoyable pastime. Though my modeling skills are not as good as in my younger years, I am still enjoying the hobby, either by working on my layout, talking about it or writing about my railroad. I am thankful for the NMRA and the Sunshine Region we started almost 70 years ago.

W. C. "Bill" Koster

Wildwood, FL

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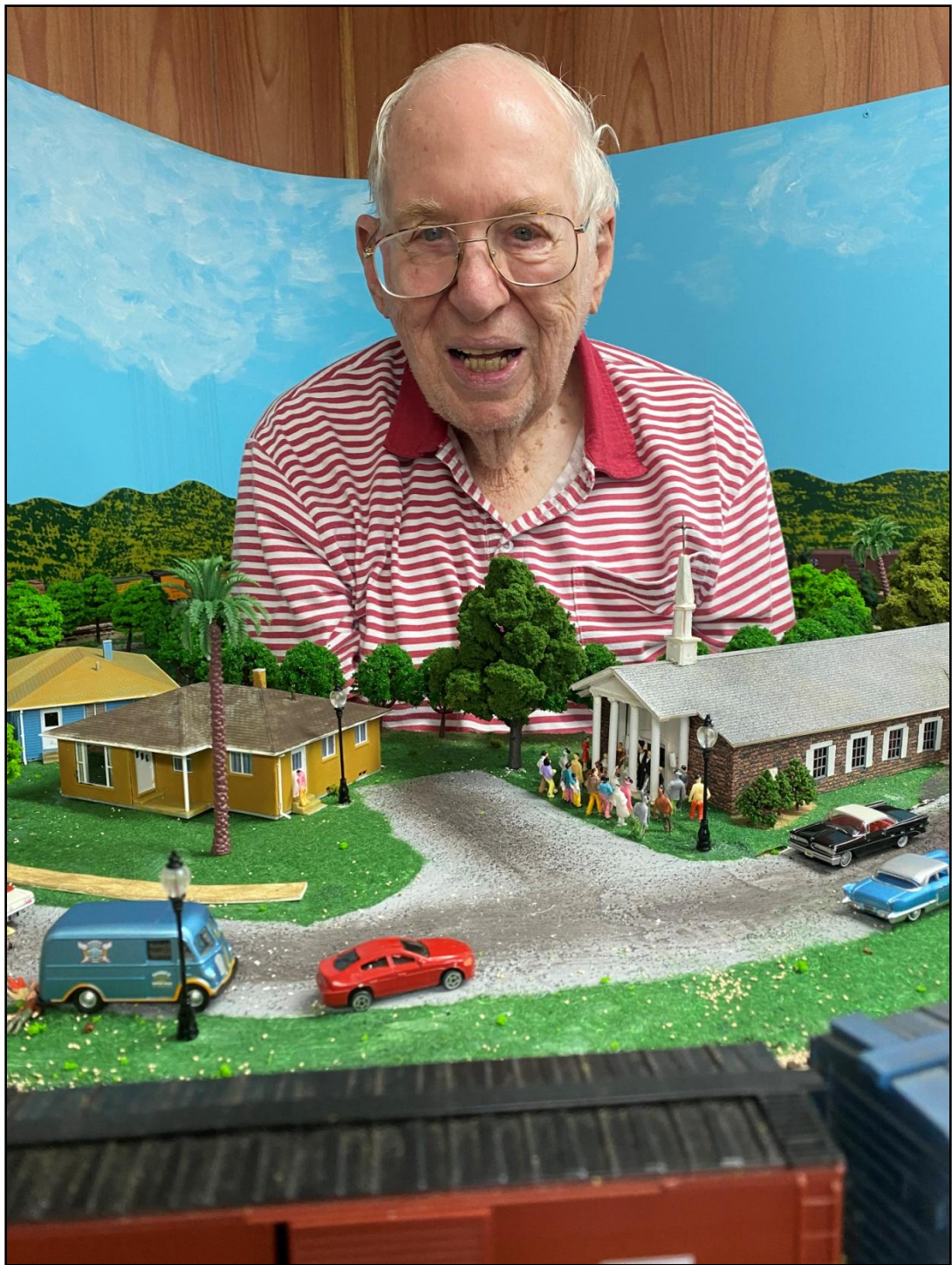


Locomotive #82, a Sandley 4-4-0 returning from Western Springs to Hyde Park, an excursion of three miles round trip, in Wisconsin Dells, Wisconsin.



Bill's 12' x 16' layout, still under construction.  
Wildwood to the left, Bellevue center and Ocala in the foreground





Bill in 2025 in his Wildwood section of his layout.



# **A Train Comes to Homestead**

**by Bill Koster**

I moved to Homestead, Florida in 1957. It was a small city 28 miles Southwest of Miami. There were two railroads serving the area. One was the Homestead branch of the Florida East Coast railway, part of the former Key West extension. The Seaboard Air Line had a branch which terminated in Homestead with a wye. Both had daily freight service at the time but no passenger trains.

When I chose a piece of property to build my house, I selected an acre which backed up to the Seaboard. Daily I would see an Alco RS diesel leading a mixed freight. Most of the cars were reefers, picking up produce from the Redlands.

I stayed active in model railroading, being a Life Member of the NMRA, a Charter/Life Member of the Sunshine Region and a member of the South Florida Society of Model Engineers. One day in 1966 my good friend Bob Harris called me. He said that for the NMRA convention to be held on Miami Beach in 1967 they wanted to do a fan trip. He asked if I would be agreeable to have a train load of people come on a Seaboard train to visit my layout. I replied with, "I will have to check with my wife Alice." I felt it was a great idea! I am glad to say that Alice was as enthusiastic as I.

The arrangement would be handled by Bob Harris, with some input from me. How to plan for, what could be as many as 400 people? What could we offer in addition to my railroad, a 25' x 26' HO layout? My first thought was a small railroad museum in nearby Florida City, across the street from it was an Italian restaurant. But how could we get them there? We called on the Miami Transit Authority, they could run a bus between my house and the restaurant.

But first Bob had to contact the railroad, they could use the coaches from the Silver Meteor. They agreed to a contract to carry up to 400 passengers for \$3.00 each ... \$1,200.00, those were the days!

Next, we had to decide where to have the train stop. Though my back yard went right to the track, it was thought that unloading them 4 blocks to the south, where there was a road alongside would be a better location.

I arranged with the Homestead Air Force Base to have two trailers we could use as a stage. I contacted the Homestead Chamber of Commerce and they were very interested. This would be the first passenger train ever on the Homestead branch, the track had only been used for freight service. Of course, the Mayor agreed to show to greet the group.

To make it even more exciting I invited the South Dade High School Band to play. The Homestead/Everglades Posse of horseback riders were also invited; they could ride their horses and wave their flags.



