



# The DERAIL

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## From the President

By Robert Barnett

It has been a hot and wet summer and as I write this we are expecting between 15 and 30 inches of rain in the next few days, a result of living along the Texas Gulf Coast – during Hurricane Season. I hope you, your home and railroad stay dry.

I would like to thank Dave Currey for this excellent clinic on RPO's presented at the August meeting. Being a dyed-in-the-wool passenger train fanatic I was very interested in the subject. The RPO's, the Railway Mail Service, the Railway Express Agency and the LCL freight business have all been casualties of the modernization of the railroad industry and our way of life. And they are all something I remember and miss.

Speaking of something I remember and will miss: we all got the surprising news that G&G Model Shop is moving. I will always remember the good times at the old location and the fact that I could walk to the old shop location. The bright side is the shop is not closing or leaving town but merely moving about a mile to the north, closer to the Southwest Freeway. G&G is without question the oldest surviving hobby/model shop in the state of Texas. The closing of Halls Hobby Shop in Dallas a few years ago eliminated the question of who was first. Both shops opened shortly after World War II and were mainstays of the hobby in their respective cities. We wish G&G the best in their new location.

I truly appreciate the ability to visit local hobby shops and they have been great supporters of the San Jacinto Model Railroad Club and our activities. Where I grew up in small town northeast Texas the closest hobby shops were Halls in Dallas (102 miles away) and Two States Hobby Shop in Texarkana (90 miles away). But even if you drove all the way to Texarkana you might not find Two States. When I was in high school a buddy of mine and I drove his 1947 US Army surplus Jeep to Texarkana looking for parts in a scrap yard there and to visit Two States. After driving up and down old US 59 South several times we gave up. It simply was not there. It wasn't until years later I found out that the Two States Hobby Shop was located in the lobby of the Two States Motel on US 59. To use a now popular phrase "Who Knew???"

I am looking forward to the Fall, and some cooler weather..... and to our annual Layout Tour.

See you at the September Meeting.

*Bob Barnett*

## REALISTIC OPERATIONS ON YOUR MODEL RAILROAD 21 BY AL PARTLOW

In this episode of the series, we are going to examine the critical role of the “dispatcher” on our model railroads. Regardless of the era you model or the size of layout you have, some member of the group must provide some form of direction to the other operators during the session. On a small to medium size layout, this can be simple verbal instructions or the issuance of “track warrants” in order to keep trains moving over the railroad. On larger layouts, the dispatcher must not only communicate with yardmasters and road crews, but also with station and tower operators, especially if the railroad utilizes a Timetable and Train Order operating system.

On the prototype, a good dispatcher must be aware of several key elements of his job. First, he must have a detailed knowledge of the appropriate Operating Rules Book and Timetable. Second, he must have strong familiarity with the geographic territory or line segment for which he is responsible. Third, he must be aware of the motive power capabilities assigned to trains on his operating division or subdivision. Finally, he must know the operating personnel, both engineers and conductors, and how their abilities affect any operating decisions he must make.

On a model railroad, the role of dispatcher usually falls to the layout owner or at least a regular member of the operating crew. In some instances, there will be someone who is confident that he is fully capable of performing this task and requests the job. Sometimes this is a person that performs such work in real life or is simply one who has extensive knowledge of the railroad and is not intimidated by the role. I would not recommend that a person visiting a layout for the first time accept this position

unless he meets one or both of these criteria. Not only will it create additional stress for you personally, but also seriously impact the overall fluid operation of the railroad for the rest of the operators as well.

One of the key tools in performing the dispatcher function is “The Dispatcher Record of Train Movements” or “Dispatcher Sheet”. This document provides a format that includes space for all of the various information the dispatcher needs to keep up with train movements over the railroad in a given time period. Included on this form is a sequential listing of stations for which the dispatcher is responsible, the specific train numbers operating during that period, the names of the crew members on those trains and space for any unusual occurrences or delays to train movements. If using a Timetable and Train Order operating system, the effective date of the timetable is also noted on this form and that timetable is used for reference purposes.

If there are enough people present at a session, allowing for one or more to work as actual “operators” for a specific station or stations, then the dispatcher simply dictates train orders to those individuals who, in turn, write the orders and/or clearance forms and provide them to the crews. In many cases, the dispatcher handles those functions himself and provides to the crew before their run. It may be possible to pre-write some orders and clearance forms in advance which lessens the work load for the dispatcher during the session. However, he still must be able to write new orders as situations develop over the course of the session.

