

# Rochester Model Rails

*Dedicated to Quality Model Railroading*

VOL. 5, NO. 37

ROCHESTER, N.Y.

JANUARY 2006



Bath and Hammondsport Railroad passenger depot at the south end of Keuka Lake, Hammondsport, NY.  
Photograph by Gerald Brimacombe, copyright 2005.

Photo Gallery: <i>The LARC – Model Railroad of Bill Brown</i> .....	2
<i>N Scale Words of Wisdom</i> by Steve Levine .....	3
<i>Cass Scenic Railroad State Park – Heisler # 6.</i> by Dick Senges .....	4
<b>Doctor Dick – Mixing Plaster</b> .....	5
<i>NRHS Rochester, NY, 2006 Schedule</i> by Harold Russell .....	6
<i>The Sociology of Model Railroading – Hobby Magazines</i> by John Bruce .....	7
<i>Train Events – Expanded 2005/2006 Calendar</i> - New events added .....	15

## Scenes from the HO Scale Model Railroad of Bill Brown of Jamesville, NY.

Both images below are on the LARC (Lehigh Alliance of Rail Carriers) of Bill Brown of Jamesville, NY (outside of Syracuse). The LARC is a 1970's fictional merger between the CNJ, LV, D&H, Reading, and the Erie Lackawanna in an attempt to avoid Conrail and operate the old CNJ and LV trackage in Eastern PA. The LARC involves about 100 feet of mainline and several towns and cities from Newark, NJ through Easton/Bethlehem PA, Sayre PA, on the way to Buffalo, NY.



A Delaware and Hudson U23B pulls some chemical waste from the Badger plant across from two boxcars being loaded at the Sayre REA warehouse.

Some whitewater rafters fight the rapids of the Lehigh River through the Narrows section of the Lehigh Gorge just below Jim Thorpe.

Two Jersey Central SD45s #s 2504 and 2511 head a mixed freight on the old Lehigh Valley line to Lehighon across the river from Reading SD45 # 7603 on ex Jersey Central tracks.



# N Scale *Words of Wisdom*

*by Steve Levine*

Why N scale?

Good question, but not an easy one. N scale seems to cost more than HO. Not as many products are available as in HO. They are extremely small to work on, like try to paint a face on an N scale person. The list goes on and on so why choose N scale.

Some people may answer because of limiting space at home, for me I had different reason.

My 1<sup>st</sup> scale was O when I was growing up. In my 20's I started building my HO layout but something was missing. No matter how hard I tried I seemed to get more track then scenery. Don't get me wrong tack for operation is great but I love to see the trains within scenery.

After thinking long and hard I sold all my HO and went to N. After about 5 years working with N scale, we moved to our current home and my wife said the basement was mine. At times I question if I should go back to HO and I keep answering NO, because I can get the correct mix of trains scenery and operation in N scale.

So sometimes size does matter.

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**Link to the *Red Markers***

**The newsletter of the  
NMRA NER Central New York Division**

<http://homepage.mac.com/gyoust/Cnynmra/redmarkers/RMVol23No8.pdf>

## Scenes from the Cass Scenic Railroad State Park, Cass, West Virginia

*Digital Images by Dick Senges*



Heisler # 6, a 100-ton Class C – 90, was built for the Bostonia Coal and Clay Products Company of New Bethlehem, PA as their #20. She is a 3-truck Heisler and built by the Sterns Manufacturing Company in 1929.

Cass purchased this Heisler from the Meadow River Lumber Company in 1966.



## ***Ask Doctor Dick (The Scenery Doctor)***

[OCRR@frontiernet.net](mailto:OCRR@frontiernet.net)

### **Billy Bob writes:**

I was reading Dave Frary's new book, *How to Build Realistic Model Railroad Scenery, 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition*. I noticed on page 16 under the *Working with Plaster* section, that he is suggesting, when mixing plaster with water, that the ratio is 1:1. In his last book, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition, on page 17 he states, "it must be mixed in the correct 2:1 proportion". In his original 1982 book, pages 12-13, he states that the proportion is 1:1. For *HYDROCAL* plaster, which is it?

### **Doc:**

Wow! Billy Bob, you sure are doing your homework on this plaster-mixing thing.

So to answer you I did some homework too. Dave Frary mentioned *HYDROCAL*, (not HydroCal) so I went to the Internet and looked up *HYDROCAL White Gypsum Cement* on the *Plaster Master Supply* website. I found the following information:

### **"HYDROCAL White Gypsum Cement**

*HYDROCAL White Gypsum Cement* offers a gradual setting time and a long period of plasticity. Recommended for both solid and hollow casting of lamp bases and figurines. Especially designed for thin sections, which require high green strength to minimize breakage during removal from an intricate latex mold. *HYDROCAL White Gypsum Cement* should be mixed at 45 consistency which gives it moderate carvability."

