



# Semaphore Signals Part 1—Construction

by Jim Atkinson

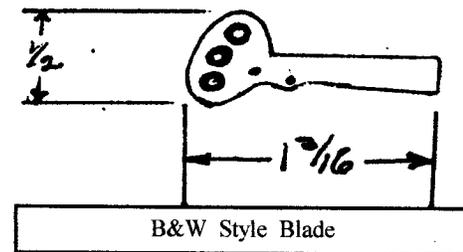
I wanted to add semaphore signals to the branch line on my Baltimore & Western layout. First of all, I researched the subject from my library and found there were many variations of semaphores. Besides upper and lower quadrant, and two and three position, there were numerous blade styles and mast heights as the most prominent varia-



tions. The Railroad Standard Code illustrates a multitude of combinations with multiple blade signals. As a modeler, I was only interested in a simple, single blade, three positions, upper quadrant signal. My first semaphores could only operate as two position units using a standard Tortoise switch machine. For block signals, I used the red and green positions and for turnout signals, I used the green and yellow positions for my signal situations. Its control rod sets the upper and lower travel limits of each signal. If you are up to some electrical work, you can make them operating three position signals.

Rather than purchase a manufactured signal, I preferred to design and build my own. If you've done any scratch building with brass, it isn't difficult to build your own signals, and you can build the style you desire. My eight semaphores cost less than two Tomar units.

First we make the blades. Cut enough 5/8" x 2" blanks from .020" styrene sheet for all the units you need plus several spares. Stack the blanks up and carefully cement only the ends together - NOT the center areas! Lay out the blade design in the middle of the blanks. Using a Dremel tool and files, cut the profile out in the entire stack at one time (making them identical) leaving the ends to hold the stack together. Drill the holes in the entire stack (three 3/32" holes, one .040" hole, one .025" holes). Now cut the ends off and file each of the blade ends to shape. Deburr as necessary. The blades are now complete.



Moving on to the mast, I used 1/8" outside diameter brass tubing. I know it's oversize, but I wanted the strength that smaller tubing lacks and the internal diameter is needed for two light wires and the control rod to pass through. I cut the tube 4 3/8" long yielding a finished signal 28" tall. 5/8" from the top and using a small round file, make a 5/32" diameter cut .030" deep in the mast. Cut a 5/32" long piece of 5/32" outside diameter brass tubing and deburr it. This is the LED "light" casing and it should fit in the groove you filed in the mast. By sliding a longer piece of 1/8" tubing through the light casing it is easy to hold the casing in place on the mast. Line up the front of the casing with the mast and neatly solder the two parts together. With

*continued on page 6*

## MER LOCAL

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The MER LOCAL welcomes articles, photographs and model railroad related material as contributions to members' mutual enjoyment of the hobby. Materials should have a wide appeal. Editors will exercise all due care of submissions, but contributors should not send originals without having back-up copies of both articles and photographs. Editors, by definition, reserve the right—and have the responsibility—to make corrections, deletions and changes to accommodate space.

## Keeping In Touch...

by Rita Lynam  
MER Business Manager

Recently I have had a few requests for copies of our newsletter for distribution at events. Will you have a train display or table with information for the public? If so and you would like some back issues of the LOCAL to give out, give me about three weeks notice and I will send you a packet of newsletters you can have for people to see what's available in the region. Just ask and we will accommodate as many requests as we can. If you have a division newsletter it too would be a great source of information for what is happening in your division. Any questions or comments? Please contact me at one of my addresses listed on the masthead.

### New Life Member

Kenneth B. Montero, Midlothian, VA. L-332

### Recently Deceased Members

John Atwater, Onancock, VA. Died in September 2001. Joined the NMRA in 1944 - #L00053; joined the MER in 1989 - #L-300.

Paul G. Bryant, Blue Bell, PA. Born May 1926; notified of death November 2001. Joined the NMRA in 1993 - #097274; joined the MER in 1995 - #7005.

Linda Coski, Virginia Beach, VA. Died in September 2001. Joined the NMRA in 1991 - #090527; joined the MER in Sept 1995 - #6400.

C Edgar Hires, Berwyn, PA. Born August 1911; notified of death in October 2001. Joined NMRA in 1964 - #036330; joined the MER in 1965 - #2406.

Robert P Lynch, Winston-Salem, NC. Born April 1920; died Oct 23, 2001. Joined the NMRA in 1972 - #L03745; joined the MER in 1993 - #L-279.

John R Turner, Chevy Chase, MD. Born July 1927; notified of death in October 2001. Joined the NMRA in 1979 - #L04808; joined the MER in 1979 - #L-195.

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# President's Column

*Norm Garner*

I hope everyone had a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year. We all hope this new year will bring us a reprieve from the disastrous events of last year.

The MER BoD has been busy implementing many changes. We started 2001 with a new Business Manager, Rita Lynam. We also approved and purchased a new computer on which Rita could keep our business up-to-date. It should be apparent to everyone that Rita and the new computer have markedly improved how the MER does business. I have received many compliments from our divisions about Rita's commendable performance as Business Manager. Thanks Rita.

For the first time in the history of the MER the BoD voted for an outside independent CPA audit of our books. I can safely say that we are fiscally sound. We have also purchased and adopted a new up-to-date accounting program.

In our efforts to stay up-to-date, ten new bylaws were submitted and approved. This is a protracted process that usually takes a year from conception to approval by the MER members. A committee is selected that submits its recommendations for changes to the BoD for review and approval. All recommendations are reviewed by legal counsel prior to publication in the Local pending membership approval.

I am pleased to announce that five divisions have pledged to come into line with MER and NMRA by-laws concerning prerequisites for membership. I know this has been very controversial for those divisions affected. I want to thank all Division Superintendents who helped get this accomplished. It was a sticky situation that took a lot of courage on your parts.

I have had the pleasure and opportunity to visit all but three divisions in the MER. I plan to reach the rest this year. In making the rounds and traveling over 2300 miles,

I have encountered many things, most good but some not so good. The major item is that we have a lot of work to do to make our Region even better. Each division indicates that all the work is being done by only about ten per cent of their membership. We need to get more members involved and stepping up to volunteer to help us reach our goals and offer solutions to some of our problems. I have also heard a variety of complaints or answered questions about things some members think the MER is doing wrong or what they feel the MER should be doing. Sometimes the answers are things about the MER that they weren't even aware existed. Sometimes their complaints are legitimate but few offer to step forward and chair or serve on a committee to address the complaints. I must point out that all of us are volunteers. As such we need more help in addressing and resolving the issues that arise throughout the region.