The dispatcher must also communicate with yardmasters at various locations on the railroad to make sure they are aware of arriving trains at

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their terminal. In turn, the dispatcher receives information from the yardmasters on the status of trains ready to depart. If passenger operations are involved in a session, the dispatcher must also communicate with station masters regarding arriving and departing trains.

So, let's look at an example of a particular train movement over a segment of railroad and see how the dispatcher job works in actual practice. In this case, our dispatcher will be working the "daylight" shift on the Texas & New Orleans Hearne Subdivision. The initial action is to review the current "Dispatcher Sheet" to determine which trains are still on the railroad and which ones have completed movement during the previous shift. He must also communicate with Houston Englewood Yard and Hearne Yard to determine which trains are ready for departure. A quick review of the Dispatcher Sheet and the timetable will also show what passenger trains will be handled during the shift.

While both overnight passenger trains have completed their runs, the morning passenger train between Houston/Dallas #15 is on the railroad and the Dallas/Houston counterpart #16 will be on the sub later in the morning. These are both First Class Trains and are "superior" to all other trains on the railroad. This must be kept in mind when planning "meets" with various Second and Third Class Trains as well as "Extras". The dispatcher must also handle the movement of the Third Class Hearne/Houston Local #56 which is already on the railroad and currently switching at Bryan, Texas. Communicating with the Englewood Yardmaster, the dispatcher learns that Second Class Freight #257 is ready for departure with sixty cars for Dallas and North Texas connections. The train length is important for the dispatcher to know in planning "meets"

with other trains enroute to Dallas. Allowing #257 time for "set outs" in Navasota, the dispatcher must already begin planning for a "meet" with the Dallas/Houston First Class Passenger Train #16 which is due in Hearne at 11:30 AM.

Knowing that delaying the passenger train is not good for job security, the dispatcher decides that he will issue an order to the Navasota and Hearne Operators for both trains scheduling a "hard meet" at College Station. This will allow time for the set out at Navasota and still give #257 time to make it to College Station and get "in the clear" for the passenger train. Note that an order is not necessary for Local #56 as the crew knows that the passenger train usually runs on schedule and they must be off the "main track" well in advance of the "trailing" passenger train.

For those of you with more modern era layouts, the job of the dispatcher is one of more direct communication via radio with train crews regarding "meets" and other operational issues such as track maintenance, signal or turnout malfunctions and any special situations that may develop. If you have a layout with Centralized Traffic Control (CTC), the dispatcher also sets signals and turnouts as required for a smooth flow of traffic. As distances and time on our model railroads are more compressed, the dispatcher must react in a more expedient manner to keep trains moving safely and efficiently, which keeps things interesting, to say the least.

While the dispatcher's job is very busy, it is never boring and can be lots of fun. Give this job a try and see how effective you can be running a railroad.

One day during the summer after my freshman or sophomore year in college, I was at home in Lafayette, Louisiana for the summer months. This would have been about 1971 or 1972. My mother worked as a representative for Scholastic Magazines, and her territory was southwest Louisiana. Her supervisor was in Baton Rouge. Her main duties were to attend various teacher meetings around that part of the state and set up a display of the various Scholastic products and answer questions. She didn't handle orders. One day she had such a meeting to attend in Opelousas, which is about 20 miles north of Lafayette. Opelousas was the junction of the Houston–New Orleans mainline of the Missouri Pacific Railroad and the Southern Pacific branch from Lafayette to Alexandria, Louisiana. I knew all of this at the time, but was not aware of an ex-Texas and Pacific branch that at that time extended from Opelousas southwest down to Church Point.

She invited me along, and I worked it out with her so that part of the time while she was set up with her display at the meeting, I would borrow her car and drive around Opelousas looking at the rail sites.

I seldom went to Opelousas, other than passing through there to other parts of the state, and attending high school football games when we played in their home stadium every other year. Excuse me while I digress: At one of their games against Lafayette in Lafayette's stadium, I witnessed what to this day is still the most blatant example of outright cheating I have ever seen by a referee—bar none. There was about thirty seconds left in the first half, and Lafayette was down inside the Opelousas 10 yard line, and ran a play towards the middle of the field down to about the 2 yard line.

That was where the cheating started, and to this day, pardon the expression, I hope that that referee is rotting in a place that is very hot and the sun doesn't shine. With about 12 to 15 seconds to go on the ticking clock, the head referee set the ball up for play, and walked out presumably to blow the whistle to commence play. Lafayette's offense was set up and ready to roll, and should have had time to run two plays. But he didn't blow the whistle—he walked back in, repositioned the ball, and walked out again. The clock was still ticking. Still no whistle.

