



THE FIREMAN'S SEAT

By Robert Bell, Division 15 Assistant Superintendent



Greetings! I'm ba-ack!! My deepest apologies for the recent lack of the *Fireman's Seat* here in the *Semaphore*, I had computer problems and the shop had it for 2 ½ months. ARG!

So, some catching up is in order. First, from the "You Heard it Hear First, Dept.": *Railroad Model Craftsman* ran a product review in the June 2007 (pg. 103) issue on some of those cheap HO-scale vehicles from Wal-Mart, which I wrote about in last November's *Fireman's Seat*. And, in the August 2007 *Model Railroader* and the September 2007 *Railroad Model Craftsman* issues they both reviewed the Blackstone Models K-27. Just remember, you heard it here first!

Now, an update on those cheap HO-scale vehicles: There was a brand that I had mentioned last November in 1/24th scale with a 1970's Gremlin, Pacer and Pinto. Well, now those plus a Ford Escort, and a Mercury Bobcat, a Pinto wagon and others are available die-cast in 1/64th and 1/87th scales, under the brand name; *Fresh Cherries*. I recently saw them advertised in the monthly Walther's sale catalog for about twice the price that Wal-Mart charges. Also, most of these cars seem to be available in at least two different colors, the Gremlin, in three that I've seen. The *Malibu* name also has several new cars available here under the "Reels" name. These 1/87th scale cars are from a couple of motion pictures, most notably "Tommy Boy" and "Top Gun". Please note that Wal-Mart apparently likes to move/shuffle things around and all I can tell you is to look close around the toy department.

Okay. On to where I left off: joining the National Model Railroad Association or NMRA. Why join?

The NMRA is devoted to the promotion, enjoyment and development of our model-railroading hobby. By joining, you get access to what is probably the largest railroad reference library in the world. You get the association's magazine, *Scale Rails*, which is a far cry from the old *NMRA Bulletin*. The Achievement Program can help us all become better modelers within the hobby. The various region and national conventions offer the opportunity to see prototype railroading, contest models, to get inspiration from visiting other members' layouts and learning numerous new modeling techniques from the multiple clinics offered at each convention. The NMRA also offers insurance for our beloved models and our railroads. This is not a complete list of the benefits offered, for that I would direct you to www.nmra.org. But, the NMRA also works with manufacturers to insure that your *Kato* SD-whatever runs with your string of *Athearn* or *Walthers* 100-ton hoppers, and that your DCC decoders will operate in the same way across the various brands of DCC controllers. All in all, the NMRA is a most worthwhile organization to join.

Now, **WE NEED VOLUNTEERS FOR THE 2008 SER CONVENTION** to be held at Lake Junaluska, NC. Please contact either Fred Coleman or me about helping out. By volunteering now, you can have a positive impact on our convention and be proud that you were involved at the ground level.

In the December *Fireman's Seat*, we'll discuss not having room for a layout. Until then, remember: It's your club - get involved! (Become a convention volunteer!)

Let's play trains!