Regrettably, I have to report that this is the last edition for Art Thomas as Editor of the Local. Art has been Editor for over a year and has done a yeoman's job. I will personally miss his editorial style. The MER has also lost our Executive Convention Committee Chairman, Bob Martin. Bob has had one of the most difficult jobs in the region. It isn't easy to go out to the Divisions and persuade them to sponsor an MER Convention. These are two fine men that the MER has lost. The BoD is looking for someone to volunteer to take their places. (*Ed. Note: Late breaking word is that Alan Mende has offered to assume the job of LOCAL Editor to replace me. His offer has been accepted and he will issue the Mar - Apr 2002 issue.*)

In the last Local's "Letters to the Editor", the question came up about the Region's finances and full disclosure of them. For the record, the MER's finances were presented by the MER Treasurer, Ron Schmidt, and discussed at the annual business meeting in Lancaster. If anyone wants a full disclosure of them please contact me. The MER has a completely open policy about such matters, as it should be.

Hope to see you in June in Richmond.

# Editor's Column

*Art Thomas*

In the more than fifty years of my adult life I've worked with a lot of vastly different groups composed of a broad variety of people all over the world. In all that time I've never known or been more pleased to associate with anyone as much as I have been with you, my fellow members of the Mid-Eastern Region. From the top down it's been nothing but pure pleasure hammering together these issues of the LOCAL every two months. The friends I've gained and the cooperation I've received have been second to none. I can't think of a more enjoyable hobby in which to be involved nor a nicer group of people with whom to be associated.

As each issue rolls by I'm amazed by how more and more interesting items just seem to materialize for publication. They emanate both from one-time writers and from authors who provide serialized modeling articles of interest to the whole membership. Others diligently and repeatedly submit new and interesting write-ups of various lengths about their particular modeling scales, experiences, and knowledge. The MER's administrative staff diligently uses the LOCAL to its best advantage to keep the membership fully abreast of the business of the region. Then there are those who provide us with in-depth interviews of various manufacturers and dealers and their products. We have excellent photographers who unselfishly give of their time and

resources to supply us with images from conventions and other popular events. Last but not least there are all the division officers, the committee and program chairmen, and the special volunteers such as our publisher, auctioneer, contest officials, judges and many, many more who devote much of their valuable time just to make the hobby more educational and enjoyable for all of us. To each of them we owe a sincere and continuing debt of gratitude.

Nothing seems more fitting during these troubled holiday seasons than to take stock of all the contributing members who give so much of their time, talents, and effort for the hobby and the benefit and pleasure of each of us. Try to keep this in mind the next time you see or meet one of them. Offer them a warm and cordial handshake and say, "Thanks. I really appreciate it." It'll make them feel better and you'll be glad you did. And let's also not forget one another, all our fellow members, who year after year faithfully renew their memberships and form the lifeblood of keeping the MER in existence.

Now I will say goodbye to you as Editor of your LOCAL. As you may already know, this is my last issue. I thank you for your support, your encouragement, and your compliments as I've endeavored to put the past several issues together for your modeling enlightenment and enjoyment. Alan Mende, who many of you probably know, will be taking over the Editor's job beginning with the March - April issue. I encourage you to give him the same generous support you've given to me during my tenure. Thanks.

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## Letter to the MER Editor

I don't usually complain as I realize the MER is a volunteer run organization and I believe I have gotten much value for my dues over the past 20 years. However I was disappointed with the advertising for the recent convention in Lancaster. Attendance of the MER conventions is one of the major values of membership and I try to make most of them.

The Lancaster convention is very close to my home in Reading. Yet I couldn't get excited about attending. I couldn't find any information regarding clinics, layout tours or operating sessions. Both the July-August and September-October issues of the Local carried an article on the "Dutch Station 2001", but the articles only covered the outside activities. I searched in vain for a web site with more information. I e-mailed my dilemma to President Norm Garner and he gave me the organizer's email address. I inquired and got no response. So I stayed home.

I was talking to a friend this week and asked him about the convention. I met him at the Keystone Junction in Downingtown earlier this year and knew he usually attended. He didn't go to Lancaster either. Same problem - no information to plan a weekend. If others stayed away, I would suspect the attendance was way off. I hope the MER doesn't blame the September 11 events, and will look at future advertising.

The Keystone Junction website was a good example of the way to advertise. The pre-convention articles in the Local were also helpful in outlining clinics, judging schedules and highlighting nearby model railroads. I hope the organizers of the Richmond and Washington conventions next year pay attention to this detail.

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<http://www.quaker-valley.com>

**MADE IN  
THE MER**

**COMPILED BY  
EDWIN C. KUSER**



*A feature profiling model railroad manufacturers located in the Mid-Eastern Region. To be included in a future issue, contact:*

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Boyertown, PA 19512  
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ECKRY184@aol.com

## **C & O Historical Society**

Researched and written by Bill Fleisher

It might seem strange to think about an historical society as being the manufacturer of train products until you realize the number of rail-specific items sold in connection with a particular road name. The C & O Historical Society, located in Clifton Forge, Virginia, inventories and sells a plethora of C & O paraphernalia ranging from mugs, afghans and clothing to books and photographs. However, the most important product offering is the wonderful collection of rail history and photographs from which research is conducted and results are provided for a modest fee.

Founded in 1969, and with a membership of over 2500 people located among all 50 states and seven foreign countries, the COHS is able to support four full-time employees, one of whom is a professional archivist and also the Society Executive Director. A volunteer board of directors is elected from the membership. The primary goal of the society is to collect, conserve, restore, index, archive and make available materials on the history of the Chesapeake & Ohio Railway to as wide an audience as possible.

Collections of 200,000 engineering and 60,000 mechanical drawings, 1500 linear feet of reference files, 7000 books and bound periodicals and 200,000 photographic images are housed in the 6000 square foot archive/headquarters building. Publications include annual Chessie and C&O calendars, approximately ten books in print at any one time, pamphlets on delimited C&O subjects, and a monthly periodical.

