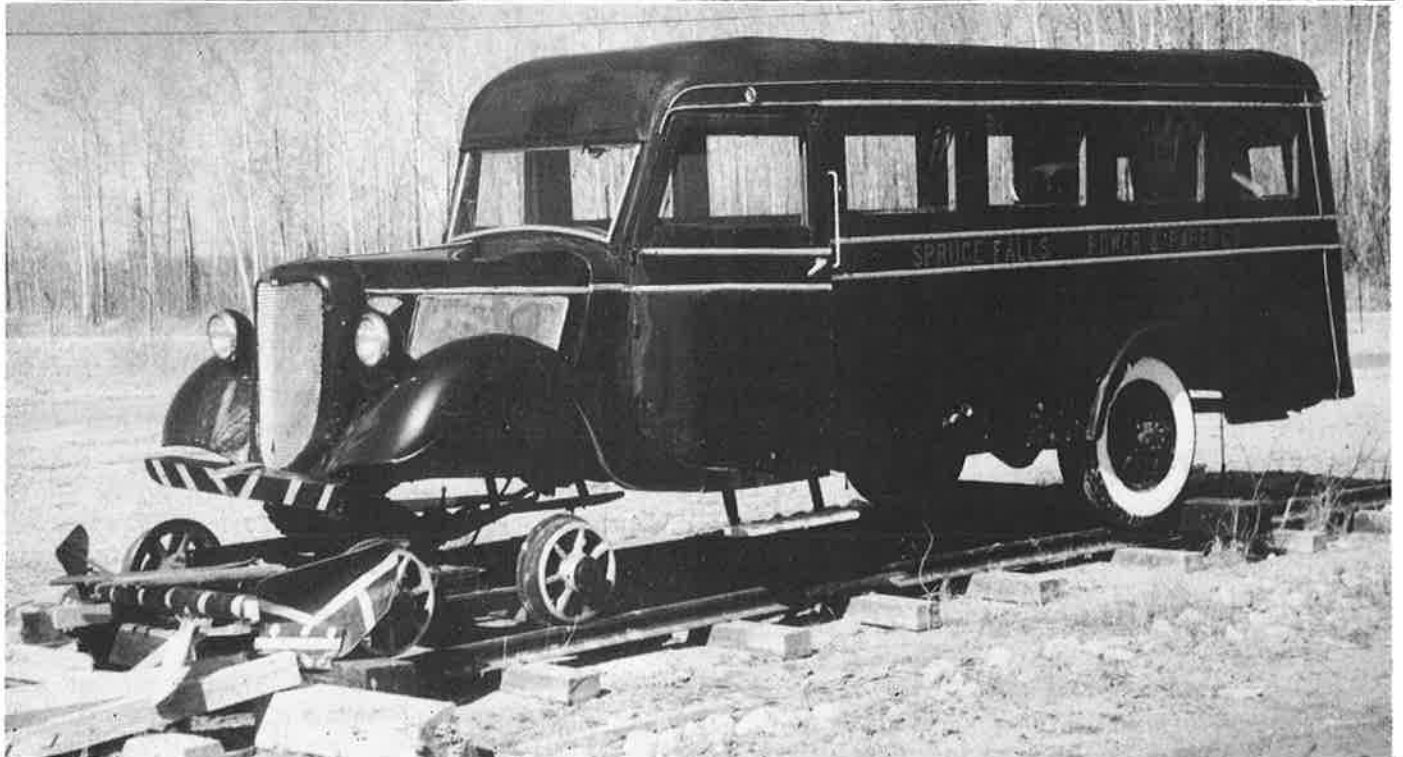
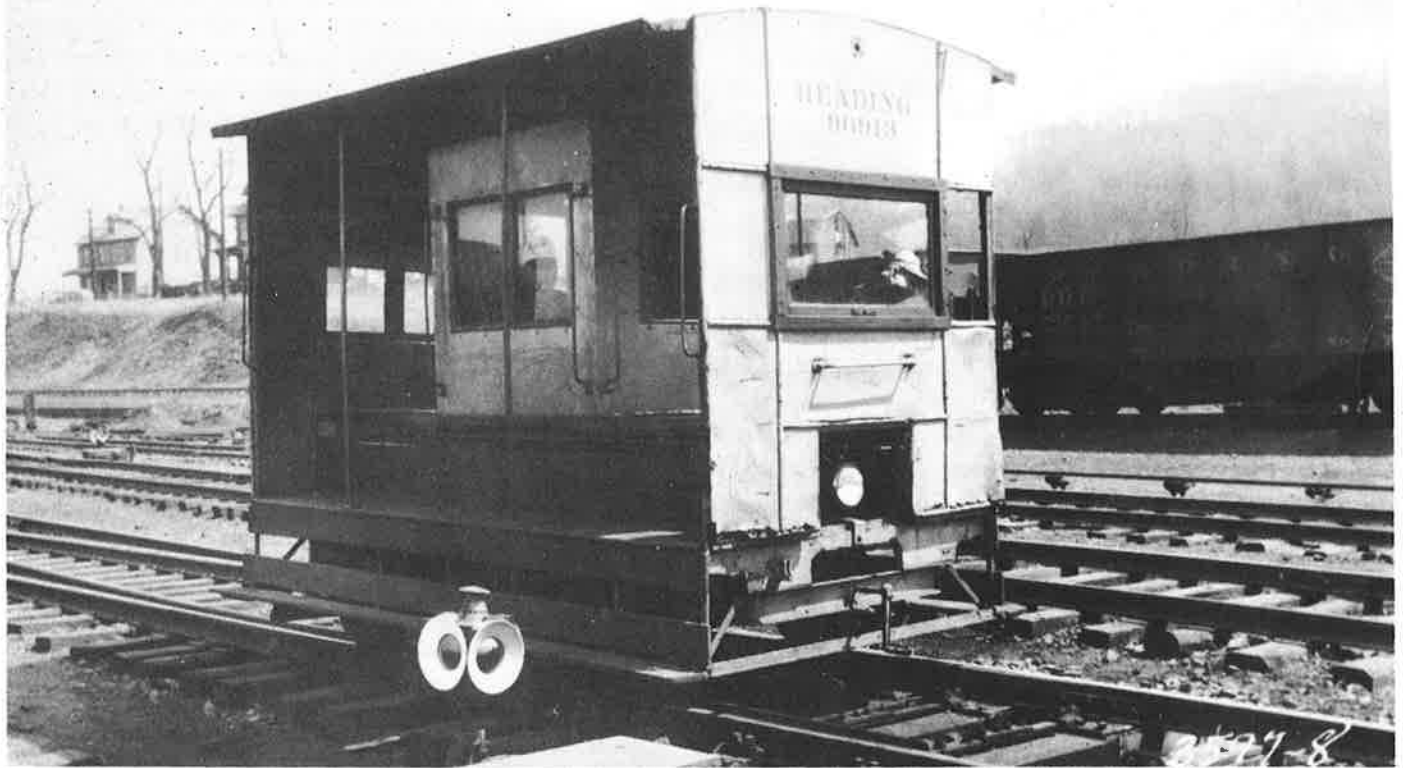
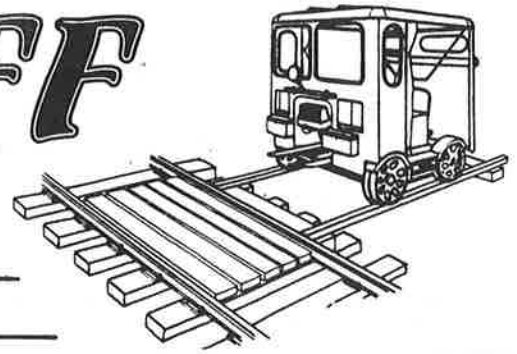