[Ed. So what is the mix ratio? Read on.]

### **"Water-to-plaster Ratio**

The water-to-plaster ratio (consistency) is the amount of water used with a definite amount of plaster. For example, a 70 consistency mix would mean 70 parts of water per 100 parts of plaster. Consistency is always specified by weight.

When less water is used in the mix, the setting time may be faster, and the plaster will not be as fluid, which may cause air bubbles in the cast pieces.

The density, hardness, strength and durability of plaster casts are intimately related to the quantity of water used in the mix. Therefore, it is extremely important that the recommended water-to-plaster ratio be followed for best results. While the experienced plaster caster may be able to gauge the plaster and water by eye, U.S. Gypsum still recommends weighing the plaster and water each time."

### **Conclusion:**

Therefore, *HYDROCAL* mix: 45 parts of water and 100 parts of plaster. That's a ratio of 2.2 to one, plaster to water – by weight. (Note: *Moulding Plaster* is 70 parts of water to 100 parts of plaster, a 1.4:1 ratio. *Durham's Water Putty* is one part water to three parts powder, a 3:1 ratio.) Looks to me that the 2nd Edition is the winner, 2:1.

For more detailed information on plaster, see the Website:

<http://www.plastermaster.com/usg/>

## NRHS 2006 Schedule

Meetings are held at the 40/8 Club, 933 University Avenue, Rochester, NY, starting at 7:30 PM. All are invited. There is no charge. Exception - June, July and August we meet at the Industry Depot about 6:00 to run locomotives and cabooses. Again, all are invited.

### Here is the program:

- January 19: "Railroad Stories of Long Ago" by Mike Rickert. + "Chill the Fill" by Allen Oberst.
- February 16: "Mike Roque's Photo Gallery"
- March 16: "Members' Slide Night"
- April 20: "South Buffalo Railway" by Stephen Koenig.
- May 18: "The Rochester Branch of the Lehigh Valley RR." by John Stewart
- September 21: "Nickel Plate Diesels" by Bill Quick
- October 19: "Photos of the Lehigh Valley and Erie Lackawanna" by Ken Kramer
- November 16: "The American Orient Express" by Bob Achilles
- December 21: "Depots of New York State" by John Stewart and Charles Woolever.

### NRHS/NYMT Track Car Program

The NRHS/NYMT track car program will begin again in the spring of 2006. We are always looking for new operators.

All readers of RMR are welcome to become Track Car Operators for the local railroad museums. Candidates must attend a 1 hour classroom lesson on proper railroad procedures and spend about 3 hours 'hands-on' training before they are assigned as assistant operators. There will be multiple classroom and operation times from which to choose. Classes traditionally start in mid March and continue through mid May. The exact class schedule will be published soon. Candidates should be a member of National Railway Historical Society or the New York Museum of Transportation. Operators also must hold a valid New York State automobile driver's license and be at least 18 year old.

Try it, it is fun and you will like it. If you have any questions, contact Harold Russell at 585-427-9159 or [haroldrussell@juno.com](mailto:haroldrussell@juno.com)

# *Sociology of Model Railroading*

## **Part 8 – Hobby Magazines**

(Abridged Edition)

*by John Bruce*

The hobby's pre-eminent publication has always been [\*Model Railroader\*](#), founded by the visionary [Albert C. Kalmbach](#). Through the 1940s and 1950s, the magazine was the chief chronicler of the hobby's growth, with a series of highly capable editors, some of whom were committed hobbyists, but all of whom were capable journalists who developed and published authors like John Allen, Paul Larson, John Armstrong, Frank Titman, Jack Work, W.Gibson Kennedy, and others. The work of such authors was indispensable in showing the public what the model railroading hobby was capable of providing in creative enjoyment.

However, after Kalmbach himself, a second visionary editor, Linn Westcott, was responsible for keeping the hobby alive, if not prosperous, through several crises in the 1960s. The hobby industry faced conventional wisdom in the early 1960s that model trains were going out of fashion, to be replaced by slot cars, and a number of manufacturers were disinvesting in the model railroad field. Others made a business decision, based on what appears in hindsight to be questionable analysis, that they would need to cheapen their products to survive, radically reducing product quality in order to sell at a lower price.

