

OCTOBER 1986

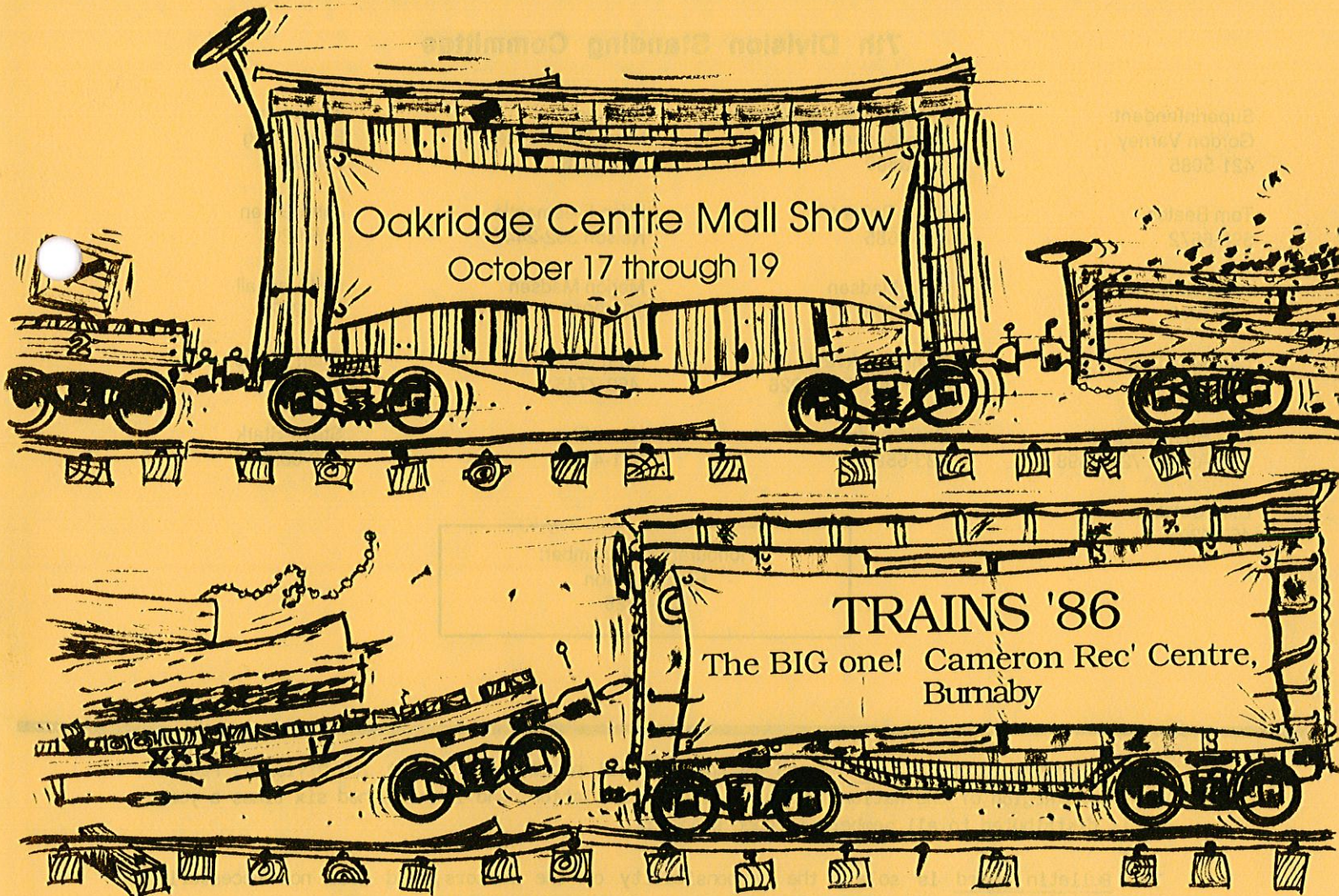


7th Division



BULLETIN BOARD

Published by the Seventh Division, Pacific Northwest Region, National Model Railroad Association.



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The Seventh Division Bulletin Board is the official publication of the 7th Division, Pacific Northwest Region of the National Model Railroad Association, and is published six times a year. It is distributed to all members in good standing.

The Bulletin Board is solely the responsibility of the editors, and does not necessarily reflect the opinions of the Standing Committee, or the organization's policies.

