



The DERAIL

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President's Message

Richard Louvet

Scratch Building for an Old Friend

Like many of us, I have been naming industries on my layout after friends. Bob was my college roommate at Michigan. He worked for Ford in metallurgy so I showed him a picture of Freytag's Foundry from the April 2009 Model Railroader. He graciously approved its addition to my West Shore layout as the Marrone Foundry. For an old buddy, it needed to be my best effort.

There was only one problem. I had built kit structures before, but nothing this ambitious, and never anything from scratch. I needed a practice structure.

My GE Ulster Park Works needed a crane for outgoing generators and such. There was a detailed article in the November 1983 Model Railroader on how to scratch build a Whiting traveling crane. This would be my practice model.

The object was to learn – and I am learning a lot!

First of all, without any materials from previous projects, assembling a supply of styrene shapes and detail castings can cost as much as a craftsman kit. Subsequent structures will be quite a bit cheaper using parts from the inventory of previously purchased packets.

Second, it's much easier to follow a well written magazine article than to translate prototype infor-

mation directly into 3D plastic. At least both the crane and foundry articles came with pictures of the model assembly and tips to avoid pitfalls. I'll try the next model without some author's help.

Third, scratch building is not turning me into a rivet counter. Reducing a structure to 1/87th size requires a fair degree of compromise – primarily matching the fidelity of the model to my time and ability. The end result is still better than a lot of kit-built models and much more satisfying.

Fourth, this is a process of learning by doing. Techniques that work for other modelers need to be adapted to my skills. I've had to refine my methods of cutting, shaping, clamping and gluing plastic, not to mention improving my air brushing ability.

Finally, deep in my model railroad heart, I now feel a common bond with John Allen and George Sellios. I try not to boast of this to other club members because the usual response is "You're nuts to start with a structure as complicated as a crane". I'm not offended because it's my railroad and my rules.

Bob and his wife will be visiting us in Houston this month. I had hoped to complete the crane and to be able to show him progress on his foundry. I misjudged the timing badly but my first effort at scratch building has been more than worth it.

He'll appreciate the effort.

The 2014 Greater Houston Train Show is now in the books. If you missed, it you missed an excellent show. We had a record attendance for the years since the show has been held at the Stafford Centre, the Humble Convention Center or the Corpus Christi School. In fact the only show which may have had a greater attendance was the 1979 San Jacinto MRRC Jamboree held at the Dumfries Royal Coach Inn. We issues 1525 numbered stickers. That is in addition to 40 badges to display layouts, approximately 80 issued to vendors, 7 to clinicians and about 25 issued to show staff. **That puts the total number at around 1675 attendees**, very close to the 1979 show. (*Legend holds that number was around 1700*). While we are still compiling the numbers, a preliminary assessment shows us at approximately \$3,500 in profit from the show.

As always this was a group effort from our club:

Robert Ashcraft handled the vendor table sales and sold us out again by the end of December. **Don Bozeman** drew up the floor plans. Congratulations to both for another "Sold Out" year.

San Jac Treasurer **Gilbert Freitag** brought the start-up cash, worked with the registration table all day and gave us a preliminary assessment of the cash on hand on Sunday morning. Registrar **Ed Dibble** with all day help from **Bob Sabol and Dick Louvet** staffed the registration table all day with help from **Chris Tolley, Denny McGonigle, Rex Ritz, Cliff Cheesman, Max Zanger, Walt Saunders and Tom Wayburn**.

Steve Sandifer chaired the clinics this year and they were excellent. The clinics were well- attended, with attendance beginning to drop in the afternoon sessions. Our presenters this year were **David Currey, Al Partlow, Steve Barclay, Will Gage, Rick Jones, Phil Stewart and Steve Sandifer**. A great job by each of them and thank you guys very much!

We had display layouts in all popular scales with a the Z-Bend Track layout, the NWX HO division, The Houston S-Scalers, the Houston Area G-Gaugers, and the Southeast Texas Model Railroad Club setting up an HO and an N-scale layout. We also had the Houston Area

Live Steamers displaying 1 ½ inch scale (7 ½" Gauge) equipment, 3 ½ inch gauge equipment and operating a small Gauge One live steam railroad out on the sidewalk in front of the hall. That's a lot of railroading in a lot of scales and should be enough variety to satisfy the modelers and the public.