What to do at my house to handle such a large group? I had the only basement in town and it was large 26' x 60'. How about setting up a movie theatre in the end not used by my model railroad. I erected temporary walls to make a 30 seat theatre. Why not use my double garage to show slides, that area could seat at least 60 people. I arranged to borrow an air conditioner to cool the garage.

I am glad to report that all went well. We were disappointed that only about 200 decided to take the trip. Those who did were very enthusiastic. When they entered my house, they would first go to the movie theatre. They would see a 15 minute movie of my layout. Then they would get to see the layout for 15 minutes and a slide show for 30 minutes. After that they were off to the restaurant and museum, then finally, the bus would bring them back to my house.



I talked with many of the visitors. One in particular, was good friend John Armstrong, who did layout design for Model Railroader magazine. He approved of my track plan but commented the rails were of a too narrow gauge. He was well known for his O gauge railroad.

After discharging passengers the train pulled ahead to the wye, turned around, and returned to my backyard. We had a drink station set up to provide water while people waited to board the train. Finally it was time to board for the return trip.



That trip was the ONLY time that Seaboard ran a passenger train to Homestead. Since that time, the Gold Coast Museum has run a handful of trains on that branch. Unfortunately, the track has not seen a train in years and sits abandoned. It would make a great transit line into Miami, if the commissioners ever decided to use it.

I can also report that my railroad ended service only a few years after the convention to make room for me to produce 7 1/2" gauge trains. Would I do it again, if I had the chance? Definitely!

I am wondering if anyone reading this happened to ride on the trip. If so, please drop me a note at [Purlear@aol.com](mailto:Purlear@aol.com)





**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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<b>Tracey Sanders</b>	tassailor@mac.com	786 514 5667
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# South Florida Railway Museum

## Happy New Year Sunshine Region



The Museum is Open on the 2<sup>nd</sup> Saturday of the month, the following dates are our 1<sup>st</sup> quarter

**01-10, 02-14, 03-14**  
**from 11:00 AM to 4:00 PM**

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A Smoking Shay, Cass, WV 2010

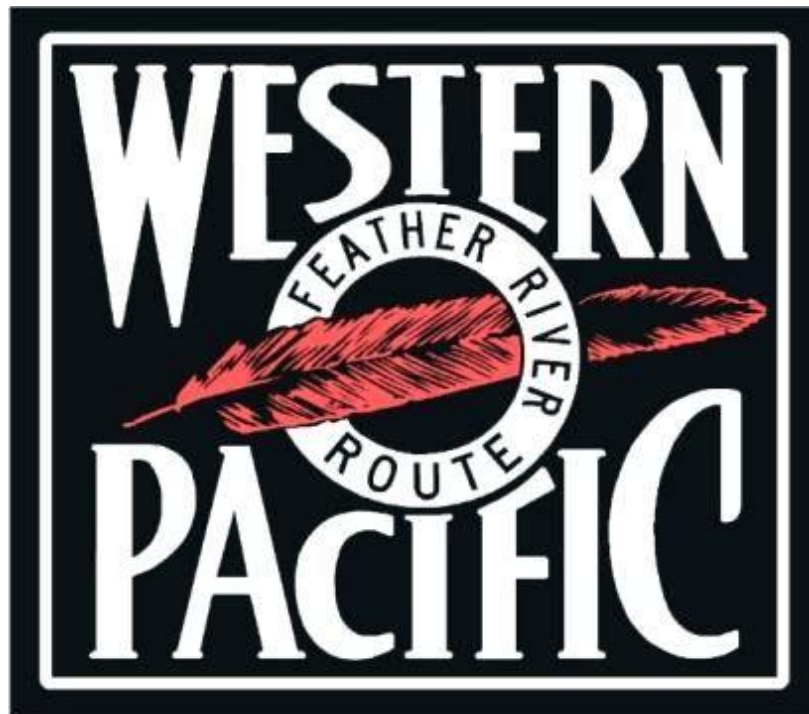


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## Showcase

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This quarter the intent was to display the models that were entered into the Celebration room at the convention in this section of the magazine. Well that is not happening. The problems arose in reviewing the photographs, they all came as a dump, selecting appropriate ones, editing if necessary, organizing, and dealing with a finicky Windows 11, all became an aggravation. I know I asked for photographs from members and photos we got, roughly 800, and I thank you for that. But I have a plan! With the benevolence of our webmaster, I would like to put out an interim Journal Box focusing on just the contest entries. It would be an issue midpoint between regular issues. We shall see.



## Book Announcement

I have been given an alert from a friend up north about a new publication, "Batten Kill Country *Seasons of Change*" from a very proliferate modeler and photographer. Ken Karlewicz who primarily documents the New England area, although he has chronicled the Hudson River, is the author and photographer. The book is aptly titled considering the northeast has some of the most photogenic scenery all through the year. The railroad runs on ex-Delaware & Hudson tracks from Eagle Bridge, NY to Greenwich Junction, NY. You can tell from the pictures accompanying the book cover the BKRR is ALCO happy!

# BATTEN KILL COUNTRY

• SEASONS OF CHANGE •



BY KEN KARLEWICZ



A sampling of pictures from the book depicting the four seasons.



Look at all the accoutrements on the RS3, angled number boards, steam era markers, Hancock Air Whistle, polished air ringer bell, only thing missing ... a candelabra.





Ken Karlewicz 2025



Ken Karlewicz 2019

# Durango & Silverton Narrow Gauge Railroad & Museum

by David J. Leider MMR

I got a chance to mark one more item off my bucket list - a visit to the Durango & Silverton Narrow Gauge railroad. It was all I expected and more. It is something that everyone should visit. Rather than write about it, I will let these photos speak for they do it better than text.



# 1 is busy assembling the trains for the morning departures.



This is the first-class coach we rode in.  
It had a bar for refreshments and platform on the back for taking photos.





Durango & Silverton Narrow Gauge #476 and #450 getting ready to depart Durango for Silverton. The train is double headed most of the way. Engine #450 cuts off and goes solo to Silverton, engine #476 takes us back down the mountains to Durango.





The blue flag has been removed allowing the train to proceed.



The Animas River is never far from the tracks.





I got up the following morning to watch the trains leave the station in Durango. This is the train we rode the prior day. All of the locomotives have been converted to oil.



View inside the shop.





Main Shop



I always like to see what is behind a museum.





Admission to the museum is free and it is packed with artifacts, including an engine and caboose.



#476 and train have been turned in preparation for the return trip to Durango. After a rainy arrival, the skies have cleared for our departure.



Meeting another train along the way.



Silverton depot. The train goes a few thousand feet beyond the depot, closer to town.





Arrival in Silverton

**Editor's Note:** As David said, another adventure off his "Bucket List" and we are with him. Well, as long as David wants to diminish his list and he shares, we will be the beneficiary of his travels.



