

The Semaphore

On Saturday, February 25 the club meeting will be held at 10:00 am, at Boney's Marketplace, 1820 Oceanside Blvd., Oceanside, Ca. Members, guest and visitors are invited.

Special points of interest:

Clinic of the month

A tree modeling clinic will be conducted following the meeting on February 25th Saturday. Small hand tools required, call Tom Brunner for info and reservation.

Work Schedule

Every Thursday and Saturday are work days at the clubhouse. There are plenty of tasks to be performed.

North County Model Railroad Society

Volume 2, 2

President's Message by Al Cuevas



March 2006

Usually in this space I talk about how great the club is and what wonderful progress we are making. Don't worry I'll get to that in a little bit. But first I want to share a personal experience from the last couple of months.

Recently a bedroom in my home became available. I decided to build a model railroad in at least part of the bedroom. I was told that I would have to share the bedroom with a trundle bed. A trundle bed, as far as I am concerned, is something that takes up time and space and doesn't serve much of a practical purpose. It had spent the last couple of years stored in our garage where it took up mostly space. When my daughter moved out at the end of the year the trundle bed and I raced to see who would get to the bedroom first. It was a tie.

Anyway, I now had an opportunity. Before I go much further I have to provide some of my background for you to fully appreciate the rest of the story. Many of you have only known me as the President of NCMRS and therefore someone who has great knowledge about all things to do with model railroading, construction, scenery, etc. In-

fact I have belonged to the club for just over two years and while I could tell a hammer from a screwdriver - you drink a screwdriver - I didn't have very much skill in using either. Prior to this time I was last involved in the hobby when I was 10 years old. My knowledge of "how to do things" has been very limited and like many of you I have been reluctant to get involved in construction for fear of doing something wrong or embarrassing myself.

However, I had made a commitment to build a home layout and now I was stuck. I bought the Model Railroader book on bench work. Must have read that seven or eight times. I even took it on a trip to Northern California for my "quiet moments". Then I looked at and measured every piece of club bench work that even remotely looked like something I would have to build. The day finally came when I found myself at the Home Depot parking lot with a list, that I had made, of materials for my bench work. I also bought a few essential tools such as a square and an 18-volt drill.

During this time I consulted with some of the club Guru's. As expected everyone I talked to was very helpful. Tom Bruner even drew up a plan based on my room size and what I wanted the layout to look like.

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By the second day I had my tables completed and bolted them together. The Superintendent (Tom Bruner) came by and gave the OK. I had passed the first test. Next were the risers and sub-roadbed. Recalling how the club members had installed riser and plywood sub-road last year, I tried the same thing, including leveling and it worked! I only had to do a couple of pieces of sub-roadbed over. But each time I learned a little bit more. I didn't get frustrated as I had with other home handyman projects.

I now have cork roadbed down. Track has been ordered. Work is starting on my sidings and I am starting on a couple of bridges. All of this happened because of two things. First I wanted to have a home layout. Second, I had watched, learned and helped on our club layout. I am a long way from finished but because of my club experience I am confident that with some advice here and there I can create a layout that I will be proud of.

January found us conducting our first clinic. This was very successful. Partially because of the clinic we had 30 members at the monthly business meeting. Our February clinic on tree making will be completed by the time this hits the web. It looks to be very popular also. Each month we will try to have a clinic on some aspect of Model Railroad-ing.

The scenery crew has been working very hard. The first peninsula is a regular construction zone. I can't wait to go to the club next so I can see what has changed. Be sure to see either Tom Bruner or George Benton for work assignments. They will put you to work, as there is plenty to do.

Now is a great time for the club. The local Model Railroad community has heard about us. People want to see what we have done. Visitors see what is going on and they want to be a part of this. Every member should be proud of the effort that has been put forth.

See you at the club.

Al Cuevas
President
NCMRS



Here is our President at his new layout doing a little day dreaming.



NCMRS

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Old Number 24

A few days ago Tom and Wally were cataloging the Diesel and Steam locomotives that are part of the Club's recent rolling stock purchase. Those locomotives that would not run on our demonstration layout were put aside in a separate storage box. Their fate was to be determined later.

I picked an 0-4-0 Mantua Shifter out of that box and took it home to see if, with some TLC, I could get it running again. I took it all apart and did a major clean up. The wheels were the worst with many years of built up crud and corrosion.