He walked back in and repositioned the ball a third time, and walked out again. Still no blasted whistle. There was something about the ball that perturbed this lousy low-life of a loaf. Maybe the laces weren't facing exactly straight up. Maybe the ball was sitting at an angle with the nose down. Maybe the color of the ball contrasted too much with the color of the dirt. Who knows, but that blasted no-good cheating rotten ref.

With about two seconds left on the clock, the Lafayette offense ran the play anyway and scored a touchdown. The crooked ref called the play back, of course, which was unfortunately in accordance with the rules. Funny that there are no rules to keep crooked referees from running out the clock. Now with the clock officially stopped, he could not simply let the clock run out, which was obviously the crooked refs original plan. He had to blow his whistle to start play, and this time Lafayette ran the play and did not score. End of half. Lafayette ended up losing the game by less than a touchdown.

One of the Lafayette assistant coaches had to be physically restrained from running out on the field and clocking that ref. I think he probably would have, too, as he was my PE coach, and I knew what kind of temper he had. The stadium was in an uproar. I have not mentioned any names here, but eternity knows the truth, and I am calling out that cheating ref. You are a no-good lousy cheating low-life scoundrel of a wadded up piece of cow excrement, and I hope you rot in that place that is very hot and the sun doesn't shine.

Steve Sandifer is going to call me out on this one.

Back to the story. My mother drove us up to Opelousas, and I believe the meeting was at the high school. I helped her carry her stuff into the meeting, and then I took off in the car.

I headed west a few blocks over to the north-south SP line first. I had never really been there to look at the SP, so wasn't sure what was there. It was my lucky day, and the Lafayette–Opelousas Turn was there switching an industry a mile or so south of the interlocking with the MP. The power might have been an SW7—I really don't remember—but I think it was probably an Alco, as the SP had a lot of those

in Lafayette, but I was not very good at distinguishing locomotives by type and model back then, and still am not today. At that time, the SP also ran a daily Lafayette–Alexandria through freight on the line, that entered Alexandria on trackage rights on the ex-T&P. One year, the Ringling Brothers, Barnum & Bailey circus train used that line to get to Lafayette, and I was down at the depot to watch them arrive in town. Back then, there were several tracks near the depot, including the freight station track, and they probably parked and unloaded the train there. Perhaps the cars with animals and equipment were parked in the freight yard about three miles to the west, and the passenger cars were parked at the station, which was right near downtown and many restaurants.

Back to my Opelousas escapade: I parked west of the crossing on an east-west side street that crossed the tracks, and got out to watch what was going on. I had my trusty Kodak Instamatic camera, and took a couple of photographs as well. While I was standing there, the locomotive stopped about 200 feet away, and somebody climbed down off of it and started walking straight towards me. Uh oh, I'm in big trouble now. Maybe they did not like me taking pictures of them. I wasn't trespassing on railroad property, so other than the picture taking, I couldn't think of anything else they might be upset about.

When the man got about two-thirds of the way to me, I recognized him. He was Mr. Breaux, who was the father of one of my buddies in the Lafayette High School Band named Conrad Breaux. Conrad was one heck of a tenor saxophone player, and he also went on to be drum major after I graduated from Lafayette High. Two of Conrad's brothers, Richard and Andre, were also in the band, or would be. Only the oldest brother, Patin, was never in the band.

Mr. Breaux simply wanted to say hello, and we stood there and chatted for a couple of minutes. Suddenly, somebody from the cab yelled at Mr. Breaux in French, seemingly in anger, but it was hard to tell. Mr. Breaux yelled back, also in French. They yelled back and forth several times, all in French. I think what the man in the cab was yelling was something to the effect of, "That's enough chatting. We need to get on with our work." Mr. Breaux talked with me

another 30 seconds or so, and then walked back to the locomotive. I think the SP branches around Lafayette were probably the only railroad properties in the entire United States where some, maybe even most, of the train crews conversed in French. I wonder how "That'll do" translates into Cajun French?

Mr. Breaux also told me that the branches in and around Lafayette and New Orleans had its own seniority district, and was known as "The Branches". Besides the aforementioned line through Opelousas to Alexandria, there was a line east to Breaux Bridge that used to go all the way to Port Allen opposite Baton Rouge on the Mississippi River, but that branch was cut in half after a hurricane in the late 1920s, and a bridge over the Atchafalaya River was never replaced. For awhile, passengers were shuttled across the river on a barge, with passenger shuttles from both Lafayette and Baton Rouge running to the river, but that was long, long gone by the 1970s. Breaux Bridge also once had a 90-degree junction of other branches branching out from that town.