Correspondence and contributions are solicited, and may be sent to: The Editors, 7th Div. Bulletin Board, 9300 Ryan Crescent, Richmond, B.C. V7A 2H2. All other correspondence relating to the 7th Division should be forwarded to the Division Superintendent.

EDITORS: PHIL MAGNALL & BRIAN RUDKO

Three local shows for MR fans this fall

If there was ever any doubt that in the fall this hobby swings into high gear after a summer hiatus, this fall should dispel it. The Oakridge Mall Show, put on by the Division in return for use of the centre's auditorium for its monthly presentations, is just about ready to go. Displays of static models in all scales together with two operating N layouts (one being the first public exhibition of the newly-formed Train Gang NTRAK group) should have excellent appeal for shoppers, and inspire the sale of a few more train sets this Christmas. This is a show aimed at what a retailer would call the "walk-in trade" more than modellers, so there will not be the contest models and demonstrations found at other events. For real "buff stuff", Trains '86, on November 9, is still the year's big event. Advertised elsewhere is the Pacific Northwest Narrow Gaugers' Annual Meet, and narrow gaugers being the particular breed they are, there is always a superb array of truly exceptional modelling present at these shows. If you like scratchbuilding and superdetailed realism, this is the one to see.

Aside from participation in the latter two shows, there is a need for volunteers to "interpret" and patrol at Oakridge from the 17th to 19th; if you can spare the time, your presence would be appreciated. To sign up, or for more information, contact Cyril Meadows at 579-1592.

A special editorial: What's wrong with the NMRA?

Phil Magnall

Those of us who read the letters column of the NMRA Bulletin will have noticed something of a groundswell of opposition to many of that organization's policies in recent years. In fact, the movement would appear to be growing. The dissatisfaction of many people who faithfully pay their \$20 (US) each year and feel they get little in return is understandable. Unless one is into contests or the Achievement Program, there is little to recommend membership to the newcomer. To say so may sound like heresy in a publication that falls under the NMRA umbrella, but to ignore the facts is to invite the steady decay of the Association to the point where it loses all credibility as any kind of authority. That would be a very real loss, for without a unifying body, the various regions and divisions would fragment, as would special interest groups, into hundreds of little clubs and cliques across the continent, each following its own set of rules and objectives. National conventions would become a memory, and local events aimed at promotion and fundraising would become a competition between clubs for perceived supremacy and authority in the area. Without the stratification of divisional, regional, and national events, there would soon be a bewildering hodgepodge of shows and competitions, all claiming a status that none would be likely to attain. And, of course, those who did take part in contests would find their awards meaningless when judged by one of fifty different sets of standards. It's an unappealing scenario, to say the least.

The two accusations dropped on the NMRA's doorstep most often are that (a) money is wasted on such things as a fancy magazine that unsuccessfully attempts to compete with the commercial press and an expensive national headquarters of uncertain value and purpose, and (b) that it no longer has a focus or grand design the way it did in the thirties and forties when the hobby was in desperate need of universal standards. Thus, inordinate amounts of time are spent hashing out any new standards required, which, as in the case of N scale module specifications, sometimes fly in the face of established standards. There is probably a great deal of validity to these criticisms, but one might well ask if these possibly misdirected efforts are actually the problems, or rather the symptoms of more subtle changes within the nature of the model railroading hobby. One could argue a case for the latter on the grounds that social, technological, and bureaucratic changes have altered most members' perceptions of the NMRA and what it should be doing for them. Consider the following aspects of the hobby - and of life - and the impact they must have on the organization:

Politics: Never before has so much attention been paid to the hierarchy of elected officials at the regional and national levels of the NMRA. Almost anyone familiar with their local representatives can name several who appear to be in the hobby solely for the political goals to which they aspire. Enthusiastic "hobbyists" without layouts, who never display their work at shows, never enter contests, and never host clinics or workshops are frequently ushered out of harm's way into some office where they are not expected to make waves.

Unfortunately, that is not always the case; some do cause trouble and create resentment, and worthy candidates are discouraged from running for a position tainted with past blunders and difficult personalities.

Fragmentation of interest: When the NMRA first organized, about the only question you could ask of the average modeller was what scale he was in: O, OO, or perhaps HO. The main goal was to see that couplers, wheels, tracks, and so on were compatible between makers in those days. It was a big job, and *everyone* benefitted when the standards the NMRA managed to forge were adopted by most manufacturers. It was a strong unifying cause.