Funding for this effort comes from grants and donations, not to mention the selling of the aforementioned products. With over 50 vendors located all over the U.S., future plans are to publish more books and offer a broader line of scale models. Meanwhile, work continues on the organization of informational material while working to secure grants for

feasibility studies to assimilate into the existing archives hundreds of thousands of documents currently in dead storage. Other plans include the badly needed upgrading of buildings and the dream of creating an overlook platform for visitors to view actual train operations in the CSX Yard.

Modelers will find many items of interest, either on-line or in the merchandise section of the historical society's building. Of particular value are the HO- or N-scale laser-cut building kits, special issues of rolling stock, and working locomotives; all bearing the C&O or Chessie roadname, of course. Additionally, one must not forget the wonderful assortment of books for acquiring data or just sparking ideas to give your pike that extra bit of something special.

For C&O enthusiasts that happen to be traveling near Clifton Forge, VA, a short stopover is worth the time. If a stopover is not convenient, then visit their website where listings of services, pictures, data, and products are all available. Whether you are doing research or just want to buy a book or T-shirt, they should have something for you. If you plan a visit to Clifton Forge be careful not to miss the building (as I did) because there is only a small sign in the window identifying it. Like most non-profit historical organizations, its funds are limited. Regardless, a new sign is planned for the near future. Hint: it is located opposite the town 's train terminal. You may contact the C & O Historical Society at:

C & O Historical Society  
P.O. Box 79 - 312 E. Ridgeway St.  
Clifton Forge, VA 24422 - 1325  
540-862-2210 or 800-453-COHS (orders)  
[www.cohs.org](http://www.cohs.org) (orders)  
[www.chessieshop.com](http://www.chessieshop.com) (sales)

## Semaphores

a standard cutting tool in your Dremel tool, cut the groove on the 45-degree angle close to the dimensions shown. This is for the blade control rod. Deburr the mast inside and out

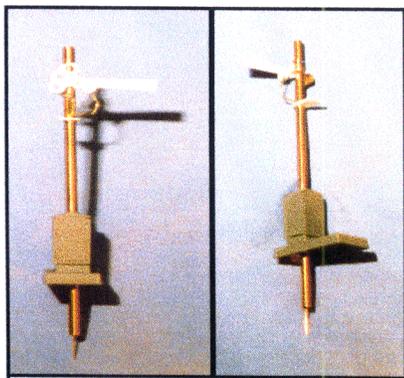


The parts you'll need

and check the slot to make sure the .022 control rod will slide freely in it. Now, solder an .040" brass wire to the mast in line with the top of the light casing as per the drawing for the blade pivot pin. Cut the back off flush and cut the front with about 1/4" overhang. We'll cut the excess later. Now, we need to drill a clearance hole for the wires just below the light casing on the back of the mast. Using a pin vise drill a 1/32" hole first, then enlarge it to about .050" so that two #30 wires will slide through it.

Make the maintenance platform from .040" styrene sheet as per the drawing and slide it on the mast. The base can be made from scratch using a .60" x 3/8" x 7/8" piece of styrene, a 1/4 x 3/8" x 3/8" block of styrene, and a 3/16" outside diameter x 3/8" long piece of styrene tubing.

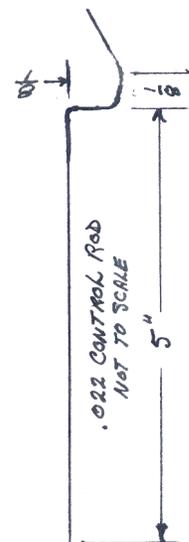
Another method is to use the base from any commercial dummy mast signal available. I used the bases from Selley dummy semaphore signals (available from English) or AHM signal part. I had to cut the cast mast off and file the top of the base flat. Using a drill press, I



Basic finished mast with working blade

drilled a 1/8" hole through the base. Once you have the base ready, put the mast into the base with 3/4" of the mast protruding below the base. Glue them together, making sure the front of the mast and the front of the base are in line. Locate the maintenance platform and glue it in place on the mast. Now make four small washers from .020" styrene sheet about 1/8" in diameter and .022" holes in three and a .040" hole in one. Glue a .022" hole washer on the back of the blade at the control rod pivot hole to reinforce it. Slip the .040" hole washer on the .040" blade pivot pin on the mast.

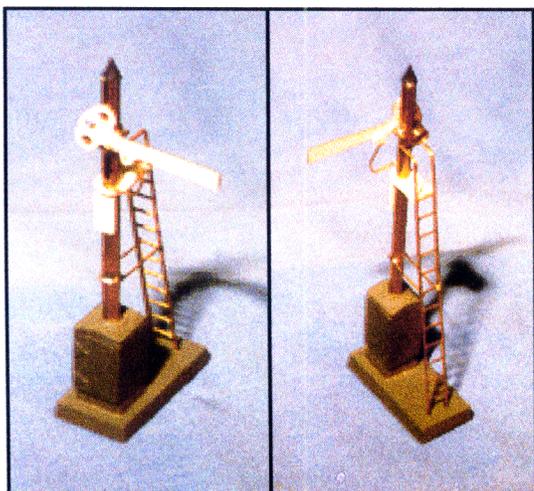
Next, put the blade on the pivot pin and check it for freedom of rotation. Once you are satisfied with the movement and that the lens holes in the blade properly line up with the light casing, force a .022" washer on the pivot pin. Allow for free blade rotation and carefully super glue the washer to the pin. Cut the excess pivot pin length off.



Control Rod

For the control rod, cut about 6" of .022" hard brass wire. Bend it in a flat plane as per the drawing. Slip the rod into its slot and behind the blade. Now position the blade in its lowest desired position and the control rod in its lowest position and note where the rod intersects with the rod pivot hole in the blade. Using needle-nose pliers, bend the control rod forward to 90 degrees at the noted location. Push the rod through the rod pivot hole in the blade. Hand-test the unit to see if the blade moves close to the desired positions at maximum rod travel. It doesn't have to be exact yet, just close. If it's close, put the last .022" washer on the portion of the pivot pin extending through the blade. Allowing for free movement, carefully glue the washer to the control rod. Again check for proper blade movement. If the alignment is slightly off it can be adjusted by carefully bending the control rod behind the blade with pliers. On your first try it may take a second control rod to get it right. So you are satisfied with the blade positions and movement (it must be smooth), the hardest part of the construction is done and you know you are going to like the results. I used brass ladder stock from Walthers for the ladder. Cut it to length, remove the unwanted rungs, bend, and glue it in place on the back of the signal. Make the number plate from .020" styrene sheet and glue it in position on the mast. I had some cone-shaped pinnacles left over from my earlier signal projects (AHM parts) and glued one on top the mast.

