



The DERAIL

The Official Monthly Publication of the San Jacinto Model Railroad Club, Inc

June 2012

Volume 43, Issue 06

President's Message

Bob Werre

The temperature hit 90 yesterday, so that means summer is here, not to mention that I'm a few days late with this message. With that in mind we need to get ready for the summer conventions coming up. I don't know who is planning on traveling to NMRA national in Michigan this year, but our convention just down the street, the Lone Star is happening in just a few days. This convention will cost you a lot less to attend and for its size, will have a lot to do. I also understand that a very worthwhile prize will be given to some lucky person.

The organizers of this event, the Division 8, are aware that many of you have seen most of the layouts, been to Zube Park and may even have rail-fanned much of the prototype tours. However, what you haven't seen is the bulk of the clinics or had a chance to 'hang' with some of the great folks in the Region. That last part might be the best—the fellowship in model railroading. Most of you enjoy chatting during the break at our meetings, so making friends from Austin, Dallas or even Tyler should be easy! Heck, this is a good time to

gather some of those 'foreigner's' and show them a good time in Houston. I'm sure if you drive, they'll buy you a good lunch and chip in for gas money!

I've been busy making some minor changes on my layout. I always find it surprising all the modifications and additions that even a 'mature' layout needs. I guess that means progress is being made or that my layout was so badly built anything will help! I'll let you make that judgment!

The Great Plains Northern will be on the self-guided tour, so come on by for a visit. I'm sure all the layout owners, clinicians, and officials will appreciate your attendance and feel they've hosted a worthwhile convention.



Part Two: Module and Benchwork Construction

In the April Derail I covered the advantages of lightweight modules for the expansion of my New York, West Shore and Buffalo. This month I will describe the methods and tools I used to assemble the modules and how I used the same materials to build the module support benchwork.

Basic construction utilizes 3 5/8 inch steel studs and 2 inch extruded polystyrene foam board (Owens Corning Formular). The studs and foam are bonded using adhesive. There have been many variations of studs and foam in the literature, so I can't take credit for the idea.

Although the modules have many advantages, working the studs and foam has some drawbacks. The studs are easy to cut with the right tools but the edges can be knife sharp. Care must be taken while assembling the module to avoid cuts. In addition the sharp stud edges must be covered in the finished module.

While easy to work with, the stud/foam combination is not as precise as working with wood. I compensated for this by incorporating leveling feet into each module and on the legs of the benchwork.

Module size is limited to 15 to 20 square feet to make them manageable for building and maintenance. Basic construction involves gluing the broad side of the stud to the foam using polyurethane adhesive (Gorilla Glue). This provides a large gluing surface and but still results in a rigid unit. It also keeps the module thickness at about 3 5/8 inches.

The foam is cut to the shape of the module and laid on a flat work surface. OLFA makes a two-handed LL Model 9037 18mm snap off cutter that works very well with the foam. The blade can be extended to cut completely through the foam. Use of a straight edge allows for very clean cuts.

Longitudinal studs are then cut to run along the long edges of the module. If the module is wider than the 24 inch foam width, additional longitudinal studs are cut the straddle any seams. Cross studs are cut to overlap the longitudinal studs at the module ends and every 2 to 3 feet in between. The longitudinal studs are notched to receive the cross studs. The cross studs are not notched. I have several sheet metal snips (right and left hand as well as one with 4 inch blades) that make the cutting easier. A sheet metal seamer is used to straighten the edges after each cut.

The entire assembly is dry fitted and adjusted as needed. After assembly, a corner bracket leveler will be installed each corner of the module. I locate and punch holes to clear the rising stem of the leveler before assembly. I use a Wide jaw metal hand punch (Roper Whitney). A drill will work if you don't want the substantial investment of the punch and dies.

The longitudinal studs are glued first. I wipe the studs with mineral spirits to remove any oil. The foam underneath the stud is "painted" with water to which a drop of dishwashing detergent is added to reduce beading. The polyurethane glue is squeezed onto the stud to foam two beads that runs the length of the stud along each edge. The stud is positioned on the foam and weighted for several hours. The glue expands to fill any voids between the studs and foam. It also oozes out the side the stud. I use wax paper to collect any overflow and to prevent gluing the module to the work surface.