**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](mailto:als0622@yahoo.com)**

**'No dues, just a great experience'**  
**[westernbayrailroad.org](http://westernbayrailroad.org)**





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## Observations

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Last month I asked for participation in taking photos of the convention for future publication, well my request was answered. The number of pictures snapped on all areas of the convention can be found on our website and there are quite a few. There were a lot of pictures taken, the majority by Bob Feuerstein, he did a great job of recording the entries in the Celebration room and of the award winners at the banquet dinner. Glenn Kopriva has taken what was offered by the photographers and arranged them by basic subjects on the site. So, this time around we have photographic documentation of the event that goes beyond long distance banquet shots. I have in the past asked attendees of our conventions to photograph the event, to photograph the individuals, to photograph the clinic attendees, and if the individuals were modeling, their entries in the Celebration room.

I liked the idea of the contest room being open to observation, I hope it did provide those who are hesitant to enter their own offerings in the contest room with a bit of relief. I think it allowed those aspiring individuals to see how judging is performed, what the evaluators are looking for and how they go about doing it. Hopefully at the next convention we will have more individuals displaying their skills. What I found negative in the contest room, although I helped to set it up, was the raffle display set up on the sidelines. At this point I have no solution to the situation, but I thought it would be better to have the raffle in a separate area. I understand that timing in room activity and availability of the room is part of that problem, but I do believe the two should not be contained in the same area. Something to work on.

Well, here we are in a New Year, with new challenges, new goals, new opportunities, hopefully all of this new will not get in the way of the old. What did not get done last year should be the top priority leading onto the new year. Or at least that is the way things should be handled, not always the case though! There are so many old projects on the books that need to be completed before I start anything new. I just came across a project that I have had for over 10 years, a project that began and remains a mutual project. In a joint, "I'll do your engine, you do mine." turned into a project that both of us forgot. I was too paint and detail a steam engine, he was to repower a commuter car and here we are a decade later with nothing to show for it. Actually, I have had the engine longer than he has had the car.

As modelers we seem to have ideas, "Wouldn't that be unique, doesn't look to be that difficult, I have half of what I need already." We begin to investigate and research the base for those ideas and then make a start. Something brings the project to a halt, wrong size wire, wrong decoder, missing the right detail part, the speaker is too big, where are all those MV lenses, a number of reasons ... SQUIRREL! Then we do it all over again until we have a lot of ideas, many plans that get started, proceed to partially completed and then another idea strikes. Personally, I believe I have well over a hundred such ideas and projects, luckily for me and others, I have not acted on 3/4 of those, but they are good ideas. So, for this coming year in my waning days I need to complete those projects, not so much for my own edification but to at least get the projects to a point of operation, or display. But more importantly, in some cases, back to the people in which they belong. So that is going to be my New Year's resolution, to get off my bottom and get these projects completed before I do not have a chance to do it.

So, what is coming next year? Well to begin with we have the annual gatherings leading off this month. Upcoming we have the Prototype Rails annual in Cocoa Beach, then shortly after that a trip to the cold north, to Model Rail Mecca. Another trip to Springfield MA, to the Big E as it is known up there, to the rest of the nation, the Amherst Train Show. Seven acres of trains, four buildings of all scales from Z scale to 1 to 1. A trip that should be on every model railroader's "Bucket List", no matter the weather. Actually, the weather has been really comfortable the past few years, four years ago a blizzard, but since, quite comfortable. Why travel 1400 miles? It isn't as if I need anything, I could probably go into business myself with what I have, it is more a social

event, a chance to see old friends (you never know if it will be the last time) and to make new acquaintances. Like I said, a "Bucket List" experience, if you get the chance, go!

Last quarter I spoke of being able to observe the evolution of a new layout, a new Florida based layout at the museum. To watch the process, the direction of the layout planners' best methods to get it built. The basics, location, era, motive power, rolling stock, commodities to be moved, raw goods, finished goods, customers and buyers, still fluid, not locked in as yet. What area of the geographic location is to be displayed, flat land of the south, coastal areas, grades of the mid and northern areas of the state, or all? Is the plan striving for museum quality (hopefully), three foot rule (I suppose for "N" scale it could be reduced to 18 inches), or a crowd pleasing racetrack? From the consensus of the voices heard, operations is the focus.

The time frame to begin this endeavor has also been established, the core group of enthused members are on board and anxious. There is a plan, but only one plan. There is a phased plan for the removal of the existing layout and the construction of the new one. So, at this time most of the progress has been acquisition of the visual finished product. Roadbed, rail, turnouts, turnout motors, all have been acquired, for every turnout on the digitized plan there is a corresponding physical turnout to match it. Will the plan be followed to a T, probably not, so stick around there will probably be a sale at our annual train show. That is if the progress sticks to the proposed schedule!

When I say there is only one plan it is because there is one only. There is no plan for the bench work, there is no plan for the electrical, although there has been discussion on different methods of wiring (wire gauge and such). There is no plan for the mechanical, where are these switch motors to be located, under the turnout, or offset? To me the project is still in its infant stages, but it does get underway in February, so we will see where we will be in the next quarter, until then.

With this coming year the NMRA has rebranded itself, a plan two years in the making, a new logo, new vision, a 10-year plan. This timespan, from 2026 to 2036, the plan focuses on acquisition, the acquisition of members and how to accomplish such. The NMRA is well aware that any organization to remain viable needs to keep the interest, needs to provide something fresh to the membership. Our hobby constantly has new innovations, improved methods of building the basic framework of a layout to the finite detailing of a piece of equipment. The vision for the NMRA is to provide all of that information via printed as well as digital communication that has been a constant for the last few years. How does one improve that? The NMRAX YouTube videos with their monthly contributions currently do that, so I do not understand how they are going to do it any better.