And we had a Contest again this year. Suffice it to say that if **Ray Byer** had not stepped forward and taken on the contest, we would not have had a model contest for the first time in many years. Due to a variety of circumstances, most of our contest regular chairs were unable to help this year. Ray was our last experienced contest chair and he saved the contest. Ray was assisted in the contest room by judges **Rick White, Bill Reid, Jeff Mills** and a couple of other judges who I arrived too late to see. **Thank you for preserving an important part of our train show.**

And **Dave Shafer** transported the San Jac Switching Layout to the show, set it up, monitored the staffing all day and carted it back home at the end of the day. Dave told me at one point during the busy part of the show we had 4 or 5 kids waiting their turns at the switching layout. Thanks Dave and to all who worked a shift for keeping the switching layout a part of the show.

And after the show **Craig Brantley** lined up two layouts to be open on Saturday and four on Sunday afternoon. Thank you Craig and the layout owners for holding your layouts open.

And lastly, we could not have set up early (6:00 AM EARLY) without **Robert Ashcraft and David Gilcrest** showing up early to help with the vendors, display layout locations and generally kick starting the show. And after hours **Ed Dibble and Don Formanek** stayed until the last vendor and display layout was loaded and gone. Without all of these folks (and others I have undoubtedly overlooked) we would not be able to undertake the Greater Houston Train Show.

THANKS TO EACH OF YOU!!!

Until next time - Bob Barnett

Most freight trains and especially through freight trains originate and/or terminate in freight yards. I suppose it would be possible for some through freights to originate from a multitude of industries instead of a yard, but that seems highly unlikely. Sometimes getting out of a yard with your freight train can be kind of daunting if it's a busy yard. Settegast Yard in Houston, which was once an MP yard on the HB&T and is now a UP yard, was just such a busy yard. Trains 195 and 359 were Kingsville Division trains that originated in the yard about 12 hours apart, one of them generally around midnight.

These trains almost always departed from the numbered tracks on the west side of the yard—the tracks nearest to the engine house. I think we called it the roundhouse, though it was not round and certainly had no turntable. It had an interesting wye though. The railroad evidently did not own the property on the other side of the road that went down the west side of the yard, so the tail end of the wye went onto the street, but did not go past the far edge of the street. I think they had just enough room to turn a lash-up of diesels. Today the wye stops just short of the street, leaving 200 feet between the end-of-track and the wye switch.

Typically, the engineer and head brakeman showed up at the roundhouse by the designated time, while the conductor and rear brakeman showed up at the crew shack that was in the middle of the wye at the south end of the yard. If I was head brakeman on one of these trains, I would get to the roundhouse usually a few minutes early. I would find the roundhouse foreman or other worker in the know and ask him where the power was for my train, and then I'd go get on the engines.

If the engineer was not there yet, I'd just sit tight until he showed up. Even if he was already there, there would be nothing for me to do initially, because the engineer would be busy checking out his engines for five to ten minutes. Once in a while the engineer would be all ready to go. Perhaps this means he showed up early and checked out his locomotives before he was officially on the clock.

Once the engineer was satisfied, he or I would request a radio check if he hadn't already done that, and then get permission to leave the roundhouse. Once in a while there would be a blue light or flag blocking the way and we'd have to wait until the person who put it there removed it. Then we'd call the tower to find out where the train was at. The tower would tell us what route to take to get to the train. As I mentioned, the train was usually in the (I think they were) 50-series tracks on the west side of the yard oriented so we would be leaving out the south end of the yard—either down the East Belt to South Yard or over to Belt Junction. Once in a purple moon (even rarer than a blue moon), the train would be oriented to head out the north end of the yard. Why they would set it up that way I never figured out. That would add at least 15 or 20 minutes to your cross-town travel—maybe even more because there were only a couple of leads on that end of the yard, so it was always more subject to delays, and going that way put you through more junctions/interlockings, so you'd just be begging for even more delays. It was more common to come into the yard from the north end than to exit by the north end.

Sometimes, the train might be in one of the R tracks (R1 through R6) on the east side of the yard by the new tower, and we'd usually head out south from there, but on rare occasions maybe head out north.

As the locomotives made their way out of the roundhouse tracks, I'd be on the ground lining switches. Then I'd get on the steps of the engine to go down the lead. There could easily be delays. A train could be arriving on the lead and you couldn't get cleared out of the round house. A switcher might also be blocking things. Eventually, you'd get to your train. If you had to line switches through a crossover, you had to be careful to line them back so some switcher wouldn't get off on the wrong lead.

Once on your train, you still weren't ready to leave. The engineer would have to do a set and release with a carman on the caboose who would check the air pressure and walk the train. Once the set and release was out of the way, we would finally be ready to

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leave the yard. When the carman was satisfied with the train, he'd usually wish you a safe trip. While all this was being done, the rear end crew would still be sitting in the crew shack.