The cross studs are glued next using the same procedure. The cross studs overlap the longitudinal studs at the previously cut notches. (See Figure 1)

Finally, holes are punched to attach the corner levelers. I used 6-32



machine screws, lock washers and nuts. I added a 3/8 inch nut on the leveler stem below the bracket to lock the stem once the module is leveled. (See Figure 2)



At this point the basic module is finished and ready to be set on the benchwork. This can be traditional wood construction, shelf brackets, etc. I used steel studs for the benchwork as well.

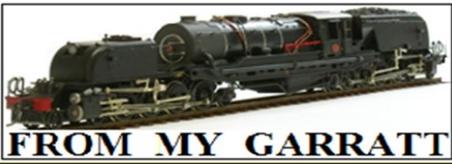
As I covered in the first installment, the steel framework is very light but very rigid. To achieve this, I follow some guide lines. First, the studs must be kept from twisting. To insure this, the studs are cross braced every 24 inches or so. The top of the benchwork should resemble a grid of 24 inch squares. (See Figure 3)



Second, to keep the benchwork grid from deforming, it is braced by adding additional studs to form triangles. This bracing is added to each leg 90 degrees apart and within the plane of the benchwork grid as needed. Finally, the entire structure must be attached to a solid surface, either a wall or the floor.

The studs come in two forms, the studs themselves and the tracks that act as base plates and headers to secure the stud ends. I used a combination of the two as needed. The studs are connected using special hardened screws driven through the stud flanges. The screws come with a

(Continued on page 5)



Henri Morris

A NEW BEGINNING – AN OLD STORY

Only an avid model railroader can appreciate the emotional distress caused when demolishing a layout – especially one that was built from scratch and that gave many years of running pleasure.

I have been threatening to tear down my old, beloved layout for a couple of years now, and finally in March – I took the plunge. I bid farewell to all my hard work, dismantled it, threw it out and now, all I have left, are memories and pictures – including my favorite one – obviously with a Garratt.



Long before the demolition started, Bob Dannenbrink and I agonized over the design of a new layout. We knew the basics of what I wanted to accomplish and the rooms in which the layout would be located, but like many of us, we were hampered by the available physical dimensions - and by some wifely ‘advice’. So, after many designs and compromises - but no arguments, we arrived at a workable plan and now, like a Phoenix rising from the ashes, the rebirth of my new layout is commencing anew.

As can be seen below, most of the basic bench-work is now in place and with your indulgence, I will keep you informed about the progress in future issues.



On a separate topic, while flying back to Houston recently, I watched “Unstoppable” – a movie in which Denzel Washington helps stop a runaway train pulled by locomotive 777. At the time, I had no idea that this was based on a true story that occurred in a rail yard outside Toledo on May 15, 2001, when

CSX Locomotive 8888, with 47 freight cars - two of which were loaded with toxic chemicals, took off down the tracks with no engineer on board.

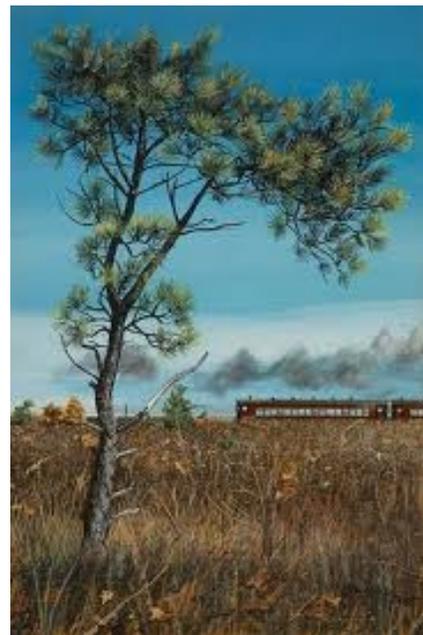
Apparently, the engineer climbed out of his slowly moving locomotive to fix a track switch, but accidentally applied the throttle instead of the braking system. Although he quickly tried to jump back on the train, he was unable to do so and was dragged over eighty feet before having to let go.