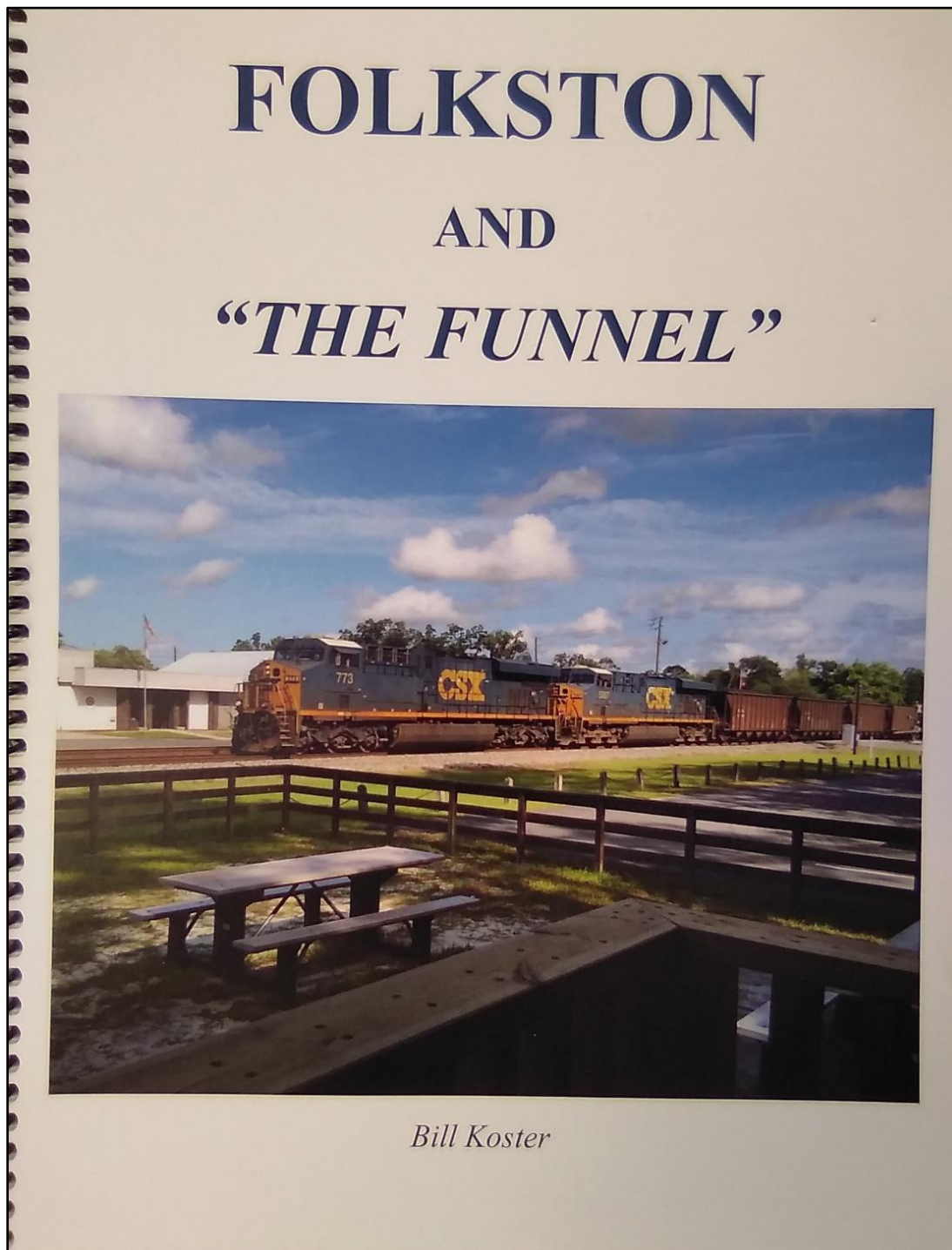
Part of the rebranding is the new logo, I don't understand that either, to me it doesn't appear very unique, or original. The "Rolling Boob" albeit controversial at its inception was a better representation considering the origin of the NMRA logo to begin with. A steam engine driver as the basic visual for six, seven decades changes to a more contemporary wheel, it is still round, it represents motion. Forward progress? I read the reasons and watched the explanations for the change, something about homogenizing the brand, standardizing the brand, putting all divisions under the same umbrella and displaying the same look. My opinion the timing is off, at the hundred-year mark would have been more galvanizing. A new century for the future, but that's just my observation.

Robert



## Book Review

I said I would do a book report earlier, well it w. The report is about a publication put out by Bill Koster titled "Folkston and the Funnel, A Railfan Guidebook to the Folkston, Georgia Area". Bill has also authored other books, he wrote a trio of them on the Ridge Live Steamers and others that are based on live steam, which I will list. The book, spiral bound and soft cover contains 44 pages describing



the not often thought of places to visit while in this little Georgia town for train watching. Through text and pictures Bill calls out the places to go within the town and who to contact for lodging and meals. The photos are clear and sharp, with a few historical shots, but the majority of pictures taken are post platform construction. The writer relates some of the history of the town dating back to the 1800s with some historical accounts of incidents and accidents. All in all a good read, good photography, a personalized look of something beyond the platform. A different approach to seeing the area, so many times folks go to the Funnel and not take the time to see the local aspect.

Bill has also authored other soft cover books, all quick reads from what I gather, but insightful. The books listed below vary in subject matter from 7 1/2" and 14" gauge to the large scale of 4' 8-1/2". For anyone interested, contact Bill's email address [Purlear@aol.com](mailto:Purlear@aol.com)

The Riverside and Great Northern Railway

The Ridge Live Steamers

The History of Live Steam in Florida

50 Plus Years in a Wonderful Hobby

Moving a Classic Pullman Palace Car

Changing a set of wheels on an Amtrak Viewliner Sleeping Car

The Blue Ridge Summit Railroad





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It is still winter out there, East portal of Hoosac Tunnel





Getting Closer

# How to Write a Story ... Mike's Way, Maybe Yours

by Mike Collins MMR



A little background! I did a similar article most recently, for the Journal Box in the Fall - 2022 edition regarding the quest of the Model Railroad Author category for MMR. This is an update of that content. Here is a chart that I did for an article on MR Author in the NMRA Bulletin for the June 1992 issue (I've been doing this a long time). The process is basically the same.

WRITING PROGRESS FORMAT			
An article needs:	Step 1 (page 1)	Step 2 (page 2+)	Step 3 (page X)
<u>A beginning</u> (reason for the article)	Title, author, introduction, the theme and purpose. (Figure 1)		
<u>A message</u> (body)	Outline the objective. What's it all about.	Expand the concept. Give facts. Develop the subject. (Figure 2+)	Special details. (Figure X)
<u>And an end</u> (conclusion)	Summary of major points		



## How to Start

First, you need to select a subject that interest you.

Then, take a pen or pencil and a writing pad and start writing notes from your thoughts, inspiration, ideas, random appropriate words, information from researching Google, YouTube, and other related sources and publications. Also, jot down general information about the subject, along with ideas for pictures and sketches/drawings that you may need. Basically, anything that comes to mind related to the topic. You will end up with a lot of *mish-mash* that will become meaningful when you start typing the first draft.

How to Write a Story for Publication  
My Way! (Maybe Yours)  
by Mike Cotton, Nov 1987.

1. How to Start - scratch out a plan  
pen/pencil + blank yellow pad (Post-It)  
notes, words, results of research  
from your thoughts, Google, YouTube  
and other <sup>related</sup> publications. such as article in *unma* <sup>or</sup> *org*.