THE SETOFF

OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF THE NORTH AMERICAN
RAILCAR OPERATORS ASSOCIATION (NARCOA)

Spring, 1990



ORGANIZATION NEWS

By Joel Williams
Western Maryland M-19, No. 334

This last quarter has seen many new members and a lot of new roster entries. Membership cards have been sent to everyone, except those up for renewal this quarter. Those members will get their cards upon renewal. New rosters will be sent to all respondents in several weeks. Thanks for your patience.

Railcar manual coordinator, Francis Saunders is now publishing an eight page list of the manuals in the NARCOA archives. Write to him at: 46 Clark Gates Road, Moodus, CT 06469, for a free copy of the list. A SSAE would be appreciated.

NARCOA member Bruce Douglas was responsible for finding a very large amount of Kalamazoo literature. The manuals are owned by Kent Van Emst of Portage, Michigan, who graciously allowed us to copy them. Kent doesn't have an interest in track cars, but he collects various types of literature. Dudley Newman of Phoenix, Arizona contributed a goodly amount of Fairmont "A" series service manuals, and Walter Matuch sent some Reo railbus brochures. The collection is growing rapidly.

On April 7 and 8, several NARCOA members from the New York and New Jersey area participated in a work/run event on the Battenkill Railroad, which is northeast of Albany New York. The Battenkill was originally known as the Greenwich & Johnsonville Railroad, providing service between those two towns since the railroad was built, in 1870.

The line became a subsidiary of the Delaware & Hudson in 1907, providing service until the line was embargoed in 1981. The railroad was reopened, and renamed after the river which it follows, shortly thereafter by Mr. Ron Crowd, who currently serves as the Battenkill president.

COVER PHOTOS

Two railcars from the past grace our cover for this issue. In the top view, a Reading Lines Kalamazoo gang car on a late 1940's work detail in Pennsylvania was provided from the collection of Walter Matuch. The ancient Ford Railbus in the lower photo was photographed by Doug Leffler in Kapuskasing, Ontario in 1965, on the property of the Spruce Falls Power & Paper Company Railway.

The NARCOA work crew began their work with light brush cutting west of Greenwich and on to Thomson. Later in the afternoon, the crew loaded several scrap rails onto Battenkill pushcars, for transport back to Greenwich. The group continued the brush cutting and rail loading on Sunday, and finished up the day after a nice lunch at Shushan, and the run to the B&M connection. The group got a lot of much needed exercise, and the railroad gained improved grade crossing visibility and right-of-way improvement. NARCOA hopes to have similar work sessions in the future on the Battenkill.

A NOTABLE QUOTE FROM "THE TRACK INSPECTOR"

"On a motor car it's usually either too hot or too cold; and when its just right, it's too windy."

THE SETOFF

Volume 4

Number 1

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THE SETOFF is published quarterly by the North American Railcar Operators Association (NARCOA), to promote safe operation of railroad motor cars, and to encourage fellowship and exchange of information among motor car enthusiasts. Membership in NARCOA, which includes a subscription to THE SETOFF is \$10.00 per year, and is available from Joel Williams, Box 82, Greendell, New Jersey 07839

The following is an updated list of the 1990 NARCOA and independent* meets that have a firm schedule. Many other meets are in the planning stages, and will be announced in later issues of THE SETOFF.

**June 2-3 Hobo Railroad
Lincoln, NH**

Lincoln to Merideth, New Hampshire. Contact Paul Yorkis, 32 Kimberly Drive, Medway, Massachusetts 02053 (508) 533-4848.

**June 4 Conway Scenic R.R.
North Conway, NH**

Run over the North Conway Railroad. Contact Paul Yorkis, 32 Kimberly Drive, Medway, Massachusetts 02053 (508) 533-4848.

**June 8-10 Sweetline R.R.*
Carson City, MI**

Numerous runs throughout the weekend on the 7 mile Sweetline. For more information, contact Dean Helwig, 9901 W. Buchanan Road, Sumner, Michigan 48889.

**June 16 Battenkill R.R.
Greenwich Jct. NY**

Work and run day. Contact George Cook, (518) 784-2137, or Mark Landgraf, (518) 456-7614 for details.

**June 23 Buffalo Southern Railroad
Buffalo, NY**

31 Miles from Buffalo Creek Jct., New York (Buffalo) to Gowanda, New York. \$10.00 per car, registration 7:00am-8:15am. Contact Joel Williams, (201) 852-6294 for further information and registration form. Pre-registration is required.

**July 14 Ohio Central Railroad*
Coshocton, OH**

Run over the old Wheeling & Lake Erie from Coshocton to Zanesville, and then to Baltic. Contact Hank Brown, 622 Oak Street, Cottage Grove, Wisconsin 53257 (608) 839-4939, for more information.

**September 1-2 Whitewater Valley Railroad/
Indiana & Ohio Railroad
Connorsville, IN**

Run over two railroads from Connorsville to Metamora, and from Brookville to Valley Jct., approximately 44 miles of track (one way). Contact Stan Conyer 9333 W. State Road #46, Columbus, Indiana 47201 (812) 342-0565, for more information.

**September 22-23 Delaware & Ulster Railroad
Arkville, NY**

Ride through the beautiful Catskill mountains. Numerous runs through the weekend. Contact Joel

Williams, Box 82, Greendell, New Jersey 07839 (201) 852-6294 for details.