Paint your signal as desired. I used grimy black as it helps to hide the oversized mast. After the paint dries, insert a white



Signal mast ready to paint

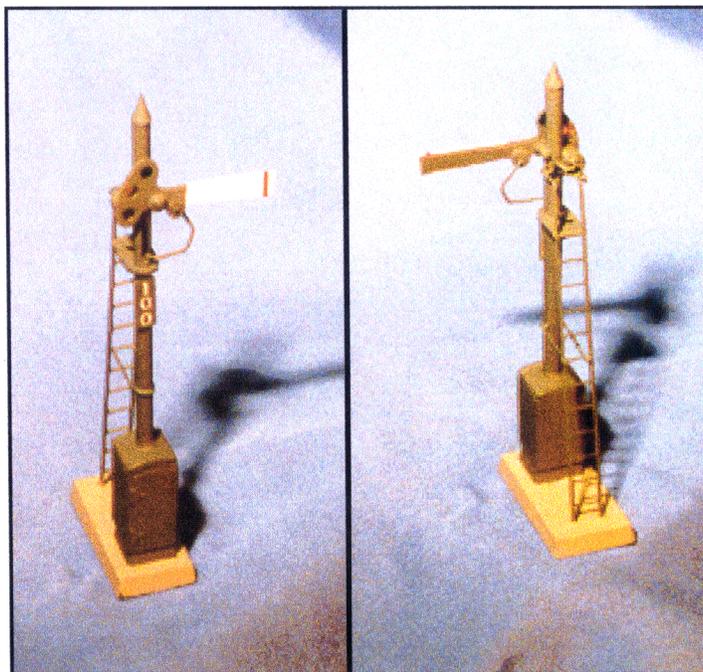
LED in the light casing and anchor it with a touch of super glue. Cut the LED hard leads off to about 1/8" long and bend them toward the mast. Keep space between them. They are an electrical circuit. Remember which lead is positive. Cut two lengths of #30 wire (preferably two different colors to differentiate polarities under the layout) long enough to reach from the signal head to the power source under the bench work. Thread the wires through the .050" hole into the mast and down through the mast. Solder the wires to the LED leads. Pull the wires slack into the mast. Brush paint the wires and back of the LED to match your signal hardware. Paint the front of the blade your desired color (usually white or yellow). I added small red stripes to my blade using decals. Decal the numbers onto the number board as desired. I used the assigned block numbers they work with. For light lenses, Edmond Scientific sells sample photographic color filters (Y40675 \$5.50) that will give you enough material for hundreds of lenses. Cut out small pieces, about 1/8" diameter, of the colors you want. Carefully position each one, one at a time, on the rear of the blade and glue with a small touch of super glue. Check it for proper operation manually. Your signal is now complete.

You could change the design of your signal from mine. Decide the blade style you want, then consider the location of the light casing and pivot pin. Your style might necessitate relocating the control rod on the blade and the slot in the mast. Experiment, it can be done.

Bill of Materials:

- 4 3/8" long 1/8" OD Brass Tubing
- 5/32" long 5/32" OD Brass Tubing
- 1 White TI LED
- 8" of .022" Brass Wire
- 1" of .040" Brass Wire
- 1" x 2" piece of .020" Sheet Styrene
- 1" x 1" piece of .040" Sheet Styrene
- 4" of Brass Ladder Stock
- 1 Signal Base (scratch built, Selley, AHM, or ?)
- 1 Pinnacle (AHM or ?)
- 1 680 Ohm Resistor
- 24" #30 electrical wire (2 colors 12" each)

Part 2 will follow with installation of your semaphore signal and how to operate it as a two or three position signal.



Finished Semaphore Signal  
Ready for Installation

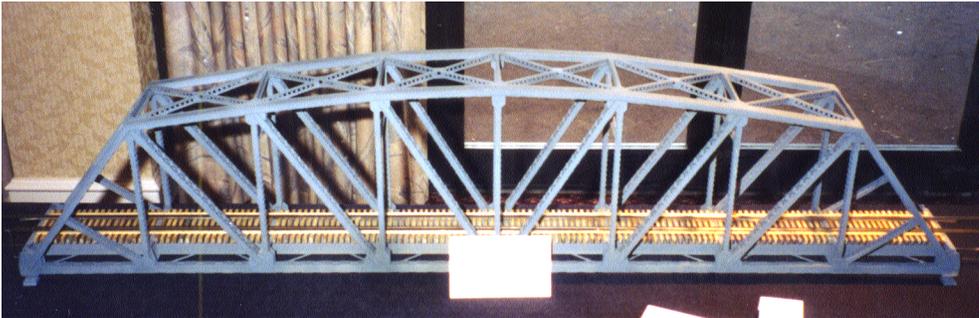
**Help Wanted  
Executive Convention Committee**

MER is looking for a person to fill the position of Convention Manager on the newly created MER Permanent Convention Committee. This position will coordinate on-site convention activities and act as overall assistant to the ECC. For details, contact ECC Bob Martin at 717-848-3640 or: by e-mail: [cprrboss@aol.com](mailto:cprrboss@aol.com) or: by snail mail 45 West Locust Lane, York, PA 17402.