2. type Draft #1 (then #2 refine the content)  
print - use a red pen to correct mistakes.  
add more info

3. Progress - type #2. add lot of form  
add add notes  
\* NOTE: Take progress pictures ~~with~~ *with* *you*

4. The End is in Sight - finished Edition  
Final for submission (then hope and pray)

5. Summary picture - my old chart from —, —.

I've been doing this for a while  
caption: found in mine  
the words in *unma.org*.

It is not easy but very rewarding. A proud achievement  
Another item for the history.

6. Another Certificate.

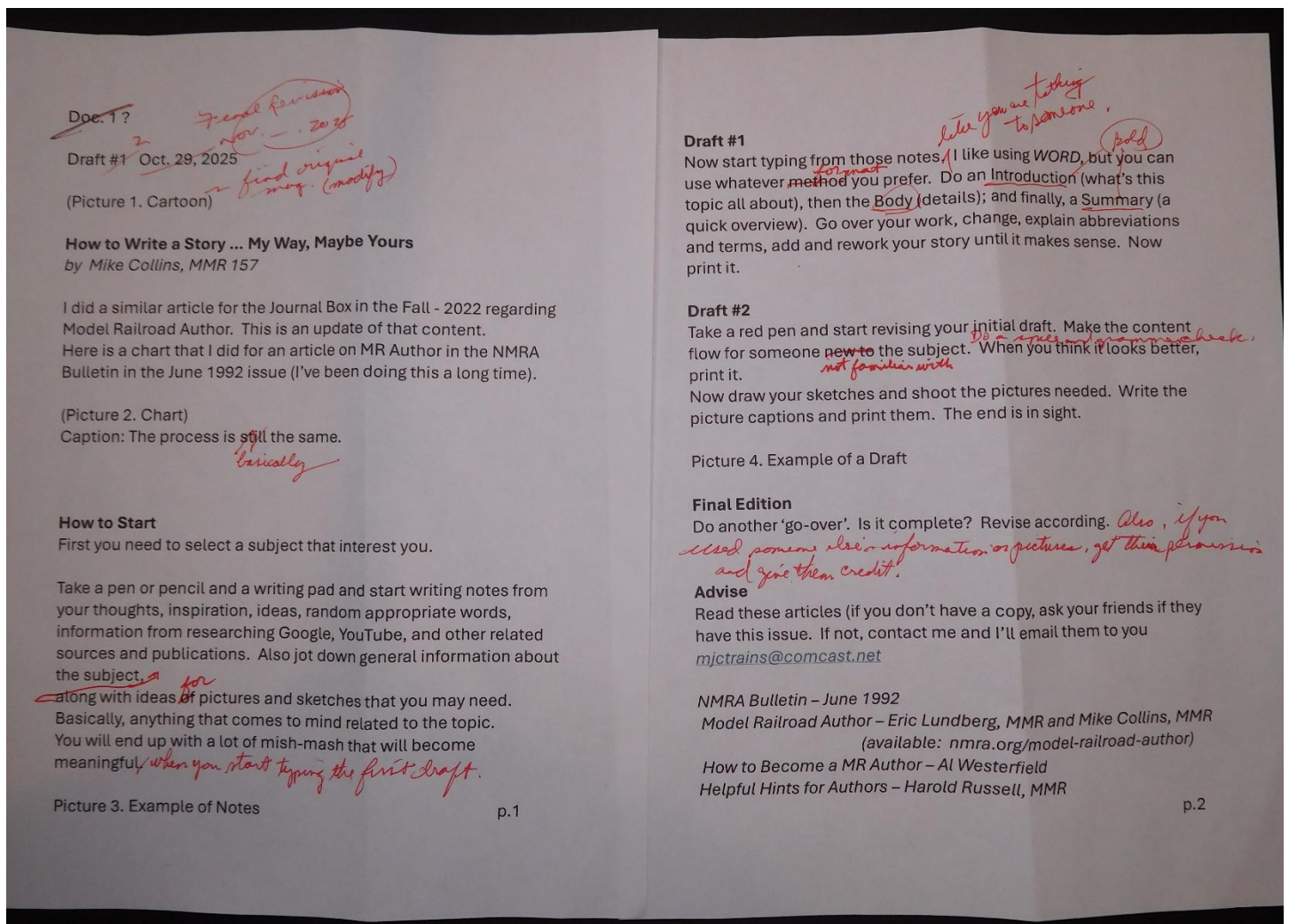
# Draft #1

Now, start typing from those notes like you are taking to someone. I like using *WORD*, but you can use whatever format you prefer. Do an **Introduction** (what's this topic all about), then the **Body** (details); and finally, a **Summary** (a quick review). Go over your work, change it, explain abbreviations and terms, add and rework your story until it makes sense. Now print it.

NOTE: If you are capable of using Artificial Intelligence (AI), such as *Copilot*, give it a try. Maybe integrate the different methods.

## Draft #2

Take a red pen and start revising your initial draft. Make the content flow for someone not familiar with the subject. Do a spell and grammar check. When you think it looks better, print it. Now draw your sketches, drawings, charts and shoot the pictures needed. Write-out the picture captions and print them. The end is in sight.





## Final Edition

Do another 'go-over'. Is it complete? Revise according. Also, if you used someone else's information or pictures, get their permission and give them credit. This is not needed if the item is not copyright.

## Advise

Read these articles; and, if you don't have a copy, ask your friends if they have this issue. If not, contact me and I'll email them to you

[mjctrains@comcast.net](mailto:mjctrains@comcast.net)

*NMRA Bulletin – June 1992*

*Model Railroad Author – Eric Lundberg, MMR and Mike Collins, MMR*  
(available: [nmra.org/model-railroad-author](http://nmra.org/model-railroad-author))