Another line came out of New Iberia and ran through Abbeville, which is about 15 miles south of Lafayette. This line continued on west until it turned north just south of Gueydan and crossed the Sunset Route at Midland, where it continued on north to Eunice. At Eunice there was an interlocking (with a swing gate) with the Missouri Pacific. The SP Midland Branch met the Rock Island coming down from Arkansas there.

There were also some other branches down around New Iberia, with one of them serving Avery Island and the world famous Tabasco Sauce company.

Back with my story: I then drove around and looked at the MP. The passenger depot there looked in very good shape, all painted white, like a passenger train could be going to stop there that very day. This was after Amtrak, of course, but little did I know that just a couple of years before then, passenger trains did actually stop there. I did not know that at the time, but I did know that people from Lafayette wishing to ride the train up to Shreveport or Dallas would go up to Bunkie to catch an ex-T&P train out of there.

I actually double-dated with Conrad once, to the

## In Trouble With the Train Crew

by David N. Currey

Junior-Senior Prom. (I believe he was a sophomore, but his date was a junior.) Actually, it was a triple-date with another buddy included. I remember the date mainly for one thing: It was the only time I ever got told off by a date. I was driving my parent's car, and on the way home from the prom, I stopped in front of my date's home to drop her off, and before I could get out of the car to walk her to the door, she unloaded on me about how she had had the most horrible time and I was a horrible person.

I was so shocked, I was speechless. All I could do was look over at the others. I remember Conrad was also speechless with a look of incredible disbelief on his face, as the others in the back seat also were. As my date got out of the car, she immediately went into a half-hearted apology, but I came away from that experience with one certainty: I was never asking her out again.

All the branch lines that worked out of Lafayette and New Iberia (over to Breaux Bridge from Lafayette, from New Iberia through Abbeville and over and up to Midland, the aforementioned line up to Alexandria, and several other short spurs) were included in a single seniority district. It probably included the line to Baton Rouge across Henderson Swamp before it was washed out in a hurricane back before about 1930. The through and local freights on the Sunset Route mainline were a different district. Sadly, the "Branches" district is mostly gone today. Some has been siphoned off into a shortline railroad, including the Midland branch, but only as far as Abbeville. When the shortline operator took over, the Branches trainmen probably had the option of transferring over to the new company or going to the bottom of the seniority roster on the mainline crew district.

That was the only time I recall having ever having talked one-on-one with Mr. Breaux for any length of time. I'm sure he passed away long ago, as he must have been at least 60 years old back in 1971 or 1972, but he was still alive during a Lafayette High Band reunion back in the late eighties that I attended. I especially remember one thing about Conrad's mother: One Saturday evening I was invited over to the Breaux's home for dinner, at their farm inside the Lafayette city limits about 1.5 miles from my home. Mr. Breaux was out working on the railroad. For dessert, Mrs. Breaux offered me a piece of pie. I accepted, and she served me an entire one-quarter of a large pie. And then she apologized that my piece couldn't be any bigger!

About six years ago, on a visit to see my Dad in Lafayette, I dropped by Conrad's place of business (he had his own insurance franchise—State Farm, I believe). We chatted for about a half hour about old times. I even mentioned my sport of disc golf, which I don't think he had ever heard about. I hadn't seen him in 20 years, and I'm glad I dropped by to visit him, because six months later I was attending his funeral.

The branch line to Opelousas and Alexandria ran right by the country club my parents belonged to: Acadian Hills. Occasionally, on a couple of my attempts at being a ball golfer, we would see a switch engine and a few cars heading to or from Opelousas. I don't know if Mr. Breaux was on any of those runs, but I like to think he was. Alas, the railroad line is gone, the golf course is grown up in weeds, and I need to tie this one up before I get too saddened by the "progress" of time.



## Notes From the Observation Car

By Don Formanek

In July of this year we took a family trip to Scandinavia. Our family does not like to cruise because of the large number of people that get off the ship at the same time. We also do not like tour packages because of doing the group activities and not being able to do things on our own. With the help of the internet, our oldest son had made most of the arrangements. We went to England, Denmark,

Norway and Sweden. Our adventure included taking a train from Manchester, UK airport to downtown Manchester and back to the airport; train from Oslo, Norway airport to downtown Oslo; subway system in Oslo; overnight ferry to Copenhagen, Denmark; flight from Copenhagen to Bergen, Norway; rental car to Flam, Norway.