These manufacturers had succeeded in "capturing" the NMRA leadership, and had gained their endorsement for coarsening wheel standards as part of the cost-reduction process. Westcott editorially supported the dissidents who opposed the coarsening, and indeed was among the voices that opposed the philosophy that the path to hobby survival led through reducing product quality. Looking at *Model Railroader's* more recent editorial timidities, it's almost inconceivable that the magazine would, by implication, oppose the business intentions of several major advertisers in that way.

Westcott started as one of Kalmbach's early employees, and it appears that he had Kalmbach's trust and support, although the memoirs of another MR editor, John Page, suggest that Kalmbach characteristically backed up his editors in controversial decisions. While Kalmbach later in his life was severely disabled with Parkinson's disease, he was likely still very active in management while Westcott was editor.

Another set of developments in the 1960s goes, as far as I can tell, completely without direct editorial mention in the magazine -- the watershed events in the civil rights movement, the growing protests against the Viet Nam war, the increased popularity of the Playboy Philosophy, the rise of the Beatles, the terrible assassinations, and many other distractions that could threaten the idea of adult interest in model railroads as any but the most inconsequential activity. I was in college during those years, and I was profoundly affected by all the social developments listed here -- but I never stopped buying *Model Railroader*. (I do recall, on the other hand, a late

Westcott editorial on the 1973 energy crisis and gas lines, suggesting that the hobby used little fuel and was probably a good way to relieve stress.)

I think this is because Westcott had a natural instinct for an editorial balance that would satisfy readers who were less experienced in the hobby, or less interested in challenging material, but would also stimulate, excite, and challenge other readers who saw the real potential for creative expression in many areas of the hobby. You could get very tired of "I Want to Hold Your Hand," but the idea of using simple materials to build a complex, accurate, detailed, and ultimately inspiring model or a piece of rail equipment didn't pall.

Westcott in fact, in a period of some suppliers trying to dumb the hobby down, consistently published material by contributors who were trying to raise the hobby's standards, such as the "1/4AAR" movement, modelers who wished to follow wheel standards far more exact than the NMRA's perfunctory "O" gauge dimensions. The disappearance of common-carrier narrow gauge rail operations during this period inspired many modelers to build models of this equipment to very high standards, and MR frequently featured photos, construction articles, and drawings to support this interest. Such articles were detailed and complex, explaining painstaking construction steps, completely against what appears to be current conventional wisdom that readers want quick, easy entertainment.

In my own life, when I was being exposed to the thought of everyone from Allen Ginsberg to Immanuel Kant, I continued to find the material in MR stimulating, and indeed inspiring -- in fact, I frequently struggled with myself then, feeling I should "grow up" and abandon the hobby, but a key influence that kept me interested was the challenging material in MR. I think Westcott is second only to Kalmbach as a highly influential figure in popularizing the hobby and communicating its interest and ultimate respectability.

MR's circulation continued to increase during Westcott's editorship. I think the biggest reason was that the magazine kept providing a diverse set of upward paths for those who wanted to stay challenged in the hobby. Trying to get cheapened train-set equipment to run was a dead-end proposition. Putting reasonable effort into successively more complex projects that were clearly explained could become addictive.

MR's circulation in fact increased until the early 1990s when it peaked at about 225,000, but I think the magazine's decline began well before that time. Westcott retired as editor in the late 1970s, at a time when the "prototype modeler" movement had already become frustrated with MR's apparent unwillingness to cover an emerging new generation of modeling interest, with standards still higher than the contributors Westcott had fostered. Westcott's successor, Russ Larson, seemed to have the words but not the music regarding MR's content.

[John Allen](#), a very influential modeler in the 1940s, 50s, and 60s, had a [unique modeling style](#) that was instantly identifiable. Allen, who had formal art training, was able to blend caricature with close observation of the real world to produce a truly imaginative effect. A number of modelers attempted to imitate that effect, but inevitably the result was imitation, not imagination, which can stem only from an original impulse.

Westcott published John Allen, the real thing, but Allen had passed away in 1973, and Larson published his imitators, John Olson and [Malcolm Furlow](#), without apparently understanding the

difference. At the same time, the world had changed, and Allen's imaginative vision -- still less that of his unimaginative imitators -- no longer matched the interests of younger modelers who found subjects like diesel locomotives and piggyback freight cars more interesting than scenes that might have come from [A Ticket to Tomahawk](#). I think many who were inspired by the "prototype modeler" movement had a vague, if not fully conscious, sense of discomfort with MR's increasing use of a formula that included second-hand versions of ideas that had worked in the past, but were no longer current.