But few, if any, would have envisioned then that hobbyists could some day be devoted to the Denver & Rio Grande in Sn3, or the Great Northern in N scale. Or that dioramas, electronics, contest models, photography, or computers would become the major focus of activity for many model railroaders. Now, it is hard for even the big magazines to satisfy everyone's interests. The N scaler usually gets more from an *NTRAK Newsletter* than either the *NMRA Bulletin* or *Model Railroader* - a fact that reflects the appeal and value of NMRA Special Interest Groups as a response to this trend. The NMRA itself may go years without touching significantly on your particular scale or interest.

Social changes: Like it not, we all seem to be a little more reserved when it comes to new acquaintances these days. A pleasant fellow hobbyist from out of town who appears at your door because he has heard of your layout may turn out to be a local B&E specialist out to "case the place". The New York mail order guy with the great price on a brass CPR Selkirk may take your money and vanish. These things do happen, and it's only prudent to take some precautions, and not simply trust in the integrity of the model railroader "brotherhood".

Model railroading is also becoming a more family-oriented hobby. Spouses are more involved in the family finances, and are also less likely to tolerate frequent nights out with "the gang" or solo trips to every possible convention in lieu of time spent with the family. That often means that going to a distant event becomes an expensive family vacation if it takes place at all, and simply buying a new locomotive is often a husband-and-wife decision. Thus, the hobby interest is often directed inward to the family, instead of out to the continent-wide fraternity of fellow modellers.

These influences do not help the feeling of belonging and fellowship that once seemed to flourish in the NMRA even if more family involvement is a step forward. If a national "identity" is therefore no longer attractive, the organization has one less thing to offer. More and more, newcomers are going to demand something tangible for their dollar, and the chance to go to the Boston convention isn't going to cut it.

Next month: Proposing some solutions

FROM THE SUPERINTENDENT'S DESK

Gordon Varney

As was reported in the August BB, I will be the 7th Division Superintendent for the next two years. My first official act will be to thank the outgoing Super, Hank Menkveld, for the excellent job he has done since 1984. Hank's time and efforts are certainly appreciated.

We have a fine group of people on the Standing Committee, including several new faces, but as has been said many times before, we cannot do it all. We need your support. Please try to attend and to *participate* in the workshops and other events scheduled for your enjoyment of the model railroading hobby.

Our next event will be the first Oakridge Centre Mall show October 17 to 19, followed by the year's big public show, Trains '86, at Cameron Rec Centre. Our last Workshop, a series of basic model railroad clinics, was well attended, and people seemed to go away pleased with what they had seen and learned. The next regular "second Sunday" Workshop will be December 14.

Happy railroading for now, Gord,

Can you help out the BB?

If you know anything about printing, especially the computer variety, you will probably have noted the numerous styles of type that have appeared in the *BB* over the past couple of years. The lack of graphic continuity is not something we strive for, but rather the result of having had to deal with several different combinations of systems and operators in that time, coupled with the latters' frequent inability to provide the same fonts used the previous time, even when supplied with a copy of the newsletter for reference.

Your editor personally set a few issues this year on the office Macintosh, a privilege no longer available to him. This issue is also Mac'ed, but the time was paid for, something our finances can do without. So the question goes out: does anyone out there (in the Lower Mainland) own, or have access to, a Macintosh we can use six times a year for a few hours? Software is no problem, and laser-printing is available elsewhere. If you can help out, please call Phil Magnall at 277-2421.

A note to "unlisted" Standing Committee members

When the Standing Committee list on page one was updated to reflect the newly elected officials, we took the opportunity to edit out the names of several members who we felt had effectively dropped out of the Committee by not attending meetings for some time, or, in the case of members from the interior, through lack of contact. Since that time, two people have indicated they still wish to be considered members, although we did not have time to add their names to the list for this issue (we'll get you next time). We should point out, however, that in order to be a member, you must attend a significant number of meetings, or, again for interior reps, keep in contact by phone or letter to the Division Super or the *BB*. Advise us of what is going on, what projects are being organized, and the nature of local MR events as your contribution to the work of the Committee, and we'll be happy to include your name on the roster.

If anyone else feels they have been unfairly dropped, please contact the *BB* editor at 277-2421.