Two engineers sped then after the train in a pickup truck, and eventually found it travelling at over 40 mph - which indicated that the throttle was open. Railroad workers in a nearby town laid a steel wedge across the tracks in an attempt to derail the train, but it was then travelling at over 50 MPH and just barreled through the obstacle.

Then, the crew of a train farther down the line was ordered to uncouple its locomotive and wait on a siding for the runaway to pass. As soon as it did so, the chase was on and a while later, the second loco caught up with the train and the crew managed to attach the locomotive to the rear car while still travelling at 51 mph.

The crew then tried to gently slow the runaway, knowing full well that if the brakes were applied too hard, the train would break apart. Slowly the train slowed down, but with the 3,000-horsepower engine still open and the weight of 47 cars, the runaway could not be stopped.

That was when the original Toledo crew, still chasing the train in their pickup, decided to act! The engineer got out ahead of the train and ran sideways along the right-of-way just as the engine – still travelling at 11 mph – approached. As it got even with him, he grabbed hold of the railings, jumped onto the steps and pulled himself onto the loco’s running deck. Then he raced to the cab and shut down the throttle. The train had gone 66 miles in two hours, no-one was injured and the train was intact. Who needs Superman?



Back in 1979, after I had decided that I was going to give up being a band director as a way of earning a living, I didn't really know what I would do instead. The school class year was over, and there was about a month's worth of work to do before I would be completely through with that. I had to work up a budget for the next year that included what instruments would be purchased. I completed an inventory, and generally got things organized for the next band director. When I was done with that, I decided that the only other thing I liked about as much as music was trains, so I walked into the little train station in Vanderbilt, Texas. The building was little more than an clerk's office, as the original station building was now only a foundation. Vanderbilt (named after the railroad tycoon) is located on the Missouri Pacific's Kingsville Division between Bay City and Bloomington. In steam locomotive days, it had actually had a roundhouse and engine service facilities. You could see where the turntable and roundhouse had been by the patterns in the vegetation growth. Vanderbilt by now had been reduced to four tracks including the mainline, plus a house track opposite the depot where occasional hoppers were loaded with rice.

The first person I saw turned out to be a conductor, so I asked him how a person would go about hiring on to the railroad. He said I was in luck, because they were hiring at that very moment down in Corpus Christi. He gave me the phone number, and I called down there and found out when I was to go down to apply and interview.

Probably early the next week (Monday I seem to remember), I drove down to Corpus Christi where the division offices were. The offices, in the old depot at Corpus, were not on the Kingsville Division's Houston-Brownsville mainline, but were on the San Antonio-Corpus Christi mainline. Though part of the Kingsville Division, the line was a different seniority district, and everybody called that line the "Sausage", as it was once the San Antonio, Uvalde, and Gulf Railroad, whose abbreviation looked something like the word "sausage". The two lines crossed at Odem, and operationally, they might as well have been different railroads instead of parts of the same division. We actually interchanged cars with the Sausage as if it were a separate railroad.

I filled out an application in a room with a bunch of other applicants. I think there was also a kind of written test. I don't remember much about the interview and written test, but I remember there was a little physical test we all had to do to prove we were fit to do the job. We had to pick up a 60-pound knuckle, carry it across the room, and deposit it on the floor.

I passed the tests, and was selected for employment. I've forgotten the exact dates of training, but it started in the last half of July, possibly the 23rd (as my seniority date was August 19), and ran for four weeks. It began with one week of classroom training at a motel in Corpus. This was followed by two weeks of on-the-line training. Another week of classroom training concluded the brakeman's school.

I was pretty impressed with the training. There was a lot of emphasis on learning the rules, as well as a lot of emphasis on safety. We had to keep a notebook, which consisted of a lot of questions we had to answer by looking them up in the rule and safety books. We had in-the-field training where we learned how to couple and uncouple cars, connect air hoses, cut in the air, bleed air off cars, and

safely step up on a moving freight car.

I remember the class as numbering about 30 to 35 people or so. It was all male, and I don't recall seeing any women applying in Corpus. Later I found out there were three women brakemen on the division, though I only worked with one of them once, and never even saw the other two in five years on the division.