At one point, Richard H. Hendrickson, one of the most prolific authors who represented the movement, wrote a letter to the editor of MR saying that its material reminded him of junk food. To its credit, MR published the letter, but if it understood Hendrickson's point at all, it didn't show in any editorial change. Hendrickson was clearly referring to the frequent articles and project layouts from both Olson and Furlow, who later left his semi-professional status in the model railroading hobby to become a painter of Native American subjects. Olson had considerable talent that he misused by not developing his own style with a greater sense of integrity. Furlow, on the other hand, made some readers uncomfortable in a way I didn't fully understand until I discovered the web site on his painting cited above.

The gallery displaying his work says, of his propensity to paint blue, orange, and yellow horses and the like: "When asked about the bright images he creates, which are fragmented by color, he says they are ' . . . a metaphor for the human condition. The further Native Americans are removed from their heritage and embraced by anglo culture, the greater the conflict that results. This is the dichotomy that fuels the fires for my paintings.'" I finally understood the problem: Furlow was a phony. (I suspect that Native Americans are not fully appreciative of the condescension Furlow, himself an "anglo" who seems to be doing quite well by embracing them, is showing here.)

While MR could continue to point to increasing circulation, and indeed to approving letters from uncritical readers, the first major sign of its decline appeared. *Prototype Modeler* magazine started in 1977 without any advertising other than for the publisher's own business ventures. Nevertheless, hobby shops began to carry it, and there was an inevitable recognition that there was a market niche that MR had abandoned: the more informed, committed hobbyists weren't satisfied by MR's increasingly dumbed-down, imitative formula. By 1980 -- during a severe recession -- several new magazines that followed the traditional advertising format entered the monthly model railroad market, including [Mainline Modeler](#) and [Model Railroading](#). With the death of its founder, *Prototype Modeler* eventually passed to a publisher that accepted advertising. (For completeness, I should note an additional magazine, *Railroad Modeler*, published from 1971 to 1980, that was published by Challenge Publications, which had begun as a California girlie-magazine house. An individual close to that magazine indicates that Challenge was trying to move beyond that genre (tame by current standards), but its efforts were ultimately defeated by the more established magazines, which discouraged potential advertisers by pointing to *Railroad Modeler's* girlie association. The individual says that the magazine innovated in several areas, including regular use of color photos inside the magazine. *Model Railroader*, however, published a color photo of John Allen's layout in the late 1950s.)

MR's readers did not stop buying MR, but those whose needs weren't being fully met by MR -- those most likely to spend money on the hobby -- did buy the other magazines. This meant that advertisers who aimed at these readers -- those, in other words, who expected quality and were

willing to pay for it -- could pay less to advertise in these smaller-circulation magazines, yet be more likely to reach the audience they were looking for.

The overall market for model railroad magazines had suddenly grown, and MR's market share had suddenly shrunk. By failing to satisfy its more critical and more sophisticated readers, MR was leaving money on the counter. In 1984, MR held a public conference to celebrate its 50th anniversary. The staff of *Prototype Modeler* sent in a check for admission to the conference -- it's hard to tell whether they sincerely meant to share MR's milestone or not. However, MR returned the check with a letter explaining that they reserved the right to refuse admittance to a competitor, a reaction *Prototype Modeler* noted with editorial glee.

It's hard for me to understand how Kalmbach, MR's publisher, which was steadily becoming a larger, more traditional corporate environment, could have missed the signal these circumstances had sent it: through its own complacency, scores of ad pages were being sold every month to new magazines that were serving readers who'd told MR directly that it wasn't meeting their needs. If MR had kept those readers' loyalty, it would be as thick as [Yachting](#). MR was simply squandering a prime business asset, its [reputation](#).

At this point, we reach the fascinating question of the hobby's second magazine, [Railroad Model Craftsman](#) (RMC) and the innovative editor who will always be associated with it, [Tony Koester](#). RMC's antecedent magazine, *Model Craftsman*, was founded in 1933, covering the scale model hobby generally, and later changed its name with a more specific focus on model railroads.

Through the 1960s it was always an obviously cheaper product than MR, with a smaller staff, less expensive paper (which is now disintegrating in existing copies), and lower editorial values. Typos, stylistic infelicities, grammatical errors, and production glitches like blurbs on the cover for articles that didn't appear inside, were common. Harold Carstens was the editor for much of the 1950s and 60s; he was no Linn Westcott, but he had a naive enthusiasm for the hobby that shone through his rough-hewn product.

RMC was an unabashed discount product. Growing up in New Jersey not far from its editorial offices, I always thought of it along with the ads for Robert Hall, the cheap clothier, and Two Guys from Harrison, the proto Wal Mart. I assume its advertising rates gave it a corresponding market niche. While MR's articles always had a professional polish, RMC's tended to be more offbeat, regional, and even esoteric.