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The crew of the Tie and Timber Short Lines would like to invite you to the Annual Meet of the Pacific Northwest Narrow Gaugers. The meet is to be held October 18th at :

Como Lake United Church
535 Marmont, Coquitlam, B.C.
Time: 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.
Admission: \$4
Optional dinner: \$8 (please pre-register)
Information: Gordon Varney
2961 Willoughby
Burnaby, B.C. V3N 1K7
(604) 421-5085

Bring some models to display!

Living room workshop

Malcolm Anderson

I've been in the hobby for about 13 years now and I must admit I'm starting to get the hang of it. My biggest problem has not been the layout - I've never had room for one of those - but rather the workbench: how to keep it organized, how to keep it tidy, and what to do with one project when I want to start another. (I'm one of those rare people who likes to start another project before he's finished the last two or three.) I also didn't like being in another room, away from the family, and more importantly, *the tube!* Hey, I do my best work watching Cagney and Lacey.

One day, I brought my work out, put it on a TV table, and - presto - there I was working away in heaven, Donna at my side and the tube in front. What more could I ask for? Plenty. The table was too small, too flimsy, and had to be cleaned up at the end of the evening. Worst of all, it could be embarrassing if someone not of a model railroad persuasion dropped in: "Still playing with trains, eh? Ha ha ha..."

The old grey matter clicked in one day (it doesn't do it often; I marked it on the calendar) and the answer was there. Separate bench surfaces of the right size for different projects, a steady folding stand to hold them, and a cabinet to hold them that was nice enough for the living room. The plans opposite show the idea clearly. I used 1/2 inch particle board for the top, sides, bottom, and six work surfaces. Pegboard was used for the back for two reasons: I had some lying around and it allows the cabinet to breath. I used adjustable cupboard self-support racks to hold the workboards since some projects require more headroom than others. The dimensions are not critical; you could change the size according to your needs. Use hinges that let the doors open wide to facilitate easy insertion of the work surfaces and projects. Ikea sells perfect hinges for about \$6 a pair. I have not been able to make folding legs that are totally stable (sorry), so for heavy duty work I still have to go back to the other room.

For those who want to have a cabinet ready-made, Ikea also makes one that, with a little modification, will do just fine. There are two in the catalogue, in the kitchen and bedroom accessories sections. The basic cabinet, shelves and doors would cost around \$220. All you would have to do is put in more rugged shelf supports and add the 1x2 around the edges of the shelves. For lighting, I used a free-standing reading lamp with a small reflector bulb. Ikea makes several sizes, and no, I don't work for the company!

Now you can work and be with the family and TV, you can have several projects going at the same time, and emergency cleanup is a snap. Also, no worries about kids, the cat, or dust getting on your work even if it's left for days, months,...years? What am I saying? No one leaves a project unfinished for *years*, do they...?