The instruction on how to step up on a moving freight car is something I really paid close attention to, and afterwards, in my job as a brakeman, I absolutely always stepped up that way, and it paid off by saving me from serious injury later. To step up on a moving freight car, the first thing you did was to grab hold of the grabirons with both hands firmly. After you had a good hold, and only after you had a good hold, you then stepped into the stirrup with your leading foot, i.e., the one that was closest to the oncoming freight car. The reason you do not step up before getting a hand hold is if you miss the stirrup before getting the hand hold, you might fall under the wheels.

Where I eventually got into trouble involved stepping up onto a locomotive. That should have been easy, as it has steps, not stirrups. In this instance, while working a switcher job in Angleton, I grabbed hold of both hand rails and then stepped up. I don't know how it happened, but my foot missed the steps. My mistake was the equivalent of poking yourself in the nose with a fork full of food, though much more dangerous. I didn't let go with my hands, but my hands slipped downward, and I fell and was drug along on the ground still holding onto the bottoms of the handrails. The engineer saw what happened and got the engine stopped quickly. I got up and crawled up onto the engine and into the cab. I sat down on one of the seats and tried to decide how badly I was injured. I was bruised up and hurting. After about five or ten minutes, I felt that I hadn't broken anything and only had bruises, which turned out to be the case. After this incident, I was even more careful, always looked my foot into the stirrup, and never had any other such or related incident.

During the first week of training, I made buddies with another guy who happened to also be a railfan. We had been assigned the same motel room in Corpus Christi. He talked up the Sausage, and we both ended up hoping we'd get selected to work on the Sausage side. I think he was from Crystal City, or somewhere else located on the Sausage.

After the first week of training, we were sent out individually all over the division to learn first hand how to be brakemen. I was assigned the Sweeney Switcher during that week, whose main duty was to switch the Phillips Petroleum plant at Old Ocean, Texas, at the end of a short industrial spur about four miles from Sweeney. (As I mentioned in an earlier article, I'm using the railroad's spelling of Sweeney instead of the real town spelling, which is "Sweeney".) On-the-line training was where we really got in a lot of work passing signals, hooking up air hoses, cutting in the air, reading switch lists, uncoupling cars, you name it. By the end of the first week of on-the-line training, much of this stuff had become second nature.

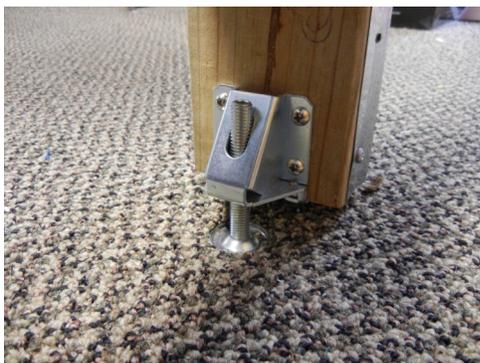
I remember one instance where I made one of the brakemen angry. I was passing signals between him and the engineer as the train was stretched out along the mainline near the south end of Sweeney.

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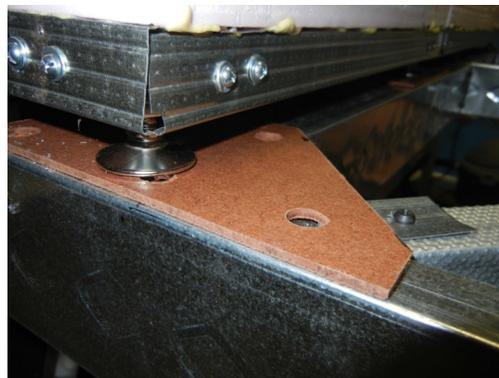
driver bit for an electric drill. Pre-drilling a hole is not necessary but using a locking C-clamp (Visegrip) makes the job easier. Assembly is a matter of cut, fit and fasten. This is where the various sheet metal snips and the metal seamer come in handy. It is sometimes necessary to create flanges at the ends of the studs or tracks. The stud manufacturer's website will have examples of stud attachments that should cover most situations.

I used the steel track for legs and added levelers at the bottom of each of the legs. To eliminate twisting at the extreme end of the leg, I used a short section of 2 x 4 screwed to the track. (See Figure 4)



My finished benchwork is a peninsula attached to one wall of the room. It easily withstands a substantial bump without moving.