As a New Jersey boy, I appreciated RMC's more frequent discussion of my local railroads, like the Erie, Lackawanna, and Jersey Central. MR tended to cover railroading in a more generic way, while I was becoming fascinated with the specifics of what I saw around me. RMC's approach was steadily evolving in this direction, whether at Harold Carstens's conscious instigation or not, I don't know.

In 1969, Tony Koester visited the RMC offices as an interested modeler, and apparently during the visit accepted an offer of employment as an associate editor. Koester had been one of the founders of the [Nickel Plate Road Historical and Technical Society](#), one of the earliest such groups. His interest in one of the regional railroads, along with the focus on specificity and detail, was part of what I found appealing about RMC.

I began to notice an improvement in the editorial values of the magazine almost immediately. At the same time, he was publishing material from Jim Boyd, a traveling technician for General Motors' locomotive division, that showed angles and details I wasn't used to seeing on contemporary diesels. This material likely had an influence in forming the "prototype modelers" movement.

Koester also recognized and regularly featured the work of Dave Frary and Bob Hayden, which fit the existing RMC pattern of regionalism (New England) and the offbeat (narrow gauge). Hayden and Frary teamed to publish articles on HOn30, the use of N gauge track with HO scale bodies, to simulate 24-inch narrow gauge. This was a caricature that was nearly as effective as the work of John Allen, but it was original and creative, unlike the derivative material of Olson and Furlow published by MR.

However, Koester is probably best known for emphasizing the work of W. Allen McClelland, who had already been published in RMC with some frequency before Koester's arrival. But starting in early 1977, Koester published a multi-part series on McClelland's layout, the Virginian and Ohio. McClelland has been, next to John Allen, probably the most influential model railroad hobbyist. Like Allen, he has considerable artistic talent and an artistic eye for the real world. Unlike Allen, his view of the world of railroading is more matter-of-fact, less romantic, and less of a caricature.

This matter-of-fact attitude combined with Koester's editorial willingness to cover McClelland's approach to the hobby in considerable depth, was something MR hadn't recently done (though Linn Westcott more than a decade earlier had published an equivalent article by John Allen taking a comprehensive look at his layout and his approach to the hobby). Hobbyists who wanted a magazine that reflected their level of commitment to the hobby were increasingly looking to RMC.

While a clear improvement over MR's now-superficial and derivative approach, RMC didn't fully satisfy the "prototype modeler" oriented readers. McClelland called his approach "prototype freelancing", which can be interpreted as one way of dealing with the limited quality and selection of models in the 1960s and 70s. Not enough models were on the market to allow a committed modeler to reproduce even representative versions of the locomotive and car rosters for most railroads. As a result, if a modeler couldn't easily put together equipment that would accurately represent a train of the Western Pacific or the Maine Central, he could say, "I'm modeling a fictitious railroad that is *like* the Western Pacific or the Maine Central, but its equipment is coincidentally much closer to what I can obtain at my hobby shop."

The modeler would name his railroad something like the "Salt Lake Western" or the "Portland and Bangor" and proceed from there. One esthetic difficulty of the approach was the highly abstruse reasoning modelers would engage in to explain their choices of region, name, route, traffic, and so forth. It was fictitious, it was done mostly to justify using what was on hand (which everyone knew), and past a very early threshold, it just didn't matter. McClelland to some extent set the tone for this in his own series, and Koester's mindset, always just a little pretentious, didn't restrain him.

As a result, the series, on one hand a breath of fresh air, and certainly an innovation in depth of coverage, also displayed a level of fussiness, self-absorption, and authoritarianism that probably

started with McClelland, but perhaps appealed to Koester and would become characteristic of his own later writing. Enthralled with how successfully McClelland and modelers closely associated with him used the "prototype freelancing" concept, Koester began to stress editorially that this was close to the only acceptable approach to the hobby. He'd adopted it for his own layout, hadn't he?

"Prototype modelers", of course, didn't agree that this was even a remotely acceptable approach. A better idea, as they saw it, was to publish on how you actually could modify commercial products to make your equipment look more like that of the Western Pacific or the Maine Central, and to make recommendations in whatever medium they could find for hobby manufacturers to make the products they actually wanted. Much as RMC was improving, and much as its content was increasingly preferable to MR's, *Prototype Modeler* still made its appearance shortly after the McClelland series appeared in RMC.