Now the train was again subject to the some of the same delays as before, and if the carman had found a car with bad-order brakes, we'd have to set it out on a track somewhere, which would require another call to the yardmaster to find out what track to put it in—after which we'd set it out, and get back on the train. I think I remember one time while we were setting out a bad order car, we were blocked in the set-out track while a train came down the lead into the 50-series yard tracks.

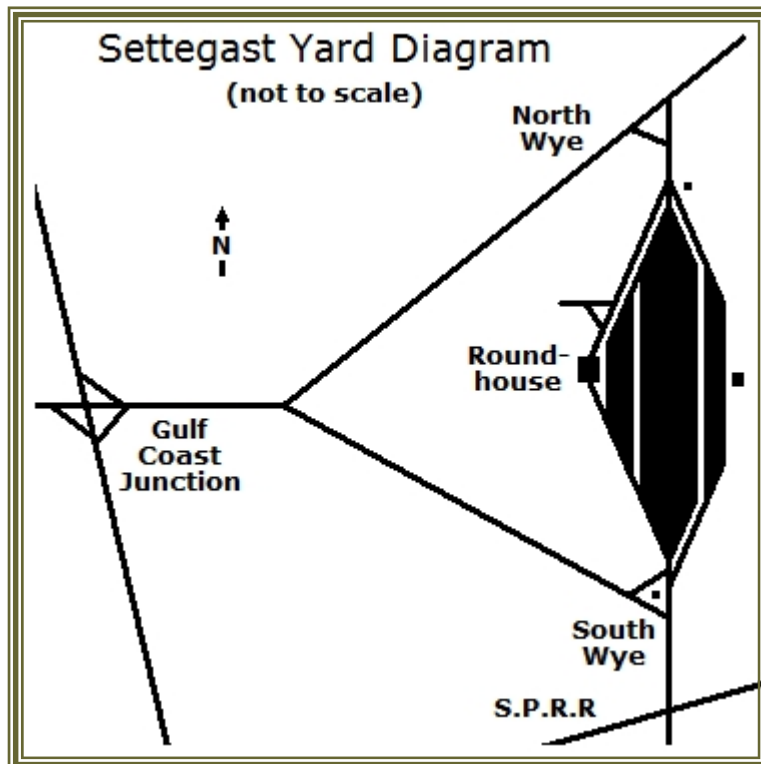
Eventually, you'd get cleared out of the yard, and you would drag slowly by the yard shack so the rear end crew could board the caboose. The first thing they would do would be to check the air pressure to make sure they had a good train line, despite the fact that an air test had just been done. If you were going out the

East Belt instead of over to Belt Junction, you might get delayed at the interlocking under the hump at Englewood Yard, but eventually that blockage would be gone, and you could finally leave the yard.

Working your way across the HB&T could also be subject to delays, but that is beyond the scope of this article.

I could write about the delays getting into the yard, but they are pretty much the same kinds of delays, except in reverse order. One factor affecting the delays on entering a yard is how much time you have left on the clock. If you are about to go on the hog law, the yardmaster will probably be less likely to delay you, since he doesn't want to take the chance of you hoglawing and blocking his lead, and having to get a crew on your train to move it out of the way. That would cause him even more delays.

Tie-up time. You the reader must stay on the clock to read this, but I as the writer must tie up. The white shirts don't like us writers staying on the clock while you readers read, so if you find a typo, sorry, I'm off the clock.



Announcements

Experience Three Days of Steam and Diesel!

*Return to Spruce • Big Cut & Beyond • Including Night Photo Sessions
May 16-18, 2014*

The information about the 2014 Cass railfan trip is now up on their website.
<http://www.msrlha.org/rfw/index.html>

Our most senior club member, David Milton, fell and fractured his hip just before Thanksgiving. The fracture was at the outer edge of his hip away from any moving parts, thus he is not in much discomfort. After a brief hospital stay he was transferred to Laurel Court Rehab in Alvin to regain strength and balance. He later developed swelling in his leg and then an internal infection which put him back in the hospital for a while for treatment and evaluation, but he has again returned to rehab in Alvin.

The rooms in the rehab center do not have phones, and Dave hates cell phones so you can't reach him by phone, but it would be great if he could hear from you in other ways.

Email at: jpcmd@neto.net

Snailmail at: 1201 County Road 668, Alvin, TX 77511

His daughter Pam will deliver your email, card or message.
Thank you!

February Minutes

Gilbert Freitag

Meeting minutes February 4, 2014

President Dick Louvet called the meeting to order at 7:00PM and welcomed all current members and guests. We had 3 visitors.

Vice president Rex Ritz introduced this month's program by Rick Jones on "micro Controllers for Layout Control and Animation. This replaced the scheduled Richard Bartlett presentation which is moved to next month.