I hot-glued masonite pads on the top of the grid where the module leveler feet will sit to allow final positioning of the modules on the steel benchwork. (See Figure 5) This allows the modules to be slid around to align them without hitting the screws used to assemble the grid.



The final step is adding the fascia. It serves two purposes. First, the fascia covers the sharp edges of the benchwork and modules. Second, it "locks" the modules to the benchwork. I use masonite with sheet metal screw and finish washers. The holes in the masonite are drilled slightly oversize to allow for adjustment. The last step is to add molding at the joints in the fascia. (See Figure 6)



Next time I will cover locating and laying track and turnouts. Special emphasis will be given to accurately aligning track connections between modules and to mounting turnout assemblies on foam.

Guess the Layout!



Answer to Mays' Guess the Layout: Art Borman

(Continued from page 4)

My arm got tired, so I switched to my other arm. After doing so, I continued moving my new arm in the same circular clockwise direction as the other brakeman was doing. However, since I was using the other arm, I was now giving a signal opposite to that I was giving before, so while the other brakeman was signaling “away from me”, I was signaling “towards me”. He got so disgusted he threw his signal rag down on the ground.

Sweeney was where I really got my first taste of railroading, and quickly learned that this was not going to be a piece of cake, that it would be a lot of hard work under the blistering Texas sun in the heat, in the humidity and rain, in the sleet, and almost even in the aftermath of a hurricane. Postmen pride themselves on working in all kinds of weather, but when it's so bad even the postmen are staying at home, the railroad crews are out working. We carried rain suits, and all kinds of cold weather gear. Not once do I ever remember staying in the depot or on the locomotive because of rain. When the switchlist was ready, we went to work immediately regardless of the weather. “We couldn't get the cars spotted because it was raining,” would have probably resulted in the conductor being fired and the rest of the crew being reprimanded. I tried to

the first week's classes, and some new stuff. We had to turn in our notebooks to be graded. We took a written test. As we were finishing up our last week of training, a second group of trainees was beginning their first week of class. They numbered about twenty, and because they started three weeks after us, we would have higher seniority than them. I also lucked out in the seniority department, as I was one of the older brakeman trainees, and for people with a seniority date that was the same, seniority was based on date of birth.

Upon completion of training, I was assigned to work on the Brownsville Subdivision instead of the Sausage (Corpus Christi Subdivision). My training buddy was assigned to the Sausage. I bid him farewell, and never saw him again. I think it was good that I went to the Brownsville Sub, as the Sausage was a small seniority district, and therefore more susceptible to layoffs. For one thing, the three railroads in Corpus Christi swapped out every year on which one provided crews for the chemical plant switchers down there, which numbered either three or five, I believe. To me that meant the Sausage's crew needs would swell by at least a quarter or a fifth every third year, meaning layoffs on the other two years.

I was startled to find out that we were expected to sign up immediately at the conclusion of the training period—I mean immediately,



make do with a raincoat at first, but after working my first rainy day in that and getting soaked head to toe, I quickly purchased a rainsuit, and consigned the raincoat to the back of the closet next to the too-small shirts.

After five days of the Sweeney Switcher, I received notice that my second week of on-the-line training was to be at the southern end of the line. Saturday was a travel day as I drove down to Brownsville, and Sunday may have been a rest day--I can't remember. The interesting thing about training down in Brownsville is that it wasn't the same job every day, so I was able to work on several different jobs. I got to work a yard job one day. Another day I worked the international job that went over into Mexico to swap cars. Another night, I worked on one of the port switchers. Another day I worked a job that went up to Raymondville to pick up a train and bring it back down to Brownsville. Finally, I worked a different port job on another day.

I've forgotten what motel we stayed at in Corpus Christi, and what I stayed at in Sweeney (or probably Angleton 21 miles away), but at Brownsville I was put up in the nice La Quinta Inn there.

After the Brownsville training, it was back to Corpus Christi for the final week of classroom training. This involved a lot of review of

as in “as soon as you can get your car down to the depot in Kingsville”. I had personal items to move from Vanderbilt, and a paycheck to pick up there as well, so I asked the Superintendent if it would be okay for me to mark up a day later. I'll never forget his response. He said, “If you can't start today, we don't want you.” I signed up that day, and I don't remember how I got my stuff from Vanderbilt. I only worked a week out of Kingsville before being forced to Houston, so maybe I picked up my stuff on the way to Houston.