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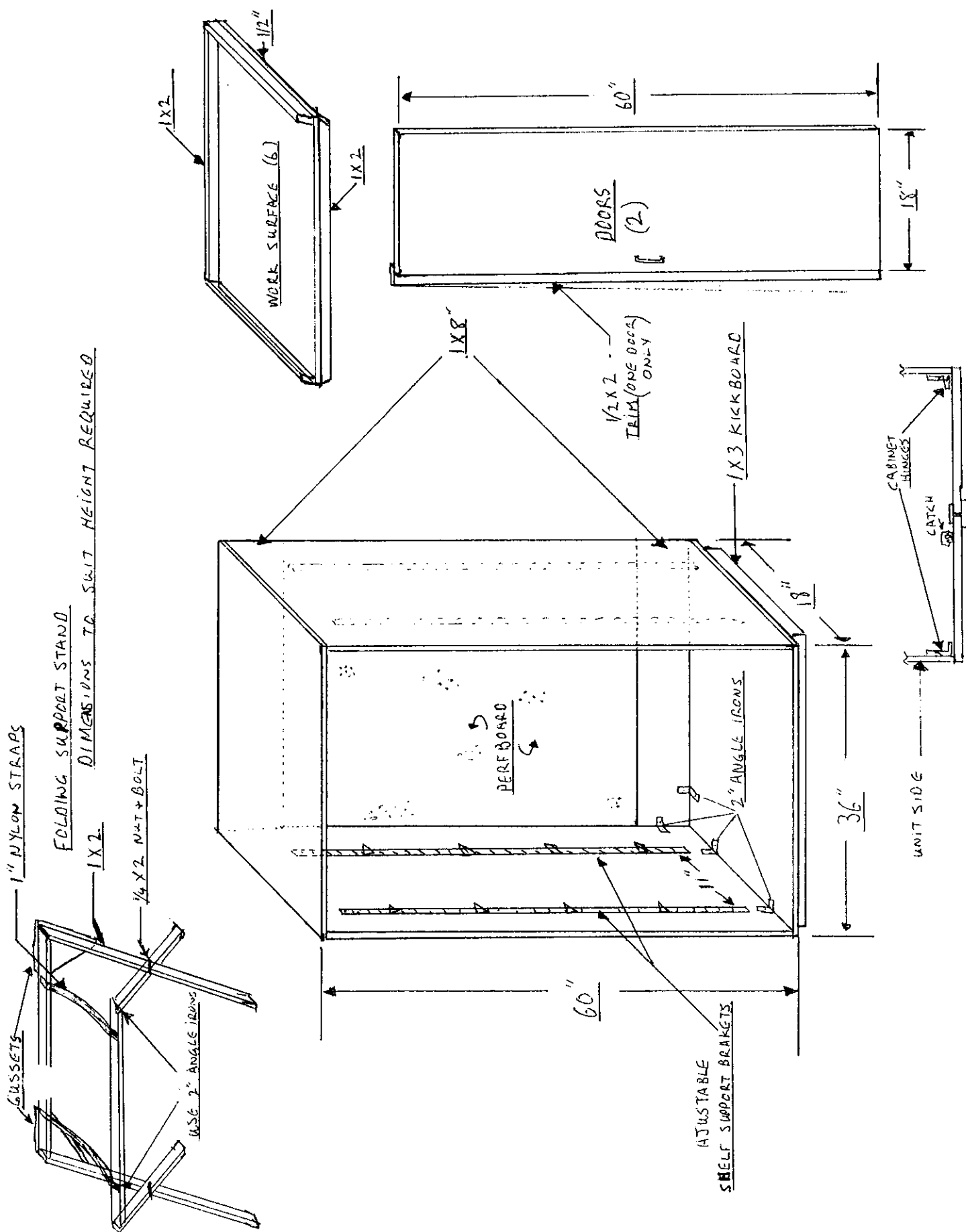
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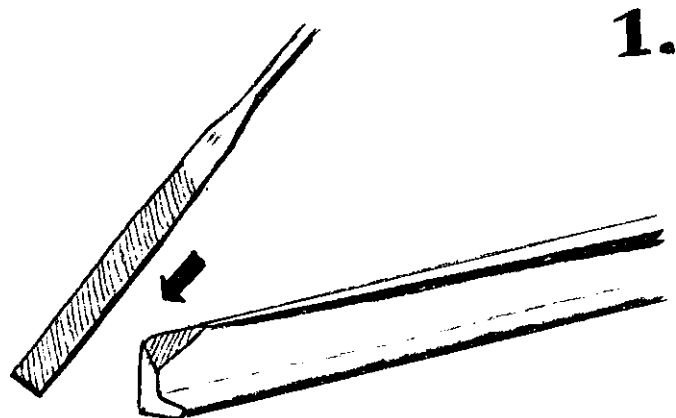
Towards Reliable Operation: 1

Brian Morgan

Do your trains go bump in the night? Does your railroad obey Murphy's Law to perfection? Are you frustrated by attempting to operate realistically? Reliable operation is not achieved by any one item or practice, but by paying attention to numerous small ones. In this article I will list the things that have helped my layout (the Burlington Northern Selkirk Division) achieve its level of reliability. Although I work in N scale, most of the following should apply to any scale.

First, use only one brand of nickel-silver rail track. Nickel-silver has fewer oxidation problems compared to brass. I clean my rail about once a year, yet I have no electrical pick-up problems. Track quality varies from manufacturer to manufacturer, and in the long run it pays to go with the better quality track. In N scale, Peco and Shinohara brands work well. After laying new track, I always test it by backing a 10- or 15-car train over it very slowly while watching the wheels of the cars. It makes it easier if several of the wheels have been weathered with light colours such as Floquil dust. What you are looking for are places where the wheels will rise above the railhead, indicating a tight spot. In most cases, the car will not derail this time, but you can be sure one of your cars will when visitors are watching!