And as the "prototype modelers" studied model and prototype equipment more closely, they found increasing discrepancies. Athearn, the most prolific manufacturer, produced locomotives that operated acceptably for the time at a low price. However, in order to fit its design of inexpensive motor, Athearn had compromised a key dimension in many of its models, the width of the engine compartment hood. The company, still run at the time by Irvin R. Athearn, its founder, was reluctant to make investments in new tooling to correct such problems. (A former Athearn employee who had stayed in touch with his ex-boss told me at the time that Athearn felt he had learned that modelers who made such requests didn't respond by purchasing the new products.) The dimensional errors in Athearn's locomotives steadily became a subject that everyone knew about, but no one would mention editorially for fear of offending a major advertiser.

In the late 1970s, RMC, I think, hit the limits of what it could accomplish given the publisher's view of his business. Koester clearly focused on satisfying the more demanding side of the hobby's readership. He continued to publish innovative and imaginative authors. One problem, however, was that those same authors, including Dave Frary and Bob Hayden, as well as McClelland, eventually wound up writing for MR -- likely because RMC didn't pay as well (though what is actually paid writers by the hobby magazines is remarkably little in any case). Hayden went to work for Kalmbach editing one of MR's sister magazines. Kalmbach, a larger enterprise, could offer greater career potential than Carstens in such cases.

Even Malcolm Furlow, who became so closely associated with MR, and who did so much to damage the relationship of trust MR had had with its high-end readership, had started as an author writing for RMC under Tony Koester. Furlow's work for RMC, however, was relatively restrained, and interestingly enough, he followed Koester's "prototype freelancing" concept, describing models of equipment for a fictitious "Denver and Rio Chama Western" railroad. (But even before his move to MR, he inspired mistrust. I remember speaking with a fellow modeler at the time who, at a swap meet, pointed to a model that had begun to warp in the hot sun, and said it "looked like Malcolm Furlow had gotten hold of it.") It wasn't until he moved to MR that the uncontrolled urge toward manneristic emulation of John Allen took over.

Toward the end of his editorship, Koester made one of his most lasting contributions to the hobby: he sponsored a poll in which modelers could vote for the models they most wanted. In hindsight, given the atmosphere that apparently prevailed in the industry, even this could have

been construed as offending advertisers -- why would anyone be remotely interested in a new product if everything now available were perfect? Irvin Athearn had certainly decided new products weren't appreciated by the buyers, and apparently no longer wished to release them. Yet RMC did hold its poll, and the product wishes that resulted were part of the revolution in product variety and quality that is still under way. Koester helped start it.

Then I noticed that I'd read several issues of RMC, and there weren't any columns or editorials from Tony Koester. I checked the masthead, and he was gone. Carstens, the publisher, mentioned some months later in response to what must have been many questions from readers that perhaps Koester intended to return to school, but that was the extent of official recognition.

Frank Pearsall, who published a small-circulation newsletter called the *ASODCO Coupler*, reported at the time (Volume 6, Number 2),

*Well, for the few of you who didn't know (or don't really care), Tony Koester was fired as Editor of RMC the morning of March 12th [1981] (Black Thursday). The exact reason? I don't really know and probably never will. . . . I do have some opinions I would like to share with you.*

*First, Tony was an excellent editor editorially, graphically, and balance wise. I think he sometimes had a tendency to get hung up in minutia[e], but we all have our particular faults. Considering the limited product he had to work with, he produced excellent results. He kept RMC in the fight. MR is a big bucks outfit, and keeping up with them is, or can be a real struggle.*

. . .

*The straw that broke the camel's back? The fairly recent article on the reader poll as to what they (the respondents) would like to see made, improvements, etc. These respondents (model railroaders) really took Athearn and Atlas to the cleaners. . . . Advertisers pay a lot of big bucks to be in the magazines. . . . A certain amount of free "puff" comes with the territory.*

. . .

*What do I personally think? As a lot of you know, there was no love lost between Tony and myself. He always thought I was a radical and a firebrand. I always felt he had a lot of people fooled. He did not mix well with the masses although a lot of people felt otherwise. I always thought he was arrogant, overbearing and a pompous ass but then, nobody's perfect. However, like I said, he was a great editor.*

On the other hand, the progress of RMC after Koester's departure may give some insight into Carstens's business intent. Carstens promoted Bill Schaumburg, an associate editor, to fill the vacancy. Schaumburg, a former schoolteacher without Koester's apparent drive and ambition, has left the magazine essentially in the state to which Koester brought it: much improved in execution, but still a secondary player. In the *ASODCO Coupler* issue cited above, Pearsall described Schaumburg as ". . . 'laid back.' He favors blue jeans and loves a good glass of wine." Interestingly, RMC hasn't produced writers like Boyd, Frary, Hayden, McClelland, or even

Furlow since that time. Schaumburg hasn't innovated in his 20 years as editor (and thereby has satisfied Carstens for roughly twice as long as Koester).