Old Number 24

I put it back together with a few drops of lubricant and was ready for my test run. The light came on and the little engine came to life. #24 still needs more work for it to run smoothly. I think I need to do a better job of cleaning the motor. It made me wonder how well these little engines that we all had really ran. Maybe they ran better in our memory. I do recall continually tweaking and over-lubricating my Varney Diesel Switcher in an effort to get it to run just a little better.

I returned #24 to the Club and put it in our display case. Hopefully someone will make a nice donation to the club and take #24 home for a special place in their display case.

Tinkering with #24 made me appreciate the John Allens of that era and their magnificent railroads. Even more it made me appreciate where the hobby is today. I guess I really do need to switch from DC to DCC.

Dick Miller

When the Winds Blow

As the winds of time blow across the railroad track and Model Railroaders get off the train for the last time, they leave behind their collections of engines and rolling stock.

The Club has just acquired the remains of a private Vista Model Railroad Club. This collection includes DC locomotives, both Steam and Diesel, rolling stock and structures. This finding has been inventoried save the structures. This Collection will be called "The Wheeler Collection"

A recap of the engines lists roughly a total of 120 items. A small number of locos require some tender loving care. All need wheels cleaned and proper lubrication.

Out of the collection of rolling stock there are some 750 pieces of freight cars and 280 pieces of passenger cars. The passenger Cars have been grouped into twenty or so Railroad Lines.

These all have Kede Couplers and plastic wheels and again the wheels are gummy and need cleaning.

There is another assortment of 250 pieces of rolling stock that needs loving care and in some cases assembly and or repair is required.

The number of structures is about 250 pieces. The buildings have been laid out according to kind.

The North County Model Railroad Society Board will review ALL of this material. The status of all items will be openly discussed and the disposition of each will be made known to all members.





Demystifying DCC Decoders – Part 1 by Leo Valley

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This is the first of several articles designed to assist members with the selection of a Digital Command Control (DCC) locomotive decoder. My aim is to keep the descriptions and procedures as non-technical as practical.

The older method for controlling locomotives is called Direct Current Analog (DC Analog). This method of controlling places a DC voltage on the track that varies from 0 volts to around 14 volts, and is controlled by a single throttle (the higher the volts, the faster the locomotive goes). This method of controlling locomotives goes all the way back to the early three-track Lionel and two-track American Flyer trains. DC Analog generally allows only one locomotive at a time to be operated on a single track.



Why do you need a DCC decoder? Our main layout is controlled by an "Easy DCC" System. Only locomotives equipped with DCC decoders will operate on this layout. DCC uses a small printed circuit card with integrated circuits to drive the motor, turn on lights, and in the case of sound systems, to ring bells, turn on whistles/horns, etc. The voltage on DCC tracks is constant and is generally around 14 to 16 volts.



Our small, portable "Show-N-Go" layout has both DCC and DC Analog Control Systems. If you only plan to operate on this layout, you do not need to install or buy a locomotive with a DCC decoder.



Decoders are controlled by a variation of alternating signals placed on the tracks and sent in groups, called packets. These packets are addressed to a specific locomotive number or all locomotives with the same number. This method allows many locomotives to be operated at the same time on a single track.

Prices for a non-sound locomotive DCC decoder range from about \$17 to just over \$40. The more functions a decoder performs or the more specialized it is, the more it costs. On the other hand, DCC decoders that also contain locomotive sounds can range from the low \$50 to well over \$100.

Not all locomotives, especially those that are 20 years and older, can be easily equipped with a DCC decoder.

The complexity of installing a DCC decoder varies from model to model. For the simplest installation, it can involve merely removing a locomotive shell, plugging in a “Drop-In” decoder (this is normally a decoder designed for a specific locomotive made by a specific manufacturer), and putting the shell back on.

Then there are “universal” decoders that are designed to fit a multitude of locomotives. Installation of these can also be as simple as merely removing a locomotive shell, plugging in the decoder, and putting the shell back on.

Older locomotives and even newer locomotives that are not “DCC Ready” generally involve more complicated installation. This generally involves steps such as unsoldering and/or cutting into wiring and then soldering new or additional wires into place.

Then there is the simplest method of all – that is buying a locomotive with DCC decoders already installed by the manufacturer. Almost every major manufacturer now sells locomotives of all types that are “DCC equipped”. The DCC equipped can be the most simple 2 function, non-sound locomotive, which costs less than \$50, to the beautifully detailed, sound locomotives from Broadway Limited Industries that range from the low \$200 to over \$300. Other sound equipped locomotives from TRIX, Lionel, etc. can cost upwards of \$400.

In the next article, we’ll go into the process that determines whether or not your locomotive can be equipped with a DCC decoder.

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