In Norway, we drove through what had been the longest highway tunnel up until 2014. When we got to Flam we took a RIB (rigid inflatable boat) on the Sognefjord going to the towns of Aurlandsvagen and Gundvagen on Aurlandsfjord and Naeroyfjord. Sognefjord is the longest and deepest fjord in the world, a maximum depth of 4,291 feet deep with the cliffs surrounding the fjord rising almost sheer from the water to heights of 3,300 feet and more. On the boat ride, we were suited up in exposure suits, hats, gloves and goggles.

The railroad trip was the Flam Railway, one more of the trips on my scenic train rides bucket list. Before we boarded the train, I visited the railway museum. The train runs from the port at Flam to Myrdal where it connects with the mainline between Oslo and Bergen. The trip is 12.6 miles long. The train had two El 17 locomotives, one on each end. There were five B3 EMU passenger units between the engines, at peak periods they can use up to six. The overhead electric line is 15 KV 16-2/3 HZ AC. The power is generated at a hydroelectric plant about midway on the line. The train goes from just a few feet above sea level to 2,841 feet in that 12 miles. It is the steepest non-cog standard gauge railway. The maximum gradient is 5.5 percent (1:18) The railway is nicknamed the “20 railway” because it took 20 years to build, has 20 tunnels and a cost of NOK 20 million. The line was started in 1924 to be able to connect to Sognefjord to the mainline railway that was being built. The minimum radius of the track is 430 ft. Maximum speed up hill is 25 MPH, 19 MPH downhill. The train has five redundant braking systems. I did not know about that when I was there but I did see on the cars both normal brakes as well as disc brakes. I have not been able to find out about the other three systems. One article mentioned rheostatic brakes, what we call dynamic braking and electromagnetic brakes. One of the braking systems

may apply the braking force directly to the rail. The tunnels range in length from 36 ft. to 4,401 ft. Machines were used on only two of the tunnels, the other 18 were done by hand. There is one passing track on the line and it is flagged and the turnouts thrown by the crews.

The train makes a stop at the viewing platform at Kjosfossen falls and the passengers can get off to take pictures. On the upward trip, “Huldra” the wood nymph appeared on the rocks near the falls, and performed the folk song of the wood nymph. The line also goes by the 460-ft. free drop Rjoandefossen water fall, one of the highest free drops in Norway. When the line was first started and used steam power, the trip was 80 minutes uphill and 65 minutes downhill. In 1992 freight service was discontinued and it became a passenger only line. It is the third most popular tourist attraction in Norway. The El 17 locomotive is the fifth in the series of engines that has been in use there. There are six of them that have been in service since 1998. They generate 4,000 HP each and have 54,000 lbs. of tractive effort. They make 10 trips per day during peak season. In one spot on the line you can see five levels of railway. The railway crosses the river three times without using a bridge, they have constructed a tunnel to rout the river. Before the construction of the railway just a narrow, winding and steep trail fit only for pack-horses existed. There was a saying-“be kind to your horse and walk.”

A quote from Gebirgsbanen Europas, “without any doubt the Flam Railway is one of the most impressive mountain lines in the world”.

The trip was finished up with a stay in mountain cabins, car ferry ride, glacier hike, scenic road trip, flight to Stockholm Sweden, train from Stockholm to Oslo and our flights home.

## Scratch Built Shingles

When I started construction of my latest layout, I planned to scratch build most of my structures. I knew I would need a lot of shingles to cover the roofs and walls. There are many good sources for pre-made shingles but I've found them too expensive and/or hard to find. Scratch building some of the basic shingles and shakes is easy and inexpensive.

My On30 layout is set in 1920s Maine. Many of the buildings had wooden shakes or shingles on the walls and roofs. (A **shake** is a wooden shingle that was *split* from a knot free section of a log. A wooden **shingle** has been *cut* from a piece of wood.) For this article, we'll call them wood shingles.

The method I use for making strips of wood shingles is based on a technique I saw on a video by Gil Freitag. Here's how I do it:

- The shingles are made from 1/64" thick plywood. This is available at many hobby shops, especially those that specialize in RC models. The thickness works out to about 3/4" in O Scale. That's a little thick in the smaller scales.
- I cut strips 1 scale foot wide (1/4" for O Scale) using a sharp No. 11 blade.
- I've built a jig from two paint stirrers from one of the Big Box stores that allows me to cut 4 strips at a time. (See Fig 1) I use a small piece of blue painter's tape to hold the bundle of 4 strips together.
- The fixture consists of 2 stirrers and 1/8" strip wood spacers. I use small wood dowels for alignment.
- I insert the bundle of the plywood strips in-between the groove at the top of the fixture. I hold in in a small hobby vise as I make cuts **half way through** using a razor saw in an irregular pattern.