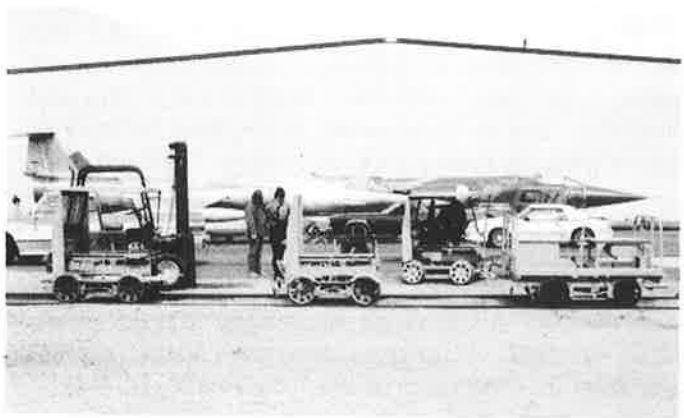
TENTATIVE MEETS

These meets are in the negotiating stages. More information will be available at a later date

**September 1-3 Cuyahoga Valley R.R.
Akron, Ohio**

**Date? Allegheny Central R.R.
Cumberland, MD**

**Date? Everett R.R. & Morrison's Cove
R.R.
Claysburg, Pa.**



Classic track cars and classic aircraft rub shoulders in February 1990, during a one day meet on the Mojave Airport trackage at Mojave, California.

Brett Tallman Photo



NARCOA volunteers help clear a crossing on the Indiana Railway Museum trackage, south of French Lick, Indiana, during the March meet, organized by Stan Conyer.

Photo By Stan Conyer

GOING...GOING... BUT NOT YET GONE

By Ken Garges
Sheffield Velocipede

The movie train business, operated by Short Line Enterprises, of Castaic, California, has been told to vacate the railroad property in which they operate on a portion of former Southern Pacific trackage, near Los Angeles, California. Newhall Land and Farming Company, who owns the isolated four miles of the former SP Santa Paula branch, wants to develop an industrial center served only by truck, and the railroad is in the way.

Jim Britten and myself have operated on this site for the last 2-1/2 years, and we have had a wonderful time operating our motor cars and velocipede to inspect the track, clear brush, and to help make movies and commercials. It has been great, but it seems that all good things come to an early end.

The only good part of the situation is that the beautiful 1898 truss bridge shown in the photo will be saved in place, and converted to trail use. This will occur when the wetlands area is donated to the Los Angeles County Parks and Recreation Department.

The photo shows me on Jim's Fairmont M-19 from the old Los Angeles & Salt Lake Railroad.



Ken Garges poses on Jim Britten's M-19, near a classic old Pratt truss bridge on the Newhall Land & Farming line near Los Angeles.

Photo By Ken Garges

Ed. Note: Ken Garges and Jim Britten covered their movie making adventures in greater detail in an article entitled: "Lights, Cameras,...Motor Cars!" in the Winter, 1988 issue of THE SETOFF

SAFETY AND SIGNALING KIT FOR MOTOR CARS

By
Hugh Cain
Gainsville Midland M-19, No. 3

Now that I have my motor car operable, and after reading and hearing about a number of safety-related issues regarding the operation of track cars, I decided that I would make it a point to be as safe as possible in the operation of my M-19.

One of the first things that I placed on board my car was a class B and C fire extinguisher. Mine is the dry powdered type, however, the CO₂ and the new halon types are probably just as good.

I scrounged around and put together a small first aid kit. Not a small hospital, mind you, but just enough supplies for scrapes and the like. One could probably be bought for about \$10.00.

When I operate the car, I have available at least two orange or red/orange signal flags for flagging crossings. I carry at least a half dozen road flares or fusees, my railroad lantern, and a copy of operating rules that I have put together from several sources available to me from the Southern Railway, Norfolk & Western, and Norfolk Southern.

Several other items that would be good for the "just in case" scenario would be a tow bar or a good tow strap; a shovel and pick, and a small can to hold an extra gallon or two of fuel.

While this list is not meant by any means to be complete, I have found this to be a good head start on a bigger list. After all, we should be as safe as possible in the operation of our motor cars.