My observation about the time Koester left RMC was that RMC was likely, given Koester's energy and innovation *versus* MR's complacency, to surpass MR as the hobby's premier magazine, and Koester's departure took place, in the odd way such things sometimes happen, not long before such a trend would have had to be acknowledged generally. This inevitably would have caused conflict over the direction of the magazine; given its subsequent stand-pat posture, it seems likely Carstens would have resisted undertaking the additional investment -- and perhaps reassessment of his own personal and business goals -- that such a change in status would have demanded. So I suspect that more than one single factor was involved in Koester's departure, though this is pure speculation on my part.

Within a short time, now with a non-hobby day job, Koester resurfaced at MR, like Frary, Hayden, Furlow, and McClelland who had gone before him. He didn't become an editor, though; he wrote a monthly column called "Trains of Thought." It seemed to me that he wasn't well cast in this role, and it's possible that his objectives in life were changing, and his moment had passed when he left RMC. His columns quickly became [as predictable as those of Maureen Dowd at The New York Times](#). He variously described events that were mostly excuses to drop the names of other prominent hobbyists; or he described events where his own sensitivity and craftsmanship enhanced another person's holiday season or relieved someone's period of bereavement; or he pronounced on what, in his expertise, was the definite Correct Thing in the hobby. This got old in a hurry, but editor Russ Larson, tone-deaf as always, carried the column and was presumably happy with it. Koester's unexceptional work in this role may even have been especially satisfying to Larson and others at Kalmbach, if the editor who shortly before had been a real threat at RMC was now a tame Samson, prisoner of the Philistines, doing mediocre writing at their bidding.

Indeed, the column was the culmination of a trend toward fussiness, self-absorption, and authoritarianism that had started while Koester was at RMC. And as a columnist, he couldn't play to what had been his strong point, the ability to recognize and encourage talent in other hobby writers. But even when Kalmbach later gave him the chance to be an editor again, the results were disappointing.

The "layout design" movement grew up along with the "prototype modeler" movement, spurred in part by the McClelland series in RMC. Koester in that magazine editorially raised the profile of concepts like staging, providing yard-like tracks connected with but conceptually separate from a layout, corresponding to distant, off-layout destinations. Like many ideas in the McClelland series, it was innovative, but a tendency toward self-congratulation meant it could potentially be overdone.

The idea of layout design and configuration as an important factor in a modeler's overall effective enjoyment of the hobby wasn't new; E.P. Alexander discussed it in Chapter 2, "Laying Out and Planning the Model System", of his 1940 book, *Model Railroads*. John Armstrong added many highly imaginative enhancements to layout topology in a series of articles in MR in the 1950s and 60s, and in his 1960s book *Track Planning for Realistic Operation* made the key point that a modeler designing a layout must make a series of essentially artistic decisions on how best to work within constraints of time, space, and personal preference.

Layout planning as a discipline, present near the start of the hobby, had grown up incrementally with it, and in fact there was no "revolution" in the movement in the 1970s or 1980s. John Armstrong's own layout, begun in the early 1950s, still looked like a well-designed contemporary layout of the 1990s, in part due to Armstrong's own long-standing influence on the hobby. However, the tendency reflected in the McClelland series to take fairly commonplace things a little too seriously had resulted in a group of modelers organizing into a "[Layout Design Special Interest Group](#)" (or SIG) to promote particular theories, such as the use of multi-level layouts and helical tracks to communicate among the levels, or point-to-point layouts with manually serviced staging tracks at each end.

As with "prototype freelancing", a characteristic of this movement is the excessive verbalization, self-absorption, and self-congratulation that accompanies it. A central characteristic has been grandiose projection with insufficient follow-through. The group's newsletter started with fanfare, but the intervals between issues quickly grew longer. The Layout Design SIG's [Layout Design Primer](#) displays all of these characteristics. It claims in the first sentence of the introduction to be a "novel publishing effort". While its intended audience is the "beginning to intermediate railroad modeler", the "primer" is verbose, self-referential, and highly theoretical. (A sentence like, "The overall theme present herein is one of blending a variety of components to produce a uniform scale model that is consistent with the viewers own sense of the prototype reality" is likely to turn off a beginner, but it probably enhances the writer's sense of his own importance.) Despite updates, sections remain incomplete after many years -- a "primer" so complex that multiple authors build each section with the painstaking slowness of an ant colony is something of an oxymoron.