*How to Become a MR Author – Al Westerfield, MMR*

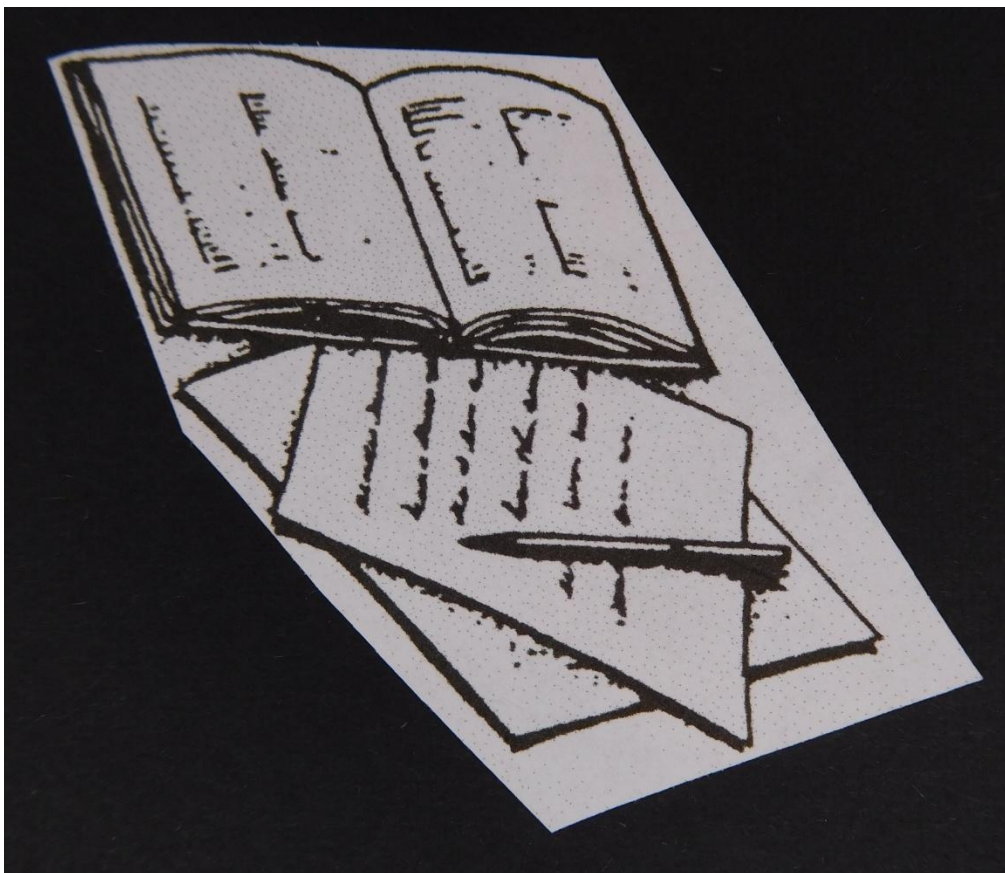
*Helpful Hints for Authors – Harold Russell, MMR*

*Also take a peek at my YouTube.com videos ... Michael Collins model railroad Part 8 (4 sections).*

## The End

If you never wrote an article on model or prototype railroading, or want to do another, give it a try using this information. Also, the editor may comment and edit, maybe ask you questions regarding your submission. I recommend you send it to the Sunshine Region Journal Box.

If you send your work to other publications, it will take time to see your manuscript in 'print'. Publishing can be difficult, but it's worth it. *Trust Me*. This is my 59<sup>th</sup> article.



# Model Railroad Photography – 101

*Mike's simple method, plus ... it works.  
Principles are good, results are better.*

**by Michael Collins, MMR**

## Introduction

It is important to know some basic photo words and technological terms to shoot a good, quality picture. Today, with *Google* and *YouTube*, any subject is available to learn including photography. You can spend an enormous number of hours researching, but you will be a better photographer in the end. The purpose of this report is to make model railroading photography simple to understand and do.

Viewpoints are many, and I'll suggest several I recommend. I am basing this article on my experience in achieving over 40 photo awards and publishing 310 pictures so far. The more you 'shoot', the better you'll become.

**First**, you or the person's model you are photographing has to be a good subject ... a nice model and scene, including a background. I truly believe, our modeling and therefore our pictures are a *dimensional miniature of realism*. This means a realistic modeling display. Simulate real-life perspective for a moment of time. Let's begin ...

## Tools

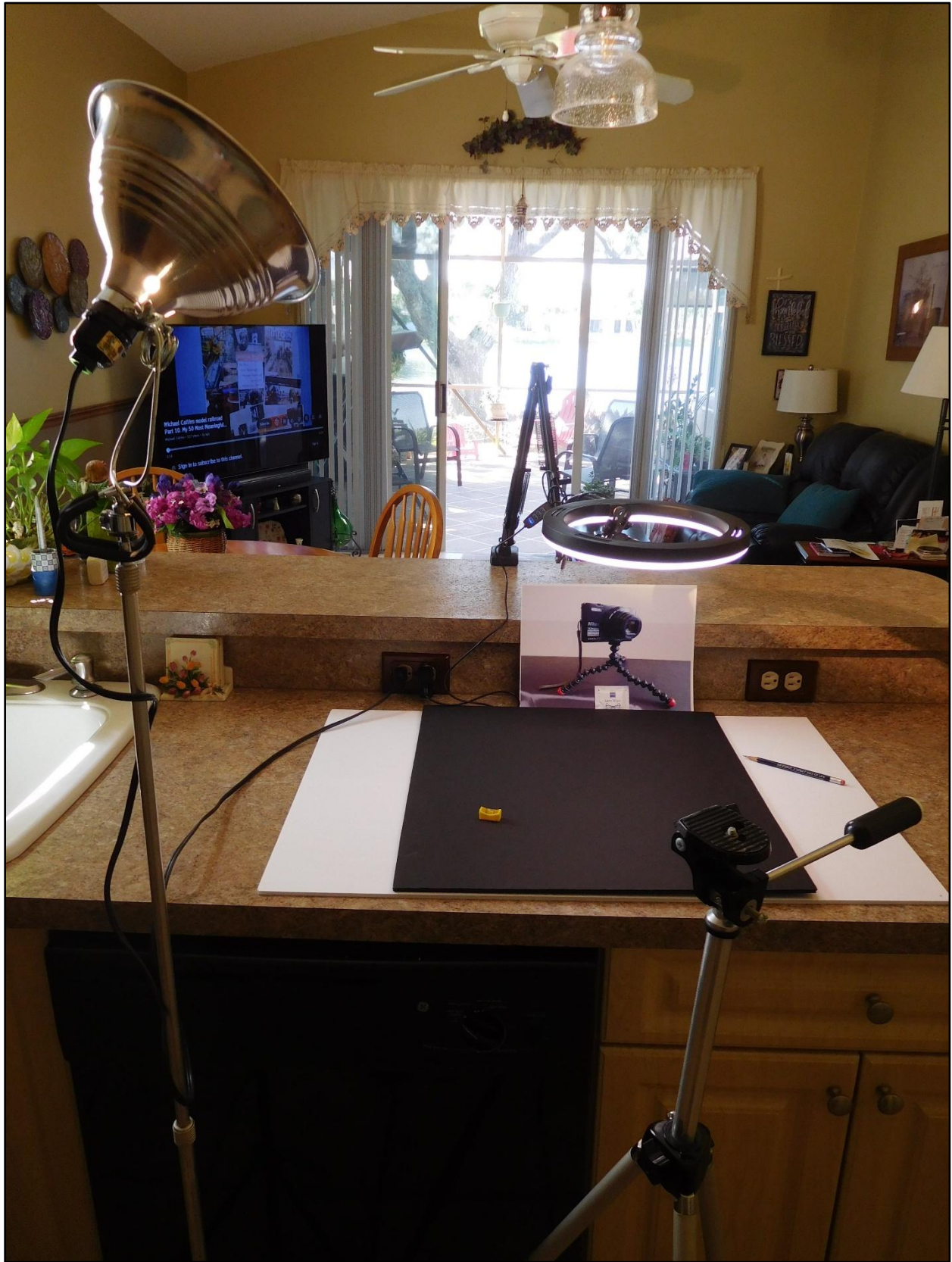
1. Either a high quality Smart cell phone or a digital camera with a macro (close up) lens and more than 5 mega pixels of data (dots per square inch). More pixels are better for quality and sharpness. Most photographers recommend a camera with manual focus feature and over 8 MP. Extra features are up to you, for example Wi-Fi and helpful viewing information.