WHY WON'T IT RUN PART I

By Dick Ray
Western Maryland M-9, No. 67

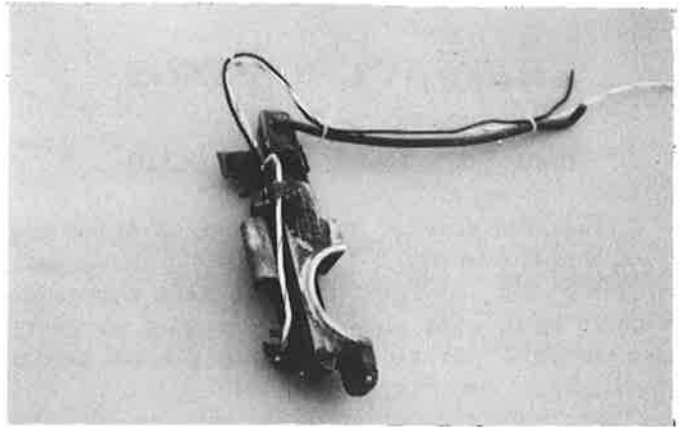
As you are putt-putt-putting down the track enjoying the scenery on your favorite railroad, the exhaust noise on your track car suddenly becomes quiet. Signalling your intention to the car behind, you ease to a stop in a shady spot. "Now what!"...you ask. The intention of this article, which is the first in a series of articles, is to help you out of this all too familiar jam, by providing step-by-step procedures to help you get moving again. Along with this, we will learn ways to *prevent* the breakdowns in the first place, by learning some simple procedures.

Although most of the information in this series of articles will be aimed primarily at two-stroke engine equipped cars, much of the information applies to all cars.

Now, back to our poor fellow stopped along the right-of-way. Since he obviously wants to get going again quickly, so as not to hold up the other folks, let's eliminate some of the obvious causes. 1.) out of gas, 2.) passenger's camera or coat brushed against or turned off the ignition switch, 3.) dead battery, 4.) plug wire fell off, or was knocked off by heavy weeds. Next, check the coil for a "buzz". With the ignition turned off, crank the engine up to top dead center, remove the crank, close the ignition switch, and listen for the buzz. It may be necessary to move the timer lever a bit, to find the correct position to enable the points to close on the engine.

If the coil doesn't buzz, turn off the ignition and remove the plug. Connect the plug wire to a new plug, lay it on the frame of the car, and watch for a spark as you turn on the ignition. No spark could mean that the plug wire is bad, or the spark is shorted out somewhere. Since this is a rare problem, the new plug should allow the engine to start on the first pull. Of course if the ignition box has a lot of moisture in it, the spark can jump across the top of the coil.

If there is no buzz from your coil, get out your clip lead. I would heartily recommend that every tool kit contain one of these. The lead is simply a three to five foot length of 16 gauge insulated, flexible wire, with an insulated alligator clip soldered to each end. You can check for power to the coil by sparking the clip lead from the BAT terminal on the end of the coil (with the ignition on). No spark means no voltage to the coil. The ground side can be checked by connecting the COM terminal of the coil to a point on the engine with the clip lead. With the ignition switch on, buzzing should occur because you have bypassed the timer.



Note how Dick Ray has cable tied his timer wiring to minimize snags.

Photo By Dick Ray

If no voltage reaches the coil, look for a broken wire to or from the ignition switch, or a dead battery. If the trouble seems to be in the timer circuit, look for a broken wire at the timer. The timer wires tend to break, because they move a lot.

The photo shows one way to prevent this breakage, by fastening the wires to the timer control rod with wire ties. A small loop at the timer absorbs movement there (kind of a "strain relief") and another loop or slack at the lever end keeps the wire away from the throttle rod. It also helps to run the wires through the loop of one spring clip on the timer, before connecting them to the other clip. A ground wire is shown, even though late model timers are supposed to be internally grounded. The external wire is insurance.

If power and ground seem to be OK, then try the clip lead from the moving vibrator point to the coil COM terminal as discussed in a previous article in **THE SETOFF**.

The foregoing trouble shooting steps are for cars wired with a grounded battery, as normally found with a generator system. Older cars had the ignition switch in the ground side, so that the driver would not get a shock when turning the ignition switch off. The procedure will be slightly different for these cars, but if the owner has memorized the wiring, the steps will be obvious.

Most ignition failures on the rails can be cured with the procedures presented here. Fouled plugs are the most common problem. Please do not install the fouled plug that you removed the last time that the engine quit...throw it away, and use only new plugs. Keep several on hand for those emergencies.