## Next Issue

### Hobby Magazines – Part II

John Bruce's Model Railroad

Los Feliz and North Western Railroad

[www.trainweb.org/lnwfan](http://www.trainweb.org/lnwfan)

**Future Articles**

*Touring the Floquil Paint Factory*

*Modeling Keuka Lake - Hammondsport*

*Modeling a Civil War RR*

*Hiding that Basement Pole*

*Designing the Bath, NY Yards*

*Video Review – Photo Mural Backdrops*

*Visiting the Brunswick, MD,  
Railroad Museum*

**Coming Next Month .....**

**Editing Model Railroad Images**

**Modeling an Icicle-Breaker Railcar**

**Modeling New England Railroads**

**Sociology of Model Railroading**

**Ask Doctor Dick – the Scenery Doctor**

**Train Events - Update 2006 Calendar**

Any interest in an

**Index ?**

*for the first 37 issues of the*

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## Coming Train Events for 2005/2006

**Updated 11-27-05**

- December 3 - 4**      **Marlborough, MA** – The Great Marlborough Train Show, Info: 781-862-0388
- December 3 – 4**      **Belleville, Canada** – Christmas Model RR Show, Quinte Secondary School, 45 College St.
- December 4**      **Albany, NY** – Great Train Extravaganza, Info: 518-371-9164
- December 10 – 11**      **Syracuse, NY** – Santa Train, Armory Sq. Station, Info: 1-800-FOR-TRAIN
- December 15**      **Rochester, NY** – NRHS meeting, Williamsport, PA in the Late Steam Era” – by Bill Bigler
- 2006**
- January 15**      **Utica, NY** – Toy Train Meet , Info: 315-865-5115, e-mail: [cnyttcs@yahoo.com](mailto:cnyttcs@yahoo.com)
- January 28 – 29**      **West Springfield, MA** – Amherst Railway Society Big Railroad Hobby Show, Eastern States Exposition Grounds, Memorial Avenue. Info: [www.AmherstRail.org](http://www.AmherstRail.org)
- January 28 – 29**      **Cheektowaga, NY** – Winter Wonderland Limited, Train Show and Swap Meet, Info: 716-876-7031
- February 11 – 12**      **Hornell, NY** – Hornell Model Railroad Club Open House, Info: [www.hmrc.org](http://www.hmrc.org)
- February 17 – 19**      **Seattle, Washington** – 21<sup>st</sup> Annual Sn3 Symposium, Contact: 425-778-6069
- February 18 – 19**      **Barrie, Ontario** – Train Show, Barrie Event Center, Essa Road & Highway 400
- February 19**      **Syracuse, NY** – The Syracuse Model Railroad Club, Open House and Train Meet  
James Street and Nichols Ave. Info: 315-452-0982
- March 11 – 12**      **Rochester, NY** – Rochester Model Railroad Club Show, 150 South Clinton Avenue – First Universalist Church. Sat. 10:00am – 5:00pm. Sun. 1:00 – 5:00pm. (*Flea Market Sat. only.*) \$3.00 adult, \$2.00 age 6 – 12, under 6 free with adult. Info: Tom McColloch 585-872-6106

## Coming Train Events for 2005/2006

**Updated 11-27-05**

- March 26**                    **Rochester, NY** – RIT Train Show and Sale, RIT campus. Info: [www.ritmrc.org](http://www.ritmrc.org)
- April 22**                    **Schomberg, Ontario, Canada** – The First Annual Ontario Narrow Gauge Show, Schomberg Community Centre, 10:00am – 4:00pm. Website: [www.creative-works.ca/NGM06Home](http://www.creative-works.ca/NGM06Home)
- April 28 – 30**                **Chatnam, Ontario, Canada** – Chatham Express: The NFR 2005 Spring Convention  
Wheels Inn, 615 Richman Street. Info: 519-351-1100
- June 1 – 4**                    **Worcester, MA** – NMRA NER 2006 Spring Convention
- July 1 –2**                    **Galeton, PA** – Bark Peelers' Convention, PA Lumber Museum
- July 2 – 8**                    **Philadelphia, PA** – NMRA National Convention
- August 21 – 26**              **Durango, CO** - 26<sup>th</sup> National Narrow Gauge Convention
- September 10**              **Buffalo, NY** – Buffalo Central Terminal First Train Show. Info: [www.buffalocentralterminal.org](http://www.buffalocentralterminal.org)
- October 20 – 22**            **Parsippany, NY** – NMRA NER 2006 Fall Convention
- November 4- 5**              **Syracuse NY** - Train Show and Sale at NY Fairgrounds