I use a Nikon Coolpix S7000 with autofocus, brightness adjustment, a timer and 16 Meg Pixels. To see this pocket camera, go to amazon.com, search for this camera to see and hear the features. It cost \$274. (almost double what I paid for mine years ago). Also, look at other cameras, their capabilities and cost. It's a personal choice.

2. For stability, you need to have a regular tripod and a small one with short flexible legs to hold the camera steady when shooting on the layout.
3. For lighting, you need a light fixture to supplement or bounce the light off the ceiling or a light ring for around the camera. Search Amazon for Niceveedi photography (cost \$34.). Or, an old-time, clamp-on, round reflector lamp with a clear light bulb is good (will also see this in two videos).

If you like light rings as pictured above the black foamboard in the Kitchen Studio, see Weibdie Overhead Camera Mount (cost \$28. Amazon). It's a selfie ring light, one that circles around the camera / cell phone, with an adjustable desk stand. For horizontal adjustment of your camera, a small level is handy. I use a tiny one that came in a package, *Bear Claw Hangers Kit* (Hangmanproducts.com). Even a Line Level from Home Depot will do the trick.





### Kitchen Studio

If I'm only shooting a model, I prefer natural daylight. I will place the model on a poster or foam board (white or black) on a box in the garage, with the door open. I will also curve up a white or light blue poster behind the model for a backdrop.



Garage Studio

## Rules

1. Lighting is very important. Soft tone (diffused), not harsh direct. Experiment what gives the most drama. You'll see examples in the videos. And check for a clean lens and display window (use lens wipes).
2. Composition ... guide the viewers eye for impact, a compelling image presentation. The elevation should be trackside, straight on or a bit of car roofs, unless you are looking down from a hilltop, building or bridge/overpass. There should be some kind of backdrop in the scene (an attractive view to 'frame the train'. Best is a slight curve shot to see more of the train).

*Does 'it' tell a story?*

3. Focus as much as possible. The target (focal point) of interest is vital. Try different angles and lighting. The topic of Helicon focus image stacking (around 8 shots) extends the depth of field. This is a more advanced multi-focus method, Blue Tooth cameras are also in this advanced category. Helicon is explained in the recommended videos that are outlined . Currently I do not use this method.
4. I recommend setting the camera timer to 2 seconds to prevent camera movement when pushing the shutter button. If you must hold the camera, hold your breath for 4 seconds, a second before and a second after depressing the shutter. Also, rest your elbows against your body or on something to steady hands. Also, I have a single pole, adjustable, camera holder, but you still need to hold it and your breath. When using a ring light, I suggest using the 10 second timer.



5. When finished, edit (crop) if needed (find the *edit* word in the top menu bar, dependent upon camera); and name it (Save as ... usually a right click menu).

## Support

As a model rail-fan contributor, you need to see and hear what others who have experience, knowledge and technique say about taking high resolution, attractive scenes. Here are helpful website/videos for you to improve your skill and enjoy our hobby better...

1. *nmra.org/members/printed-calendar* (scroll down to Episode 1. Then click-on the small left arrow on the audio line, next select 'expand picture arrows' symbol. Play (there are 5 episodes).
2. *nmra.org/national-photo-contest-judging-guidelines* (provides ten good Judging Factors re photography)
3. *nmra.org* (In the search box, type-in Model Railroad Photography by Dan Munson), enter. Select Model Photography, then increase screen size. Play.
4. *nmra.org* (In the search box, type Photography, enter. Select MR Photography by Fred Lagno. Also watch Digital Layout Photography Made Easy by Tim Garner.
5. *YouTube.com* (search) Michael Collins model railroad Part 8 (select the first Section, then 2, 3 & 4). It is also on the nmra you-tube videos (upper right arrow symbol). Also, if interested, peek at Part 10.

## Results

You are bringing your modeling to life for many to see. Does it pass the realism test?

Does 'it' grab you! How does 'it' feel? What emotions does 'it' evoke? Besides being critical of yourself, ask others for their honest opinion. Correct whatever is needed and re-shoot.

Perception is in the eye of every person ... some like it, some don't.

If you enter a contest, you'll see this in the scoring.

Then, submit your work to the Journal Box, later, to other publications.

**Editor's Note:** *After the photo is taken and you have massaged it to the best of your abilities, the bottom line remains, are you happy with it?*

## Examples of Pictures

**Editor's Note:** *The following pictures are of Mike's entries into various competitions over the years. Whether it be the NMRA Photo entries in the Celebration contests (National, or Regional), NMRA calendar submittals, Walthers catalog competition, or one of his How to clinics. I think Mike has been successful in getting published for the calendar on a regular basis for the past decade.*



1. Railroad covered barge *The word "Vote" a very stylized use of the word reminiscent of signs painted on structures three - four decades ago. Details like this frame the area and era one is modeling.*