The Missouri Pacific brakeman school really prepared me well for my job as a brakeman, and I felt confident in just about all the duties I would be doing. Some people don't like the way the railroads do certain things, but the training the Missouri Pacific provided me was absolutely first rate.

Meeting minutes May 2, 2011

President Bob Werre called the meeting to order at 7:00PM and welcomed all.

Vice president Don Formanek introduced the night's presentation:

A vintage video from Craig Brantley, filmed by Wayne Weiss about the 1989 Astrorail convention. The video showed footage of the various layouts that were on tour at the time. It was sad to see how many of these layouts no longer exist. There was footage of the side tour bus trips to San Antonio, the Texas State R.R., and the Galveston R.R. Museum. Some clips from various clinics during the convention were also included.

Don said Jim Hinds will discuss wire sizes for model railroading next month. We still need ideas for future clinics.

Old Business:

none.

New Business:

Bob Barnett reported that damage was done to 8 tables during the GHTS and these will have to be replaced to the sum of about \$1400.00. The damage was due to someone putting clamps along the edges of the plastic tables and crushing them beyond repair. Steps will need to be taken to keep this big expense from happening at future shows.

Thanks go out to Steve Sandifer for printing some copies of the club directory for a very minimal fee.

Peter Bryan announced Roy Pickard passed away this week in Comanche, TX. The Comanche and Indian Gap live steam R.R. Will continue to function with no changes and have 2 meets a year, regardless of what other rumors have been heard.

Abraham and Peter have taken on part time jobs at the Herman Park R.R. They say it is a lot of fun and you get a free shirt and hat plus a little pay. The R.R. is still looking for more employees, so sign up for shift if you can.

Bob Werre suggested collecting a club member skills database to allow us to share our talents and perhaps post this in the club directory.

Derail: Bob Sabol

Bob thanked all those who have contributed material. Still could use new material.

LSR:

Convention, Lubbock, TX June 9-12

Early registration deadline extended until May 16th.

NMRA:

The convention is in Sacramento, CA. July 3-9.

Division 8: Jim Lemmond

There will be a clinic on locomotive tune-ups at the Houston R.R. Museum on May 21st at 10AM.

Refreshments were thanks to Angie Caulking and Virginia Freitag. Bettye Bozman volunteered to bring the treats next month.

Treasurer's report, Gilbert Freitag:

Expenses:

\$113.55 GHTS printing

\$519.92 2nd run of Club Shirts

\$12.60 Club Directory printing

Income:

\$1071.00 Club Shirt sales

\$7422.91 Ending balance with all bills paid.

Meeting adjourned at 8:40PM

General comments:

-Respectfully submitted, Gilbert Freitag, Secretary / Treasurer

Blake Bogs Clinic Tuesday June 5

"Make your point using Power Point"

Blake will teach you how to make your clinic in PowerPoint both exciting and creative. Many people have an informative clinic, but lacks creativity for the presentation. He will go over many of the basics and some of the unknown features of PowerPoint.

This presentation will be Blakes' first clinic. He has been around trains his whole life, but started modeling in HO about four and a half years ago. Since then, he has begun to model in HOn3 and G scale (not influenced at all by his father). This clinic will be given at the LSR convention, if you unable to attend the San Jacinto meeting.



San Jac RR Club Meetings take place
the first Tuesday of each month

Bayland Community Center

6400 Bissonnet St. Houston, Tx

[Click here for directions](#)

Visitors are always welcome!



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Next Meeting

Tuesday

June 5

See You There!

The Hermann Park Railroad is still looking for railroad enthusiasts to fill seasonal part-time positions, such as locomotive engineer, conductor, and station master. The Railroad staff is responsible for safe, efficient and fun operation of the train.

These positions have flexible hours, although weekends and holidays are the busiest times. Call Ron Misrack, the Director of Visitor Services at 713-528-0827 or e-mail him at rmisrack@hermannpark.org for more information and an application.

HAPPY FATHERS DAY FROM YOUR DERAIL STAFF!