# DUTCH STATION 2001 Mid-Eastern Region, NMRA Fall Convention



## Some Contest Winning Models



1st Place Structures On-Line  
O-scale 184' Curved Chord  
Pratt Truss Bridge

Charles Flichman

also Best In Show

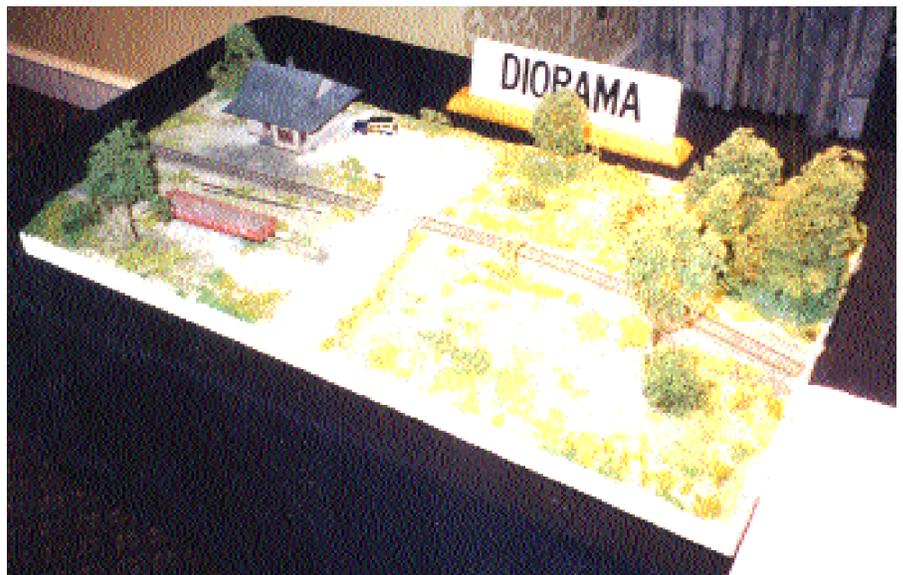
2nd Place Structures  
On-Line  
HO Double-track Thru  
Truss Span

Tom Lane



2nd Place Displays On-Line  
HO PR Flagstop Station  
Country Scene

John Johnson





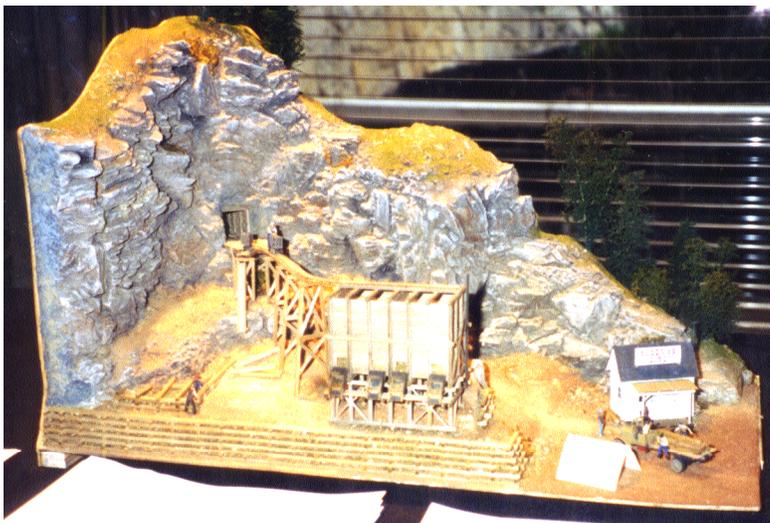
3rd Place Structures On-Line  
On3 Coaling Station

Charles Flichman



1st Place Steam Loco  
On30 Dunkirk

Noll Horan



1st Place Displays On-Line  
HO Mine Ore Bin

Dave Lynam

also: Blue Lantern Award

Step forward and claim  
your prize!

Sorry I don't know who did  
this one.



# TREE STUMPS, TREES AND LOGS -THE CHEAP WAY

by Bob Martin

A few years ago, on the old CPRR, I decided to change the profile of the mountain that was the home of the Furnace Mountain Coal and Lumber Co. (FMCL). The FMCL was also a branch line on my HO-scale Central Pennsylvania Railroad (CPRR). Those of you who were familiar with the old the CPRR will agree that the high cliff and shape of the mountain made it look like the little hat on top of a clown's big head. So, out came the saw and out came the plaster and a couple of weeks later, PRESTO! A much improved mountain had evolved.

Since the FMCL was a logging and mining branch, the requisite mine and sawmill and associated equipment had been installed for several years but the mountain was lacking in trees, stumps, and logs. After all, a sawmill generates a fairly healthy appetite for trees and a logging operation generates quite a few stumps and logs. Now let me explain that the mountain wasn't completely devoid of trees, logs and stumps; there just weren't enough, mainly because the creation of trees and stumps wasn't, for a long time, my favorite thing to do. But, needed they were. So I set about trying to find a way to make both items at as low a cost as possible since I needed hundreds of both. The project turned out to be easy and cheap. In fact, it became almost free for the trees and, believe it or not, there was absolutely no cost for the stumps and logs.

I've seen several articles over the years about using different varieties of weeds for trees. I live in a suburb with farm fields full of a variety of weeds next to my back yard. So that's what I used, along with a mix of Woodland Scenics tree kits. I just followed the standard practice and sprayed the weeds with hair spray and sprinkled on some ground foam.

The tree stumps were another matter, however. I have had good results with making latex molds from commercial castings and then making plaster castings from the molds. But that's very slow process and the variety is limited. It would have taken several weeks to make the 250 to 300 stumps I needed considering I would have cast only about ten in an evening for three or four nights each week. Then, of course, they would have had to be painted.

The idea I finally used came to me while picking up yard debris. Why not use what nature has provided? So, I experimented. I used a variety of twigs and branches cut to the proper length for a stump and they didn't look too bad. But something was missing. Then one day it hit me. There was no flare at the bottom of the stumps; they just sat there seemingly on top of the ground, not growing out of the ground. The question now was how to make the flare. The

answer, again, was so simple I felt embarrassed. On each of the small branches I had picked up in the yard, there were several small bumps where smaller twigs or branches had grown. I cut through the wood in the center of that bump and, presto, I had the flare I was looking for. In addition to the flare, the proper saw cut was also needed. Simply make two shallow cuts about 1/16-inch apart with a razor saw, one above the other, on opposite sides of the twig or branch. The result is a perfect rendition of a stump cut by a logger with a chain saw.

Logs were also easy and at no cost. Again, I simply used nature, picked up a variety of small branches and used the same method for cutting as I used for the stumps.

Simple, cheap, fast and easy! My kind of model railroading project. And, the beauty of it is that it's effective for any size tree stump or log in any scale. In two evenings, I had made almost three hundred tree stumps. The only reason it took two evenings is because I ran out of branches and didn't feel like walking around the yard on a dark rainy night. Another evening and all of the stumps had been "planted" and logs were strategically placed. A side effect is the fine sawdust and loose bark, which should be placed around the stumps and the sawmill.