If your car still does not run, keep in mind that any gas engine needs only air, fuel, compression, spark, and the proper sequence of events to run. The next article will address fuel system mixes.

HIGHWAY CROSSINGS

By Doug Leffler
New York Central M-9, M220

With the current proliferation of track car meets, and the resulting high number of motor cars riding the rails, it's becoming even more important for us to review our methods of flagging, to safely move our cars (particularly in large groups) across busy highway crossings.

Seemingly, the more often we ride the rails, the less concerned we are with the proper way to cross a busy highway. I have attended a few meets where the flagman is more taken up with watching the group of motor cars cross the road, than he is with the approaching traffic. If you have been designated by the group as a flagman, then it's your responsibility to protect the cars crossing the highway. Also, the job of a flagman is an important one, and it shouldn't be delegated to young children (which I have seen happen on a few occasions).

When crossing a busy highway, it's a good idea for the driver in the lead car to wait for the last car to arrive, and to designate two flagmen for traffic control. If the road is rural in nature, with high speed traffic flow (such as 45-55 mph), it's recommended that the flagmen set up at least 200-300 feet out on both sides of the rail crossing, in order to slow the approaching automobiles. Above all, make sure the flagmen are reminded to face the traffic, not the motor cars, and hold the flag (preferably a "dayglow" red/orange one, rather than the familiar "railroad red" cloth one) high enough, and with both hands, so the motorist can see to stop. During inclement weather, at dusk, or at night, fusees should be used, in place of the dayglow flag.

Another good idea is to move the flag (or fusee) back and forth in an arc, at least at shoulder height, as the automobile approaches...the red/orange color, particularly in motion, can be seen at a reasonable distance by the motorist, if you hold it right. To assist the flagmen, it would be a good idea for the group to delegate another person to coordinate all track car movements across the highway, based upon the flagmen directions.

If the group has over six cars in the "consist", and if the road is particularly busy, it would be a good idea to "scoot" the cars across in bunches of six or less. After crossing, don't forget to leave sufficient room behind your car, for the cars that will follow. If you take these few extra precautions to properly protect your group, the risk of crossing busy highways can be kept to a minimum.

WE'D LIKE YOU TO MEET THIS NARCOA MEMBER...

Greg Brahms
3350 Jaylee Drive
Santa Rosa, CA 95404

Greg Brahms started his track car hobby in 1971, during his college days in the San Francisco Bay area. He got involved with the Pacific Locomotive Association, which, at that time had an operating museum in nearby Richmond. It was then that he took on the project of restoring a Fairmont S-2, and became excited about track cars.

In those days, the Western Pacific Railroad had its motor car shops in Oakland. Greg became acquainted with some of the employees in the shops who would donate some badly needed parts to the museum restoration project. "One day I noticed several motor cars outside the shop going to scrap", I was able to purchase my first M-19 track car for \$45.00!" Says Greg. The car is of course ex WP, and is numbered M2163.

Greg's early runs were mostly made on the Pacific Locomotive Association's 1.5 miles of track. Other early operations were made on several local branch lines. "When I met other track car enthusiasts I was able to get involved in organized runs on the Nevada Northern, Sacramento Northern, Quincy, and some Western Pacific branches."

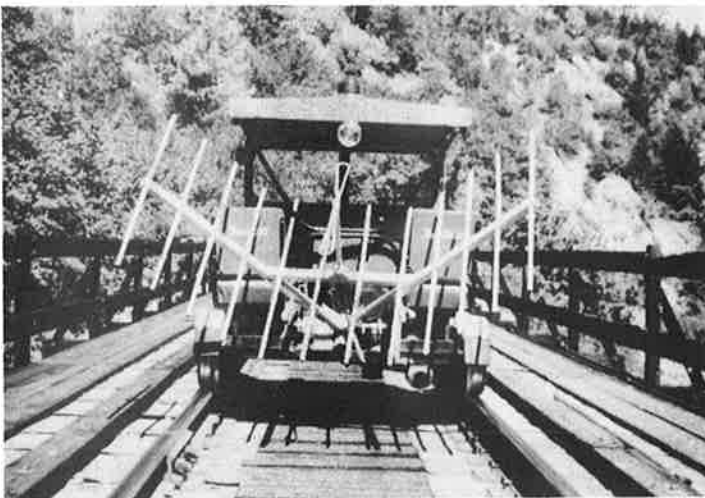
Greg acquired another M-19 as payment for rebuilding a motor car for a railroad contractor in 1975. After a couple of years he sold the car to a fellow track car fan in Portola, California.