*1 - Cutting wooden shingle strips using a fixture, hobby vise and razor saw*

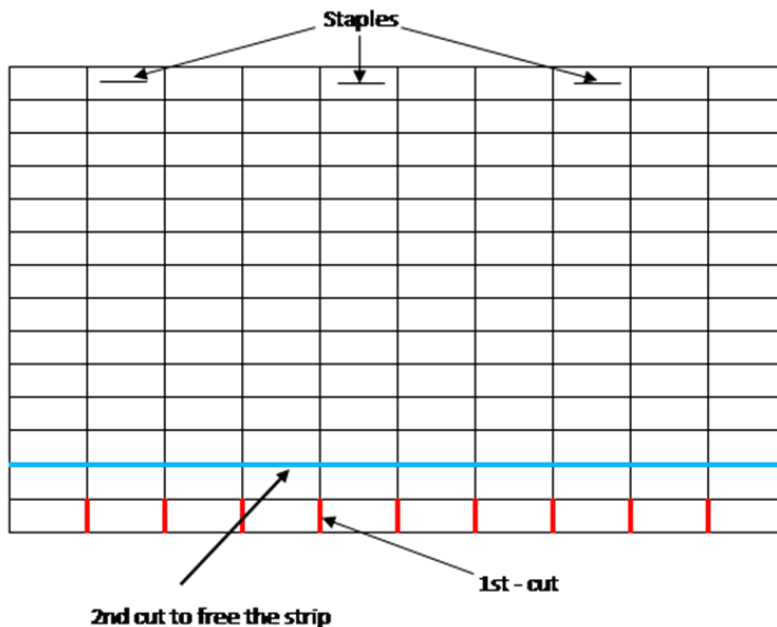
The strips of wooden shingles are applied with wood glue to the walls and roofs like the commercial versions. Most wood shingles have a 5 or 6-inch reveal. Since they are real wood, I can stain and weather them easily.



*2 - Crosby tank on my layout covered with home-made wooden shingles*

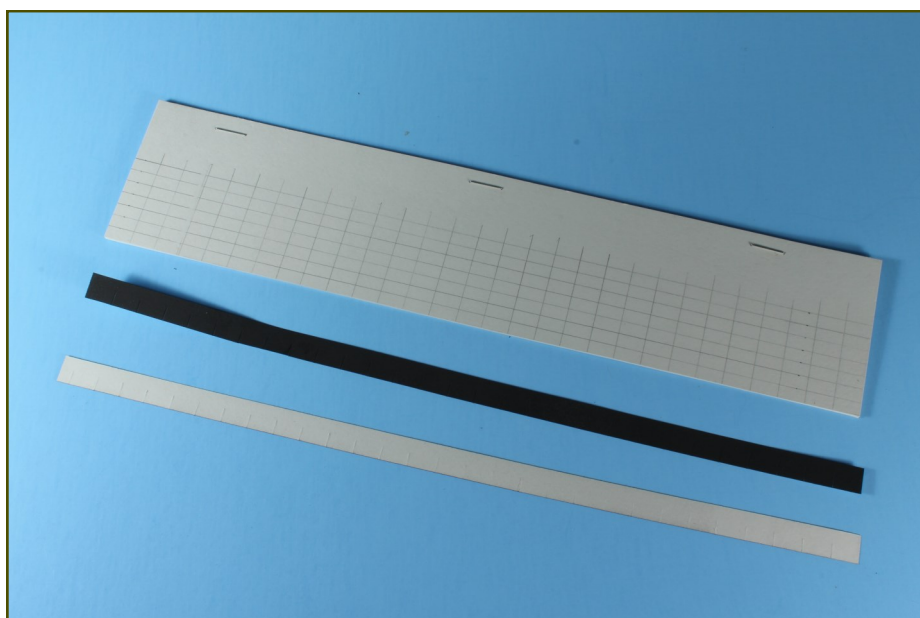
For asphalt shingles, I use a technique I saw in an article by Roger Baker Jr. in the November 1983 issue of *Model Railroader* (“Creating Shingles and a Mood.”) He used a *TV Guide* magazine to cut N Scale shingles. The old *TV Guides* were printed on light newspaper stock. I used this technique years ago on my N Scale structures. I have adapted it to make a typical 3-tab asphalt shingle for O Scale. Here is how I do it:

- Stack 3 or 4 sheets of heavy paper (I use old dividers from 3-ring binders being thrown out at work.) For smaller scales, I would use standard copier paper. (Remember when we used to call it “typing paper”?)
- With the edges on the stack as straight as possible, staple along one long edge, maybe ¼” in. This will hold everything together while you mark and cut the strips.
- I made my 3-tab shingles 12” wide per tab by 6” high. I mark parallel lines every 6 inches up the whole sheet.
- Next I draw lines 12 inches apart perpendicular to the 6-inch. See Fig 3 below.



3 - Diagram of shingle stack with cut lines identified

- I use a sharp #11 blade to cut through the short lines up to the first line to form the individual tabs. See locations in Red in Fig. 3. Use enough pressure to cut through all layers of paper.
- Using a metal straight edge and #11 blade, cut across the sheet 2 lines up from the bottom again cutting all the way through the stack. See the Blue line in Fig 3. This will free up one stack of shingle strips. Repeat this up the sheet as far as practical.
- I attach Blue Painter's tape sticky side up on a scrap piece of wood to hold the strips for painting. I painted them with spray paint from a can.



4 - Top is partial stack of marked up paper, middle is painted strip and bottom is cut but not painted

Now I just glue the strips to my roof substrate and trim the edges. Note that this method can be used to produce “wooden” shingles in smaller scales. Just cut the slits in an irregular pattern. They can be easily painted to look like weathered wood.



*5 - Paper Shingles Installed on Albion Station*

Making my own wood and asphalt shingles is easy and is more cost effective when I need large numbers to cover my roofs and walls. It's also another way to add a scratch built element to your structures. So, what's on your Hobby Bench?

*With the heart of the storm season here, I thought readers might get a chuckle, Dick*

## Modeling a Tree Limb Pile

by David N. Currey

*I know a lot of us went through a real hell the last few weeks, but maybe seeing some of it in a humorous light can help ease our pain. I am thankful that everyone is safe, and that most of our model railroads came through okay, and those that didn't can hopefully be salvaged.*

When opportunity knocks, answer the door. Hurricane Ike came knocking last month, and I realized that this gave me the opportunity to model a full-size tree limb pile. I worked real hard at modeling my tree limb pile over a period of more than a week, and it turned out quite realistic. I had never modeled a tree limb pile before, and I was a little apprehensive. I mean, what would the neighbors think if I put up a hideous tree limb pile in my front yard? So, I put forth my best effort.

There were several types of trees, limbs, and leaves in my tree limb pile, and I varied the sizes of the components as well. Note: Be sure to include the obnoxious Chinese Tallow tree parts, since those trees are so prevalent in our area, as well as the common Oaks, Pines, Cedars, Magnolias, and other types of trees. It's okay to include tree parts from trees that weren't growing in your yard, since in real life, a hurricane can bring in tree parts from quite faraway. I laid the stuff so it was mostly perpendicular to the curb instead of totally at random. I think going to that extra bit of effort makes a tree limb pile look so much better. The tree parts that were the most realistic looking, I used at the front and top of the pile, with the odd-looking stuff hidden within or in back.

It was so believable, that I think most people thought it was a real tree limb pile. In fact, some of my neighbors commented that my "tree limb pile must have taken a lot of work". It was just a bunch of stuff I picked up out of the back and front yards that the hurricane had deposited. I heartily

recommend locating in a hurricane zone, because the residue left over after the big blow is of such good quality, that it really makes modeling full size tree limb pile quite easy. I used full size limbs for the tree limbs, and a lot of full-size branches for the branches as well. I could find limbs and branches with fresh breaks, while others had old breaks--even rotten. I even found some woodpecker holes in one rotten log, and made sure to place the log where they'd be easily noticed. Be sure to haul the stuff to the pile within about a week of the hurricane, because if you wait too long, a lot of the leaves will dry out and fall off when you move them. This sort of ruins the pile a little bit, but even with missing leaves, a tree limb pile can still be quite attractive. Note: Don't bundle up the components of a tree limb pile with twine or rope. There are usually so many limbs in a pile such as this, that a person making areal pile would not have the energy or patience to bundle up the stuff.

If I were to do it all over again, I think I would supplement some axe cuts for the bow saw cuts. Having all the cuts be bow saw cuts seemed a little unnatural to me when I assessed the finished product at the end of the modeling project. Another mistake I made, and it was due to inadequate planning on my part, was that I planted a scratch built wood fence pile behind the tree limb pile, and so it was hardly viewable from the street. But, I knew the wood fence pile was there, and that's what counts.