A two-hoist yarder kit was later built along with a scratch-built logging skid. Both were super-detailed and placed on the mountainside with a logging crew, cables, and logs. I then had very effective and realistic logging operation.

## CALLBOARD — *Coming Events*

Notices must be typed and have complete addresses. Use the style shown below and be brief as possible. Be sure to include a contact telephone number. Send items for CALLBOARD to Alan Mende, , PA . E-Mail to [afmende@amp.com](mailto:afmende@amp.com)

### **January 18 - 19, 2002. NJ Division Meet.**

Haddon Township, NJ. Contact: Carl Haslett at (856)-546-9230.

### **January 20, 2002. 2 - 5 P.M. South Mountain Division, MER, Division Meeting.**

Contact: Dick McEvoy at (301)-791-1810

### **January 22, 2002. 7 P.M. Carolina Piedmont Division Meeting.**

Apex, NC. Contact: Bill Cox at (919)-462-8740. [Freeby3@aol.com](mailto:Freeby3@aol.com).

# Richmond Rails 2002 More on the Contests for the Spring Convention

Ray Bilodeau, MER General Contest Chairman

There will be a special contest and award at the June, 2002 convention in Richmond, Virginia. Convention Chairman, Chuck Hladik, has proposed that modelers attending the convention try their hand at building an Off-Line Structure, specifically an *outhouse* entitled “**The Pride of Dixie**”. The structure can stand alone; be part of an Off- or On-line Display (Diorama); have a particularly southern flavor (or not); be in any scale; reflect any era; but be railroad oriented. There will be a trophy given to the winner along with some “odds and ends”.

Besides the “**Pride of Dixie Award**”, the following four awards will also be presented in Richmond:

**The President’s Award** - President Garner would like our members to try their hand at building an Off-Line Structure.

Keep in mind that Richmond historically was the capitol of the Confederacy. Also remember that our President is a member of the Tidewater Division, and he lives in Norfolk, Virginia. So, perhaps your model should open our eyes to the wealth of unusual, unique, as well as everyday structures that exist, or did so in another age, south of the Mason-Dixon Line.

**The Clyde L. Gerald Award** - This MER sponsored award is given at each spring convention for the best kit-

bashed model entered in the judged model contest. The award is named for the late Clyde Gerald, a Tidewater Division member, long-time MER Business Manager, and a man with an imaginative vision as a model builder. Clyde not only provided inspiration to many a novice but he also became a mentor to not a few of our modeling brotherhood.

**The Blue Lantern Award** - This award is sponsored by the Narrow Gauge Car Shop, and is for a model containing not more than forty percent commercial parts that best represents branch, short or private line operating equipment and/or facilities.

**The Philadelphia Division New Modeler Award** - This award is given to a first-time modeler entering an NMRA sponsored and judged model contest at a Mid-Eastern Region convention. The new modeler whose entry receives the highest score regardless of category will win the award. The Philadelphia Division will present a cash prize and plaque to the winner and a New Modeler Award certificate will be presented by the MER.

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What’s going on out there? I’m not hearing much from MER modelers. There must be stuff you want to know about the structure of, rules for, judging of, or other things about contests either at the Regional or National level.

I would also like your input on whether you think we should print the Model, Photo, and Arts and Crafts contest rules on the MER web site?

If you care to, drop me a line at: [RayBilodeauJr@aol.com](mailto:RayBilodeauJr@aol.com) or call: (302) 636-0888.

## CALLBOARD — *Coming Events*

Notices must be typed and have complete addresses. Use the style shown below and be brief as possible. Be sure to include a contact telephone number. Send items for CALLBOARD to Alan Mende, , , PA . E-Mail to [afmende@amp.com](mailto:afmende@amp.com)

**February 17, 2002. South Mountain Division, MER, Division meeting.** Contact: Dick McEvoy at (301)-791-1810.

**February 26, 2002. 7 P.M. Carolina Piedmont Division Meeting.** Apex, NC. Contact: Bill Cox at (919)-462-8740. [Freeby3@aol.com](mailto:Freeby3@aol.com).

**April 6 - 7. Great American Train Show (GATS),** NC State Fairgrounds, Raleigh, NC. Contact: Bill Cox at (919)-462-8740. [Freeby3@aol.com](mailto:Freeby3@aol.com).

(Thanks to James Ingram [[JamesIngram@track2.com](mailto:JamesIngram@track2.com)] for providing much of the information)

# MODELING AT 22,000 FEET UP

*By Bob Martin*

I'm a Hobbytown man. For those of you not familiar with Hobbytown, you're missing the strongest and best running HO-scale diesel on the market - when they're properly built that is. Until recently they only came in kit form and were not for the novice or weak-hearted.

Several years ago B.R. (that's "before retirement"), I had an opportunity to travel to Japan and South Korea on military business for the Air Force and Air National Guard. We flew in a Lockheed C130 "Hercules" airplane. The trip took ten days with six stops enroute and approximately 50 hours in the air for the entire round trip. The C130 is a fairly smooth flying aircraft but it's dimly lit, very noisy, and there's a lot of vibration. Generally the seats are web and canvas affairs slung along the bulkheads. But on this trip we had regular airline type "F-seats". Usually I have difficulty sleeping on an airplane, even on a quiet commercial jet. Even though I enjoy reading, a couple of hours in the books at one stretch are enough. So, what do you do to help kill time on 12 or 13 hour long legs of such a flight as this? How about trying to build a Hobbytown locomotive kit? I figured it would probably be a first for a C130 passenger and it would certainly be a challenge for me!

The day before departure I packed my carry-on bag and included a Hobbytown Universal Four-wheel Drive Chassis kit that would later evolve into an EMD F7. Because I had built about a dozen Hobbytown kits in the past I knew from experience which parts had a habit of growing wings or legs and disappearing when least expected. So I brought along an ample number of spare parts like assorted screws and universal couplings. The tools required were minimal in number and simple in type: a set of small screw drivers, a set of small files, a six-inch file, a screw holding tool, a self-closing pair of tweezers, and needle-nosed pliers. Hobbytown kits are all metal and usually there's quite a bit of flash to be removed. As I mentioned earlier, we were fortunate to have airline-style seats with pull-down trays in the back of the seats in front of us. This gave me a work surface. If I hadn't had it, I wouldn't have attempted the project.