"I'm an engineer" says Greg, "But not for a railroad" "I'm a marketing engineer for Hewlett-Packard Company". This communications knowledge has enabled Greg to consult for local short lines for their communications needs. This has opened up opportunities for track car runs on the Eureka Southern and Napa Valley Railroad. "My M-19 is "radio equipped" for these working runs with these railroads as well as others."

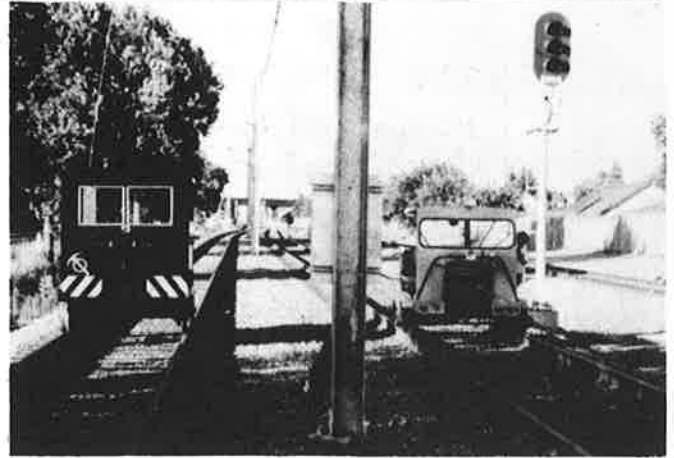
Greg has designed some electronic devices for his M-19, two of were advertised in an earlier issue of THE SETOFF. These were the "Dynabuzz" electronic replacement for the conventional coil, and the "Dynading" electronic bell. He has also built a digital speedometer for his motor car! Greg promises he will provide us with an article or two in the coming months for these devices.



Greg's son Phillip and wife Annette pose with ex Western Pacific Railroad M2163 on a bridge over a creek in their back yard. Greg is laying 300 feet of track to exercise his motor car on. (Ed note: He is looking for a source of more 20-pound rail)



"Earth station Fairmont"...Greg hauling an antenna on the Eureka Southern, to set up a repeater station.



Before its completion, Greg had the opportunity to run on the Sacramento light rail. Next to his M-19 is an ex Pickering A3, which is now used by the California State Railroad museum.

Photos by Greg Brahms

FOR SALE OR TRADE

For Sale

Fairbanks-Morse 16" wheel, new, with backer plate and 8-bolt demountable hub, 1-9/16" bore, \$50.00 or best offer.

Large quantity of railroad track tools. Some new, most used. All are in good useable condition with little or no wear. Most have been sandblasted and painted. Send for list, or state wants.

Contact:

D.M. Williamson
Westgate Village Apartments
333 Lancaster Ave., Apt. #204
Frazer, PA 19355
(215) 296-5584

Wanted:

Fairmont M-24 or W-24 weed mower in operating or repairable condition.

Contact:

D.M. Williamson
Westgate Village Apartments
333 Lancaster Ave., Apt. #204
Frazer, PA 19355
(215) 296-5584



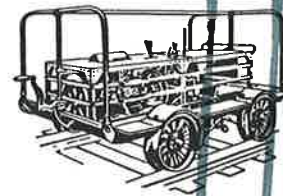
Photos from the collection of Carl Lathrop

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24
11



Carl Lathrop of Madison, New Jersey, may well be the veteran track car rider of all of us. Witness Carl as a baby (in the small photo) on an inspection car owned by the Virginia Blue Ridge Railway in 1915 (note that Carl's attention is focused on a Southern Railway freight train in the background!). Carl's father, Frank Lathrop was the superintendent of the VBR in those days. In 1989, the Lathrop Family decided it was time to recreate that vintage scene, by borrowing a Buda track car, restored by the Kingston Model Railroad Club, of Kingston, New York for just the right look. Standing left to right is Carl and son Stephen, and seated is Carl's wife Mildred with granddaughter Priscilla and daughter-in-law Karen. We wonder if Priscilla will want to try a similar photo in the year 2065...Hmmm

BUDA
ESTABLISHED 1911



THE SETOFF

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