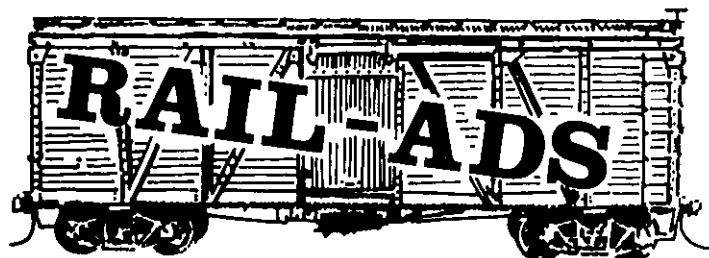
The most likely places for tight spots are turnouts. The usual cause is out-of-gauge track, or, occasionally, a small piece of plastic flash inside the rail. One way to remedy this is to heat up the rail with a low-wattage soldering iron (about 300 watts) at the location of the tight spot. This will soften the plastic "spikes" holding the rail, at which time a small pair of needle-nose pliers



Filing the point rail (both sides of switch)

can be used to move the rail outwards. After the rail starts to move, remove the soldering iron while continuing to hold the rail until the plastic cools down. It may take several applications of heat and pliers to get it right (I've yet to ruin any track with this method).

Turnouts also require that you check the points. Cars will occasionally be switched the wrong way or will bump while crossing the points. The first thing to do is make sure the points are lower than the stock rail. If not, file them down carefully with a small file. Second, make sure the points are beveled as in Fig. 1 so that the flanges cannot hit them squarely or go behind them and thus take the wrong route.



Rates for Rail-Ads are \$1.00 per 20 words or portion thereof. Commercial rates on request. Send to: Rail-Ads, 9300 Ryan Crescent, Richmond, B.C., V7A 2H2. Make cheques payable to 7th Div. Bulletin Board.

CPR T1b \$530.00

CPR F2a \$430.00

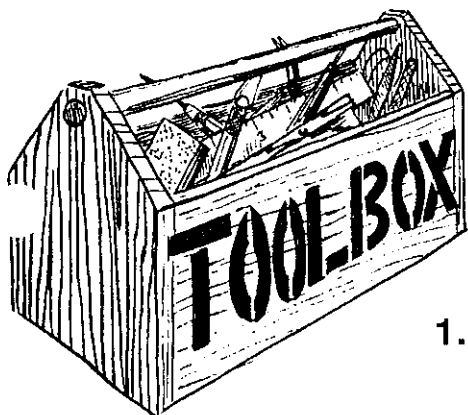
CPR T4a \$495.00

CPR D4g \$330.00

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Hallmark/Samhongs GP30 in N scale, test run only: \$150.00. Hallmark/KMT RS2, also N, \$130.00. Compare with regular retail! Phone 277-2421.



1. CUTTERS

A series intended to help the beginner toward better scratchbuilding and kit assembling results through the use of the proper tools. We will cover only hand tools with costs well within the reach of the average hobbyist.

The first function any building project requires - be it structure, engine, boxcar, or bridge - is cutting. Brass, plastic, wire, and wood all need the proper tools to be fashioned into finished parts from raw stock, and using the wrong one is a shortcut to poor results.

The basic tool of any model tool kit has to be the **Xacto knife**. There is no magic in the brand name, other than the fact that few other companies have ever copied the design of the ubiquitous #1 (small) handle and #11 blade. This is this the straight, pointed version of the blade; the variously angled and curved blades are rarely of use in model railroading. The 1-11 combo will cut sheet wood and plastic up to about 1/16 inch thickness - enough for most MR purposes - and chop small sizes of strip wood and styrene. It also trims flash and unwanted details from plastic and metal castings, cuts parts from sprues, carves, scribes lines, and even cuts tape and cellophane from kit boxes! The only other blade of appreciable use is the #17 chisel point, superb for removing things like cast-on handrails without nicking surrounding details.

For larger sizes of stripwood (how big depends on hardness), a **single edge razor blade** is far superior to the Xacto. Its thinner blade cuts a much squarer edge, leaving less to be sanded true. On sheet stock, though, its flexibility can leave an uneven edge. Another tool you *can* use on sheet materials is the **NT Cutter** or similar small snap-off blade knife. It does nothing an Xacto can't, but saves on the pricier Xacto blades if you're carving up a lot of styrene siding. Its rather blunt tip and flexible blade make it no substitute, however, especially as you can't get the blade right down on the cutting surface when chopping.