Shortly after we leveled off at altitude on the first leg heading for Alaska, I started dressing the metal parts with a variety of needle files. Normally, had I been at home in my shop, I'd have used a motor tool and could be finished this task in about two hours. By hand I expected the job to take six or seven hours - and it did. Of course I didn't work at it for seven hours straight. It finally got finished somewhere between Alaska and Japan on the second day out. Altitude 22,000 feet! Then the real fun began. Filing is no big deal, even on an airplane. The parts and tools are fairly easy to grasp and there's not much chance of losing a part but the actual assembly is an entirely different story, especially when it comes to handling the very small parts. My first hint of the problems yet to come happened while attempting to press a coupling ball onto the flywheel shaft. The ball is made from nylon or slippery plastic and yes, you guessed it, it grew wings and flew into the great unknown. No harm done. I had packed several extras. But unfortunately the same thing happened on the second attempt. I decided that sub-assembly would have to wait until I got home. The other end of the shaft needed a universal coupling socket and it went on without a hitch. Things were beginning to look up!

Next came the pillar blocks. A few swipes with the file and they were ready to be fastened to the chassis with a couple of screws. A short time later I had a good fit for the flywheel bearings and was ready to fit the bearing caps in place. I used the screw holder tool and carefully fit the screws in place but the vibration of the airplane caused three of them to back out before I could get them tightened. Scratch one 2-56 X 3/16 flat head machine screw (I found the other two). Next came the upper gearbox assembly and, guess what? The spur assembly wouldn't fit into the upper gearbox. Hobbytown had put the wrong part in the box (they sent the correct one on request a few weeks later). Oh well, at least the lower gear was okay so I moved on to the trucks.

By this time everybody on the airplane (about 15 including crew who I thought were all my friends) knew the colonel was "playing with his train in the cargo compartment". When they stopped to take a look they knew, without a doubt, that the colonel had truly lost his mind along with a couple of loose screws! Of course I also had to put up with woo-woo, choo-choo, and chug-chug for the rest of the trip too.

Meanwhile, back to the kit. The truck castings also had some flash so I cleaned them up and started to fit the drive gear shaft bearings into the main truck gearbox. I got them fitted okay but when I tried to fit the bearings on both ends of the shaft into their slots at the same time, we hit some bodacious turbulence. You got it. Scratch one bearing and one washer (the bearing later turned up in the seat cushion). It took quite awhile to get the truck bearings seated properly. As it turned out, there was a slight defect on one of the bearings that I couldn't see due to the dimmed lighting on the airplane. The next problem (okay, okay, call it a challenge) was to place the drive shaft coupler balls on both ends of the drive shaft. Again I was dealing with a round slippery ball in the dimly lit fuselage of a vibrating platform careening through the air at over 300 miles an hour. Once again one of the bearings grew its own set of wings! At that point we were approaching Japan so I interrupted the model building for awhile. A few days later, after some shopping in South Korea and days of grueling work in Japan we took off for Hawaii. During the next few hours I resumed my modeling and completed several sub-assemblies. With that I had done as much as I could without the missing part which I later received from Hobbytown. I then got the chassis running in less than an hour.

Out of more than 50 hours in the air I spent about 22 hours working on the locomotive. That's more than twice the time it would have taken at home on the workbench to accomplish the same thing. Would I do it again? Absolutely not! It was certainly a challenge but a noisy, dimly lit, vibrating airplane is not the place to build a small HO scale locomotive. However, on the positive side and with a fair degree of certainty, I can say that CPRR (my railroad) F7 No. 84 is probably the only HO scale F7 ever built while cruising more than four miles above the Pacific Ocean.

**Electronic Publishing Note:**

I can now make available a CD containing the (nearly) complete set of issues of the LOCAL from Jan 1999 through Dec 2001. They are Adobe Acrobat files, as usual. You can expect to see some of the content from the older ones on the MER website before too long.

— clint hyde, [chyde@cox.rr.com](mailto:chyde@cox.rr.com)

## A Simple LED Project

by Dave Lynam

Since Jim Atkinson has been expounding the virtues of the LED, and our editor is pining for articles, I will attempt to share a simple circuit I recently used in a diorama. The diorama scene is part one of three sections of scenery that we use for a time-saver layout that the Carolina Piedmont Division 13 sets up for train shows in the Raleigh, NC area. Since I knew nothing about electronics when I started this project, I asked my friend Dill Huey for some help. Dill's home layout is controlled with a computer and he knows a thing or two about electronics, to say the least!

I started with a simple mine shaft made of shoebox cardboard. It's one piece construction that is folded to form a rectangular tube. I added some strip wood timbers down the sides and across the roof. Then some gravel was glued in place between the timber to represent the rock wall inside the mountain. The ties for the ore car track were added and the interior of the shaft was done. I cut the back of the shaft at an angle and taped a one-inch square piece of mirror to the shaft to give the illusion of depth. I wanted to put some lanterns from the ceiling for illumination of the shaft and to add interest to the scene. So, I thought some LEDs would be a good idea. Dill had a bunch of spare parts to play with so we experimented a bit with 7 AA batteries, 2 small LED's and 2 resistors. Hooking them together in series with clips we soon decided on the type of LED and resistor that would give a good effect. Once that was figured out, all I had to do is add an on/off switch and solder them together. I didn't know just exactly how the circuit would fit inside the mountain so I used about five inches of wire between each of the components. I picked two likely places for lanterns to hang from the ceiling and cut two small holes for the LED's to set in, being careful not to make too big a hole. I slipped the LED's into their mounts and turned the switch on. Ta-Dah! ! It looked pretty good! I then mounted the mineshaft to the back of the mountain and secured the battery box so it wouldn't shift around. Finally, I mounted the on/off switch to a simple removable panel on the back of the display and my project was finished.

This was a very simple project and I learned a bit about electronics theory as well. One great part of this hobby is the sharing of information and solving problems with your friends. Don't try to reinvent the wheel! Ask somebody for some help. If you know a beginner who is struggling with a problem, offer to help and gain a friend! Thanks Dill!