Rick stated with some definitions. A micro controller is a small computer on a single chip with internal memory and programmable I/O pins. They are cheap, versatile, easy to learn, and can do multiple functions with one chip. Rick focused on the Arduino, open source boards. These are programmable using Win-

dows, Mac or Linx systems. They are low cost. They have many helpful sample programs online. They are widely available from many sources. The Arduinos typically use a USB cable for program input, a 5 volt DC power source, and have several combinations of analog and digital input and output pins. Sample uses can be random light flickers to represent an arc welder or making "chase light" display signs. Servos can be controlled by using variable pulse widths to control variable rotation angles. Both analog and digital servos are currently available, they both function the same but digital servos have more accurate control and analog servos have a cheaper price. There are libraries of code to let you just program the desired angle of rotation, without getting into all the detailed control logic. Rick demonstrated a detailed example of dual railroad crossing gates and three position semaphores.

To get started, Rick recommends a Arduino series board, IDE software (from a free download), a USB cable, and a Starter/Experimenter Kit (available from many sources). Micro controllers are available locally from Fry's, Micro Center, Radio Shack, and Ace Electronics, and on-line from Mouser, Digi-key, Sparkfun, among many others. Hobby King is a good source for cheap servos of various types.

Next month's meeting will be by Richard Bartlett on Model RR lights/LEDS.

Vice president Rex Ritz passed around sign-up sheets for future programs and refreshment volunteers.

The minutes from last month were approved as published in the Derail.

Treasurer's report, Gilbert Freitag:

Expenses:

\$2,500 train show front door start up cash

Income:

\$540.00 Train show table sales

\$3,982.57 Ending balance

New Business:

Bob Ellis would like a driver to transport him to and from the monthly meetings. He can't drive after dark. He lives in the Meyerland area.

Ed Rains is in good spirits. His chemo is going OK and he is also getting radiation treatment.

Dave Milton is back in S.E. Memorial Hospital and is getting about 3 hours of rehab per day. Dave would like visitors, phone calls and/or emails to boost his moral. He still has balance problem, so he falls a lot.

Rudy Freud, a past member who lived recently in Austin, has passed away.

Website:
no report

LSR:

Bob Barnett reported on the board meeting. The annual convention in in Round rock the year and Beau-

mont next year. Proceeds from the convention raffle will go to the hosting group.

Division 8:

Chili Cook off coming in April.

Derail: Bob Sabol

Bob asked for more articles. Remember the deadline in the 15th of the month. Bob thanked his daughter for all her hard work putting together the Derail each month.

Yahoo Group:

<http://groups.yahoo.com/groups/SJMRRC>

There can be postings of people wanting to sell/give away RR related items.

NMRA:

no report

Greater Houston Train Show, Feb 15th, 2015, 10:00AM to 4:30 PM

Bob Barnett passed around some sign up sheets for a few more volunteer spots that need to be filled.

Steve Sandifer has 7 clinics locked in by: Al Partlow, David Currey. Will Gage, Steve Barclay, Rick Jones, Phil Stewart, and Steve Sandifer.

Tom Bailey has the San Jac sales table ready to go.

Craig Brantley in working out a "limited" layout tour list.

Robert Ashcraft reported that the sales tables are sold out...again.

The model contest is questionable, depending on someone to run it..

Refreshments were thanks to Tom Bailey and Virginia Freitag.

Steve Sandifer volunteered to bring them next month.

Meeting adjourned at 8:40 PM

General comments:

-Respectfully submitted,

Gilbert Freitag,
Secretary / Treasurer



San Jac RR Club Meetings take place
the first Tuesday of each month
at 7pm

Bayland Community Center
6400 Bissonnet St. Houston, Tx

[Click here for directions](#)
Visitors are always welcome!



Officers

President: Richard Louvet
rlouvet@att.net

Vice-President: Rex Ritz
icrex@yahoo.com

Secretary/Treasurer: Gilbert Freitag
gilbertfreitag@att.net

Director: Robert Ashcraft
crash8473@comcast.net

Derail Staff

Editor: Bob Sabol
bsabol@stillmeadow.com

Production: Terri Brogoitti
tbrogioitti@stillmeaow.com

Regular Contributors:
David Currey
texasandlouisiana@msn.com

sanjac.leoslair.com

Do Not Use www.

Webmaster: Brian Jansky

Next Meeting

TUESDAY, MARCH 4

Model Railroad Lighting, LED's by Richard Bartlett, VP
Houston N Crowd

Refreshments: Chris Tolley and Virginia Freitag

Video Corner

Interesting mini train in Oregon

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ng5_rQRy0wg

Guess the Layout!



Answer to February's Guess the Layout: Dan Droogleever