2. 2023 Calendar





3. Grand Concourse Subway Station. *Something different for the Walther's catalog*

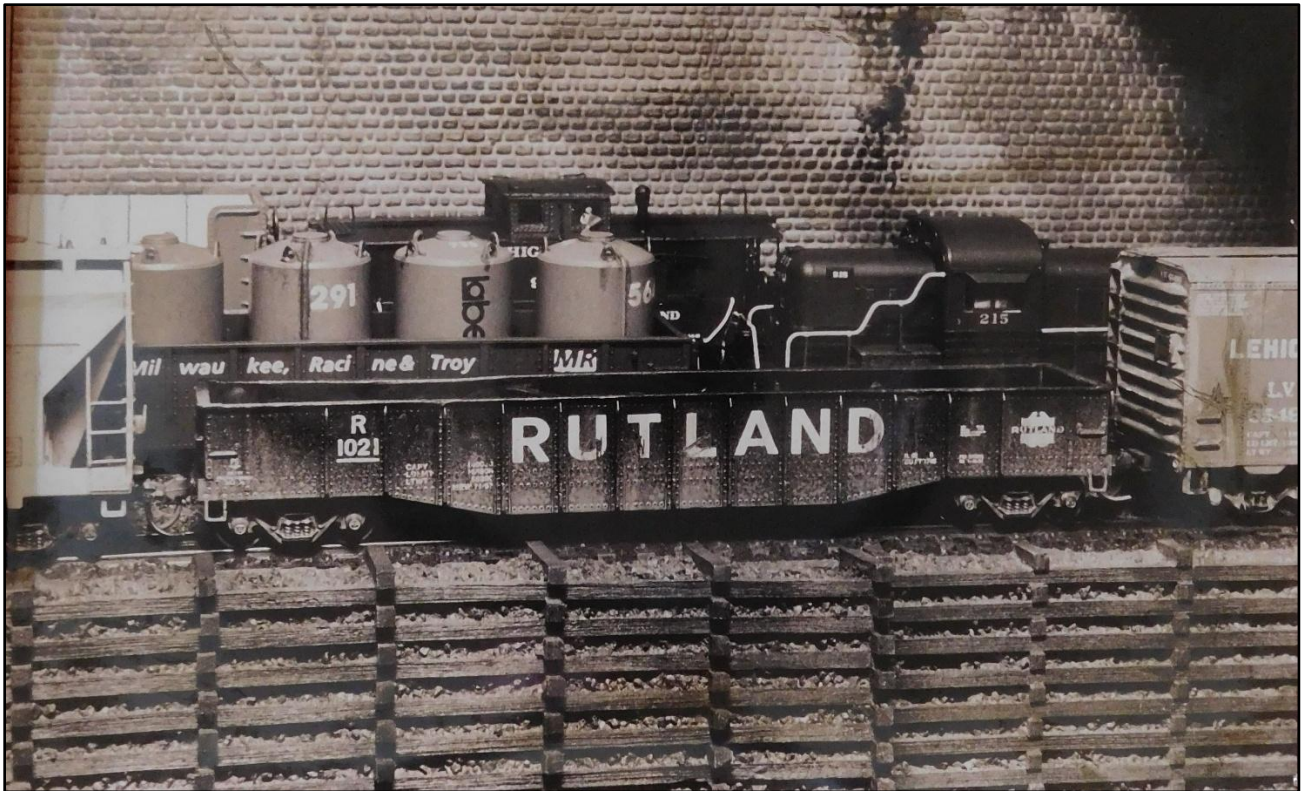


4. Jersey Central double ender (DR-6-4-2000). Another *Walther's* entry

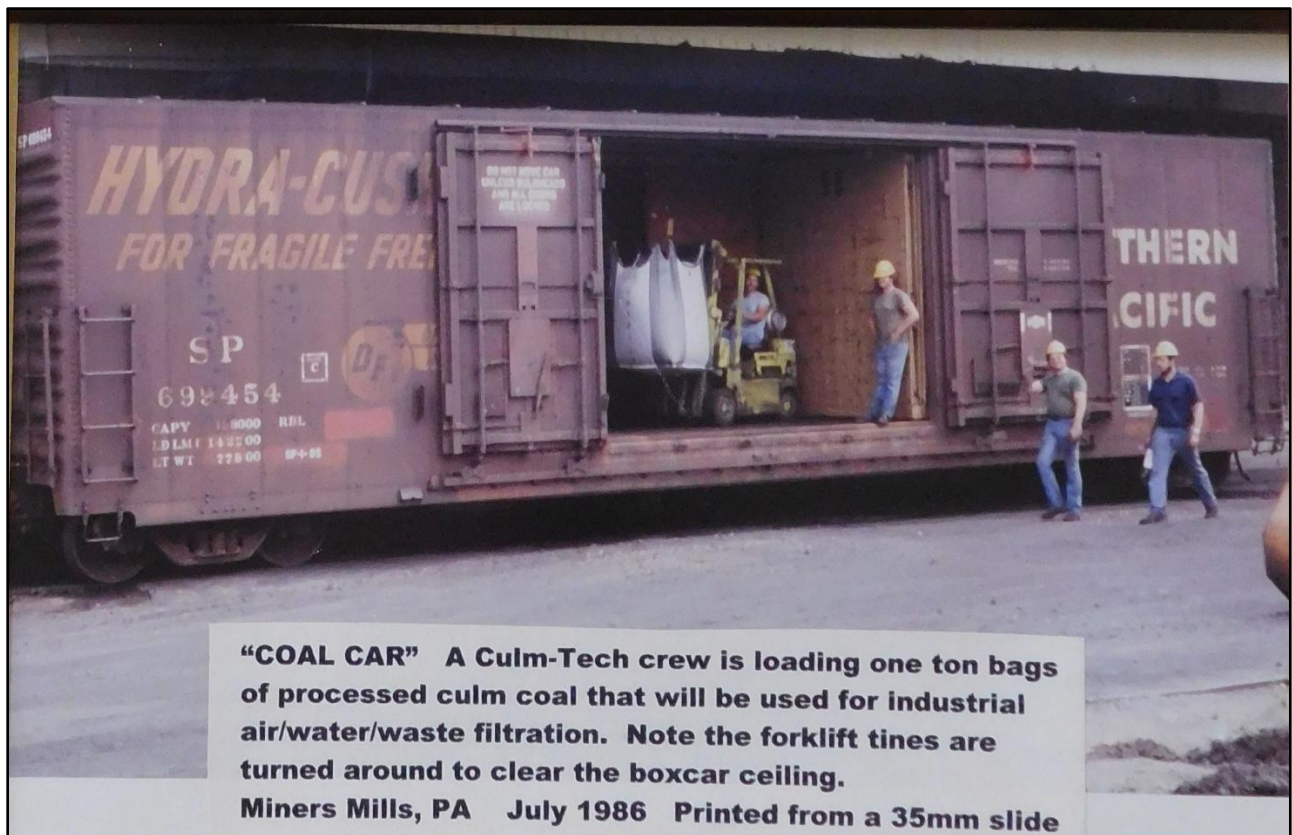


5. Foggy Trip *Mike used incense to create the foggy foreground.*





6. Yard cars (Do you see the Model Railroader & Trains car?)



7. A coal car (an unusual coal carrier). What's a slide? (a photo category no longer used)

## Summary

For your photo to be selected (unless it is part of an article and the concept still applies) it has to be an attractive scene, something special, with detail items, weathered, colorful or black & white with good contrast ... *a unique picture* with intricate features. Something that draws the eye.

I trust this information improves your picture-taking skill. So ... will we see your efforts in a future Journal Box and contest???

These concepts and criteria will produce a quality picture(s) that will go down in model railroad history. *Come on, let's do it!*

***Editor's Note:*** *It is my understanding that Bob Feuerstein is developing a more stringent set of parameters for evaluating photographs that he will submit to National for consideration.*