



The Fireman's Seat

By Robert Bell, Division 15 Assistant Superintendent



Greetings! It is with sadness that I must announce that I will no longer be able to write the *Fireman's Seat* column, ---APRIL FOOLS!!

(I am sure some of you were hoping this was true...sorry!)

Model railroaders in general, seem to have a healthy sense of humor and have had since the beginning of the hobby. Medical studies of late, state that people who laugh a lot and have a good sense of humor, tend to live longer. They say laughter relieves stress. It is also widely accepted that a hobby that involves somewhat tedious work with one's hands also relieves stress. So, it would seem the two naturally go together. Many times our humor is "in the details", be it a name on a sign, the name of our pike, or the implied action of a figure (or figures) on our layout.

Model railroad manufacturers, past and present, have tried to capitalize on our sense of humor. The HO-scale, 'Gruesome Casket Company' was produced many years ago and is still available through Walther's. The Woodland Scenics' kit titled 'Outhouse Mischief' and 'The Bare Hunter' are funny and have been around quite a while, and are both still in production. Several manufacturers have made, and Woodland Scenics still makes a dog lifting it's leg on a fire hydrant. Hamm River Model Products sells a set of 'Flatulene' decals for the Bachmann On30 tank car, and I have successfully adapted these to an HO-scale Proto 2000, 10K tank car for a friend. One of the 'Flatulene' decal slogans is: "The Only True Natural Gas!", while another is "Ignites with a Bang!" (Shown on page 1.)

Some model railroaders have named their railroad humorously. The late John Allen's Gorre & Daphetid (pronounced: Gory & Defeated) is probably the best-known example. John Allen even had a child's plastic dinosaur, with a number stenciled on each side, pulling logs out of the woods. Recently, in the *Narrow Gauge & Short Line Gazette*, there were two articles on Al Askerberg's Owen Thurteah & Weystead On30 railroad. According to these articles, the official photographer of the line is a Mr. Otto Fauxcous.

My own venture into On30 several years ago started with a single Bachmann 0-4-0 Porter. But, I was at a loss for a place to run it. I decided to build a small (30x30") layout, and then I had the bright idea to eventually build it as a 'coffee' table. What to call it?? Well, the "Java Southern" was born. "The Route of the Espresso" is not complete, but it will have a station named "Foldger's", and a house labeled "Maxwell's". The planned vertical shaft mine will be the "Sanka Mine". There will be more, but you get the idea. Also, at the 27th National Narrow Gauge Convention last August, I took second place in the geared locomotive category of the model contest, with my On30 "Respite & Rountuit Railroad" shay #3, the "Bea Tardee". The Locomotive's engineer, R.E. Lackson and fireman, Lee Thargy are in no hurry; as they haven't moved, yet.

Some modelers like to play jokes on each other. Some years ago a friend, Mike Brock first posted a sign on Lou Ullian's Coon Creek Lumber Co, prohibiting logging do to spotted owls. Later, a spotted owl showed up on the big trestle on Lou's layout. Not long after that, a bear was seen in the woods near one of the logging camps. This all took place without Lou's knowledge; it's a good thing that Lou has a sense of humor.

Back in the April 1981, *Railroad Model Craftsman*, there was an article on EMD's BL-2 locomotives. In this article was a drawing for a high, short hood version, labeled as the N.& W./Southern Ry. variant. When the first offering in Life-Like Proto 2000 line was a BL-2 back in 1989, I ordered the extra parts and built a N.& W. high short hood BL-1, (the BL-1 was the prototype demonstrator for the BL-2). The very month that I finished this project (April 1996), *Model Railroading* ran an article by Jim Teese, MMR on his Southern Railway's BL-3, a dynamic brake version.

These are all humorous versions of a "never was" engine. But every once in a while, when I dig the engine out, someone will say "I didn't know they ever made one of those!" Sometimes I tell the truth, other times, well...

Many model railroaders have a sense of humor. Usually on the subtle side, but at times it can be "in your face". Either way, it comes out. We may snicker and nudge our buddy while pointing, or laugh right out loud. Or, we may laugh to ourselves, tickled that we "pulled one over on him". Humor can be found on many model railroads, even our own when and where we least expect it. Other model railroaders and non-modelers alike, seem to enjoy our humor. Model railroading is an outlet for stress relief. Humor also relieves stress. They go together. The two together, therefore, are healthy.

In the May *Fireman's Seat*, I'll talk a bit about my recent experiences with some resin freight car kits. Until then, remember: It's your club - get involved! Let's play trains, and have fun with our hobby!