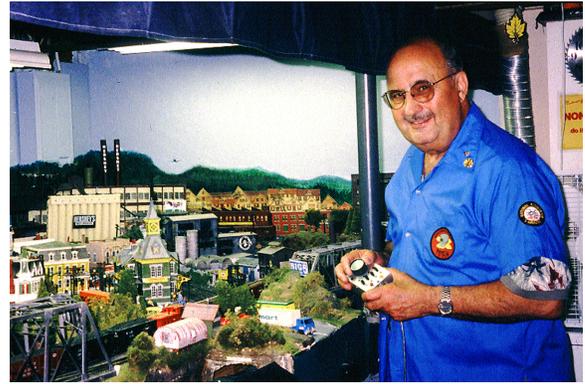
# S-Scale Modeling

By Bill Fraley

One of the niceties about model railroading these days is that you can purchase some of the most realistic buildings for your layout and they are all but, if not exact, scale. When I sit down and look through model railroading magazines I marvel at the variety of structures that are offered.

A model railroader could build his entire layout out of those beautiful pre-fabricated plastic buildings. Many have and their layout looks pretty well populated. Most times a modeler will paint his models, or maybe even modify them, just to make them look more like everyday life. But is that all there is? (Jeez, sounds like a song title, doesn't it?) My point is: Modelers, there is more to model railroading than owning the biggest city in the division.

Why not scratch build some of your buildings? "Scratch building? You've got to be kidding!" Nope. For one thing, you will have more of a variety in your structures. In S-scale we are always looking for some other size scale building to convert, modify or chop up. Actually, at one time HO was easy to modify up to 3/16th scale because the structures were mostly off scale. Sometimes we could chop down an O-scale building and other times O-27 was just the right size. But nowadays model manufacturers have the various scales right down to prototype. This makes it almost impossible to modify for S-scale.



We do have BTS Model Railroad manufacturer ([www.master-creations.com](http://www.master-creations.com)) out of Florida, with their laser-cut models. Another wonderful manufacturer is Banta Model Works ([www.bantamodelworks.com](http://www.bantamodelworks.com)). And, we can pirate MTH buildings at times. But I still like to scratchbuild. Must be my old age. My oh my, I do go on, don't I?



When visiting the Jefferson Central you will find buildings made from all kinds of materials and converted from all of the scales. That's because the model pike was started in 1962. I must add though, that even today we in "S" still have to adopt other scale buildings as we don't yet have enough manufacturers' support .



It seemed that the Jefferson Central needed some wayside stations. You know, to break up the JC engineers monotony while speeding along with a full size freight train on the mainline. So let's go get a light bulb wrapper, a Gaviscon bottle, (empty one of course) a discarded Plasticville building, some run down pencil erasers and some junk out of my scrap box. Lets say, we call this wayside stop, "PEEDINK", okay?

First you build the deck out of scrap wood. Notice how precarious it is on that hilltop? You then take the plastic Gaviscon bottle and cut the lower third of the bottle off. Take your light bulb wrapper and glue it on the bottle. With your Dremel tool, cut out spaces for those odd windows you have lying around and for the doors. Then place your old Plasticville Watch Shanty on the deck and place all your other wayside effects around the buildings. The pen-

cil erasers become 10-20gallon cans. You can cut up some square basswood and make your freight boxes. Get the paints out and weather everything. Voila! Wow! What a neat eyepiece. Something that the visitors always talk about and it does take their eyes off of the other discrepancies on the layout doesn't it?

The total area squeezed in on the mainline is about 10 inches (54 S scale feet). Ten inches on your layout that was bare and mundane. Now it looks very busy. It causes many visitors to ask, "how do you get all that to fit in?" Those are the kind of questions that always make me feel good, because that is why I'm trying to model a railroad that creates realism of the prototype and having fun doing it!



#### Helpful Hints

- (1) Old pencil erasers make nice container cans.
- (2) Scenic Express Super Trees and various colored flock and turf make excellent trees and bushes.
- (3) Finishing Details & Accessories by Mr. Plaster add all kinds of neat details for your layout.
- (4) Woodland Scenic's assorted junk piles add realism to your mainline areas.

For other scenic ideas, order Scenic Express Model Landscaping Supplies catalog. (1-800-234-8885). You can also get most of these items from Walthers or Scenic Express through your local Hobby Shops.

Another idea. Take your Walthers catalog and copy their window and door sections (and other neat things) to your scale. The rule of thumb is to have a seven-foot high doorway in your scale. Then paste them to your buildings, particularly those that are in the background. You won't believe all the realism it gives your layout.

"S"ee Ya, and Happy Modeling,  
Bill

## Who's Who in the MER

Featuring Robert G. Minnis - Director

My introduction to trains began around eight years of age with a Christmas Lionel train set. After several years, my interests moved to other models such as ships, cars, and airplanes. I rediscovered trains at age 14 in the form of an Athearn metal IC boxcar kit and have been in HO ever since. During high school, I continued to build rolling stock and structures as finances (my allowance) would permit. I joined a school-sponsored club in college.



My modeling activities remained at a low level during my military career. I continued to accumulate structures and rolling stock and eventually joined the NMRA. I participated in and attended local events when and where the opportunity presented itself. While assigned to Ft Devens MA, I was a charter member of the post model railroad club which built a large permanent layout in a donated WWII barracks building. In Alaska, a similar venture was a modular oriented organization.

Upon retirement, I returned to Virginia where the Superintendent of the Dixie (later changed to Potomac) Division heard of my modular experience and asked me to be the Module Coordinator for the Division. Our first public show was at the National Capital Children's Museum in December 1988. Many months later, I was elected Division Paymaster and joined the MER. After five years, I became the Division Superintendent and turned the Coordinator's duties over to others. Subsequently I accepted a position on the Region Budget Committee and ran (unsuccessfully) for a Region Director's position two years ago.

I have attended several National Conventions including Valley Forge where the Potomac module team and Penn Traction group displayed a joint modular layout. I am a Life Member of both the NMRA and MER. I participate in the Achievement Program and have earned (to date) Association Volunteer and Scenery Certificates. Just a few more merit awards are needed to qualify for the Structure and Car Certificates.

I enjoy scratchbuilding and superdetailing models as well as running trains for the public. Many friendships have developed over the years which I look forward to renewing at regional conventions and divisional activities.

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