Larger strip stock, tubing, and plastic or brass shapes have to be sawn, and for that you need a **razor saw**. Xacto, Atlas, and Zona make versions of this tool, which takes its name from the old-fashioned straight razor it resembles. Check yours regularly for blunted

or missing teeth, as these do wear out.

Scalpels are sometimes recommended for model work, and you may wish to try one if you have easy access to them. They are useful in very fine work, but some warnings are in order: 1) they are very sharp when new, and will cut your finger if you so much as touch the blade, 2) they blunt very quickly, and 3) the blades are not strong, and break easily in the middle of a firm stroke.

For wire, one can buy expensive flush- and end-cutters, but you're probably better off with regular **wire cutters** and something to dress the cut end. If you stay away from difficult to work piano wire and stick with brass or flower wire, you'll have no problems.

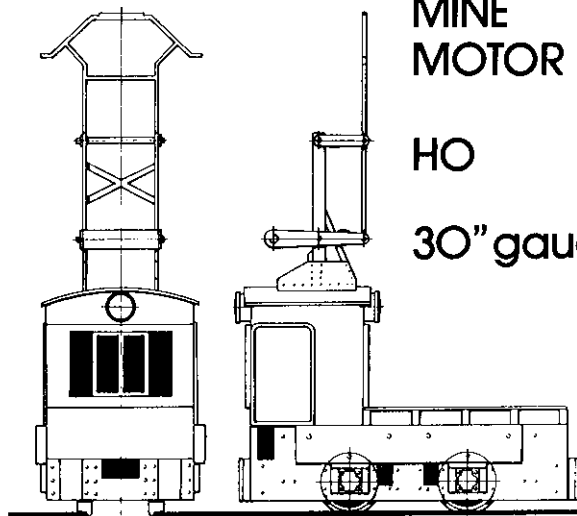
A final item not found in many tool kits is a pair of **nail clippers**. These are great for removing delicate plastic parts from sprues, or for nipping off wires that protrude farther than they should from something. Again, if using softer wire, they should give long service.

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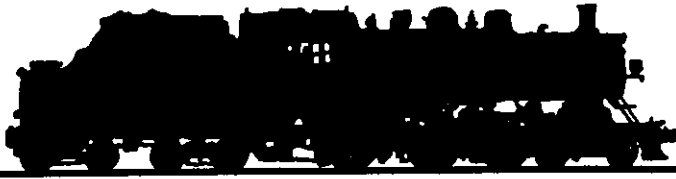


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7TH DIVISION TIMETABLE



October 17 - 19, 1986

Oakridge Centre Mall Show: Layouts and static displays. West Mall, Oakridge, 41st Avenue and Cambie, Vancouver. Details: Cyril Meadows, at 579-1592.

October 18, 1986

Pacific Northwest Narrow Gaugers Annual Meet: see advertisement, page 7.

November 9, 1986

Trains '86 public model railroad exhibition. Cameron Recreation Centre, 9523 Cameron, Burnaby. (behind Lougheed Mall) Opens 10:00 AM. Further info: Cyril Meadows, at 579-1592.

December 14, 1986

7th Div. Workshop: Steam Spectacular. Slides or video; how real steam locos work; modelling steam; etc. Oakridge Auditorium, Oakridge Centre, 41st Avenue and Cambie, Vancouver, 1 - 4 PM.

Several people have commented on the once-high enthusiasm for "Pike Ads" in divisional publications, such as the ones illustrated and commented on in the August BB's story on the Dispatcher. They once served as an excellent way to meet new friends, including, on occasion, a noted modeller or author who might be in town, but they haven't appeared here for many years. Does anyone want to try it again? Send us either your own artwork or just your railway's name, slogan (if any), your name, address and/or phone number, and visitor policy (anytime, call first, Friday night only, etc.) and we'll use modern computer technology to cobble up a unique advertisement. As a matter of fact, you can even phone in your specs just to make it easier! The number is 277-2421; there is an answering machine for your use if no one is in. After that, we'll consider the response and what sort of charge should apply regularly, so tell us what you're willing to pay for a year's (6) insertions.

If you're doing your own ad, the dimensions should be 2½ inches wide by 1 inch tall.