However, my modeling of the tree limb pile was so effective and believable, that the hurricane clean-up crew that came by hauled it all away, leaving the wood fence pile to be viewed in all its scenic beauty. So, remember, don't skimp on the piles behind the one on the street, because when the front pile is picked up, any modeling inadequacies in the back piles will be sorely evident.

I think the most rewarding part of the project was when the clean-up crew picked up my scratch built tree limb pile model thinking it was a real tree limb pile. When that happened, I knew I had done a good job.

President Bob Barnett called the meeting to order at 7:00pm.

## Clinic

David Currey gave a clinic on Railway Post Office operations from the 1800s to the systems demise in the mid 1900s. The clinic included several informative videos.

## Refreshments

Virginia Freitag and Denny McGonigle handled punch and cookies for the meeting.

## Treasurer's Report

The June 30 bank balance was \$11,880.15.

Expenses for the month were a \$100 rebate to the Houston Area G Scalpers for their floor layout at the Train Show and \$151 for floor standing sign holders for next year's Show.

There was one correction from the July minutes. Richard Bartlett was mistaken for Richard Burton. My apologies to Richard and to the late Mr. Burton and his late wife, Elizabeth.

The July minutes were approved as amended.

## Fall Layout Tour

Craig Brantley submitted the 2017 tour dates as:

Nov. 4-5, I10 west, west Houston, Katy, I59 South, Sugar Land, Richmond

Nov. 11-12 North/East I45 north, Tomball, Spring, Cypress, Conroe, I10 east Cosby, I59 North, Kingwood

Nov. 18-19 Hockley, Navasota, Bryan/College Station. The only weekend without an A&M home game.

Nov. 25-26 Thanksgiving Layouts - Beaumont Area

Dec. 2-3 South... I45 south, Pasadena, Clear Lake, Dickenson, Friendswood, Pearland, Texas City, Galveston. (There will be one new layout from a deceased modeler who worked on his own but had a "magazine-quality" layout.)

Cross bucks for your lawn are available from Craig. Attendance at any one layout tends to drop from year to year. A solution is to highlight whatever NEW you have done to your layout. That can be highlighted in the Tour literature.

Steve Sandifer expressed the possibility of opening Jim Long's layout as a last time static display. A volunteer will be needed to set up.

## Greater Houston Train Show

We will be able to add more vendor tables by narrowing the aisles. The new width will be more than adequate.

The World's Greatest Hobby on Tour will be at the NRG arena two weeks before our Show. Bob Barnett said that if we advertise well at the WGH it will increase attendance at the San Jac event. We need to update our handouts. Dick Louvet will send the latest copy to Chuck Lind for updating and printing.

On the same note, Bob still has some boxes left to display the handouts at homes on the layout tour.

## Lone Star Regio/ Division 8

Jim Lemmond has been approached by the NMRA to share a booth at the WGH show (above). He will need volunteers

Kits are still available for the current make and take series. Mark Couvillion and Jeff Hamilton will be conducting a series of three clinics LED lighting, locomotive lights and Decoder Pro starting in September. Check the Division 8 website at: [www.texasgulfdivision.org](http://www.texasgulfdivision.org) for information.

LSR still needs nomination for the Youth Award. If you know of any youngster active in the hobby, please consider a nomination.

## New Business

Bob Barnett read a thank you note from Shirley Long for our donation in honor of Jim.

## Old Business

Richard Bartlett reported on the proposed Texas State Railroad outing. The steam run is only available as a dinner train for \$59.50 a seat. A bus would cost \$1000. Since the time is short, it was decided to table the proposed club trip until spring.

Robert Ashcraft volunteered to head the nomination committee for election of club officers in September. All the current officers have agreed to run again.

Robert was absent from the July meeting and wanted to personally thank everyone for their support of the LSR convention. He specifically mentioned Walt Pasciak for his almost constant work at the registration table.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:47.

Respectively submitted,

Dick Louvet  
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!



[www.sanjacmodeltrains.org](http://www.sanjacmodeltrains.org)  
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## Next Meeting

# TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 5

## “Freight Houses”

by

**Bob Barnett**

### Refreshments:

Virginia Freitag (drinks)

Robert Ashcraft (cookies)



## Video Corner

### The Mighty Hudson Steam Locomotive

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Or27m0Q-ZVU>





# The DERAIL

