



# The Fireman's Seat

By Robert Bell, Division 15 Assistant Superintendent



## Greetings! And a Merry Christmas to All!

Some of you may say, "I love model railroading, but I just don't have room for a layout." Well, I am in that boat. So, what do we do? There are several options: build models for that "some day", when we have room for that dream layout, build a module for the club layout, build highly detailed dioramas, or build a "micro-layout". I'm not going to talk about building models for that dream day and will only touch on the modules and diorama aspects. Instead we'll spend most of our written dialog discussing very small layouts.

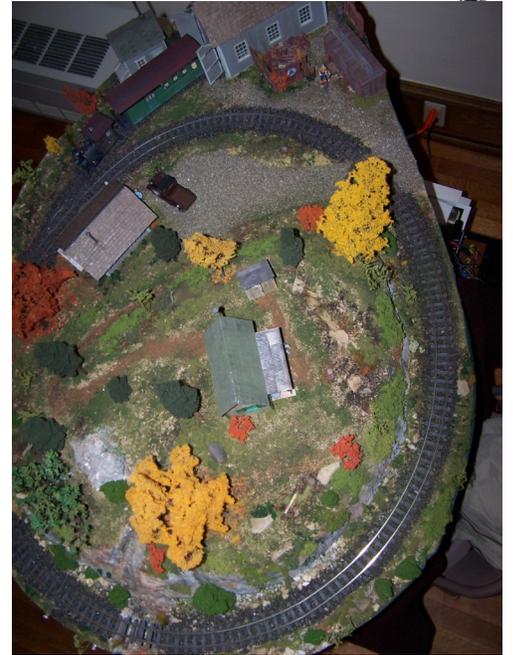
Modules offer a very easy way to enjoy model railroading without the huge expense or vast amount of room generally required for a home layout. Our club modules are 2-feet by 4-feet, and offer the ability to be shown at many train shows. They are also operated several times a month. You do not need a fleet of locomotives or cars to build a module, nor do you need to purchase an expensive DCC system. While building the module, you could leave the module at the barn or do the work at home, assuming you have eight square feet of space crying to be used. But, the module must mate with our other modules and usually have few or no "stand alone" capabilities.

Don't have eight square feet or don't want to conform to modular rules? I have a friend, Brian Nolan, who has built a number of incredibly detailed and award winning dioramas. His work has been in a number of national model railroading publications over the last several years. I believe he is now planning to incorporate some of these dioramas into a layout soon. But once again, a diorama offers little when it comes to operation.

Micro-sized layouts, as defined on Carl Arendt's web site (<http://carendt.com/index.html>) are: "small model railroads, usually less than three or four square feet in area that nonetheless have a clear purpose and excellent operating capability". If you want to visit a truly inspiring web site, no matter your scale or gauge, visit Carl's. Best of all small layouts are, by their size and nature, portable, and therefore easy to show off and spread the word of model railroading. Our November meeting's program by member Joe Norris was full of operational ideas and tips pertaining to small layouts.

I play in two scales, as I have noted before in this column, HO<sub>n</sub>3 and On30. I have no room for an HO<sub>n</sub>3 layout, but I do in On30. "What?" you say, "How can you not have room for HO<sub>n</sub>3, but have room for On30?" The answer is simple; my On30 empire takes up a little more than six square feet. That's right; it is 30 inches by 30 inches. It has about eleven linear feet of track in a folded loop with 10-inch radius curves and no turnouts (see top view of layout at right). Since one day it will become a coffee table, I saw no need for anything but a continuous loop. And, because it will be a "coffee" table, I have named it the "Java' Southern". I have a *Bachmann* 0-4-0 Porter locomotive, two scratchbuilt ore cars, two commercial-kit buildings, one 98% finished mine and have a vertical-shaft mine planned. I named the station "Foldger's" and the house "Maxwell's". The vertical shaft mine (still in planning) will be named the "Sanka Mine", and the little 0-4-0 is named "Jo". I have more humor planned, but the layout will feature a large amount of details for the serious model scrutinizer, (like a dozen O-scale coffee pots...).





In October, I attended Frank Pearsall's Narrow Trak '07 (see last month's *Semaphore* article by Ben Bartlett) and there were two layouts and a diorama there of interest as pertaining to this month's column. An aerial view of the first, seen above, is an On18" layout (On18" = O-scale or 1:48, running on N-scale or HOn30 track, which scales out to approx. 18" gauge.) measuring about 12 x 23", and depicts a small southwest mining tram. The other layout, shown right, was built by Dean Odiorne of Kingsport, TN, in On30", and is about 30 inches or so wide by about 48 inches long. When I asked Dean why the layout was shaped the way it is, he said that was the shape of the scrap foam he used as the base for the layout.



And lastly we have a very humorous On18 diorama; shown at left and below, portraying a caricature of Roswell, NM; replete with five hand-molded aliens and a wrecked flying saucer. The note across the bottom of the upper picture reads: "As the repairs progressed, some found work and some just found trouble." And the banner across the street in the second picture reads, "Roswell welcomes tiny travelers"

As shown here, there are several modeling options for those of us that "do not have room for a layout". Club modules, dioramas, offer an "out" for a lack of room, but have limited operation. Really small layouts all offer excellent modeling and operational possibilities. So, now you (and I) have no reason to ever say: "I don't have room for a layout" again.



In the January edition of the "Fireman's Seat" we'll talk about some on-line resources for modeling. Until then, remember: It's your club - get involved! (**Become a convention volunteer!**) Let's play trains!