

S LORE

By Jim Kindraka

The "Mail Track" section of the October '92 *Dispatch* carried a letter from Earl Henry that set me thinking. We do need to discuss, a lot more, how problems are dealt with. A friend of mine once told me that he refuses to review any product that has serious problems. His opinion is that it is better to be silent than criticize a new product or popular manufacturer. I think that's popular but not a particularly positive position to take in order to build better products for the future. Simply to find fault doesn't help either, but a little constructive criticism won't hurt any of us and I think this "S Lore" column is the best forum for such information. This is the section where all sorts of practical information on solutions to product problems should be presented.

Since entering the brass business I have dismantled and repaired any number of locomotives and cars. It has helped me appreciate the incredible amount of engineering and work that goes into building one of these models. It has also lead me to develop solutions to several common problems with certain models. In an effort to get a "solutions" discussion going in this column, here are several ideas.

1. First and foremost, remember all brass models are hand built. If something doesn't fit quite right the individual constructing the model may "custom" fit it. Consequently it is extremely important that any working mechanism piece removed (for painting, etc.) must be returned to its original position on the model. This even extends to which truck is on which end of freight cars. Many times bolsters are custom fit to achieve a correctly balanced car. Inadvertently reversing the trucks can leave the car with an 8° list!



2. On some of the older Overland pieces, the motor and gear tower are joined by a very short piece of flexible tubing rather than a universal joint. If this tubing slips or breaks, the model will perform poorly or not at all. This tubing shouldn't be replaced unless it is not performing. If it needs replacement, seek out a good R/C model airplane hobby shop. What you're looking for is model airplane fuel line tubing. Its heavy wall construction makes it an ideal replacement - better than that originally supplied by the Koreans.

3. A few of the Overland USRA Light Pacific's also tend to have universal joint problems. The collars of the universal can crack parallel to both the motor and gear tower shafts. In this case, the plastic used to manufacture the universal shaft was of poor quality - too hard with limited expansion flexibility. Since the manufacturer (M.S. Models) no longer does business here (too many quality problems?), no


replacements exist. That isn't all that bad since the replacements would probably be of the same brittle plastic! A perfect replacement can be made from one of the universal shafts in the original Overland F3 and F7 unit diesels. These are much higher quality universal shafts (manufactured by a different company) and have been made obsolete in the original F3 and F7 units by the F3/F7 Redrive Kits marketed by River Raisin Models in late 1991. The smaller of the 2 shaft holes needs to be drilled out with a #41 drill bit, but otherwise it makes a perfect replacement for the original universal shaft. Replacement will require removing the motor from its mount (3 screws) and carefully but firmly press fitting the new universal on both shafts. It takes about 30 minutes.

4. The ALCO RS-11/RS-18/RS-32 diesels are (in my opinion) among S scale's most nicely detailed and powerful locomotives. They also are virtually forgotten because they represent a sparsely modeled era (1956-70) and the models tend to run poorly out of the box. The units will hesitate (run/stop/run) over the entire speed range as if the wheels are dirty. The real problem is that the Koreans did not wire the units properly. Each non-insulated wheel is provided with a wheel wiper for electrical pick-up. However, if you remove the superstructure, you'll find the motor lead wires attached to the top of the gear towers. The gear towers are electrically isolated from the wheel wipers, meaning the wipers perform a useless function. Electrical current must traverse through the axles, gears and gear case to get to the motor lead wires. This leads to poor contact and the intermittent, start/stop operation. The fix is simple - solder the motor leads directly to the wheel wipers. It requires removing only the 2 bolster plate mounting screws, you don't have to dismantle the trucks or even remove the drive shaft. It takes about 15 minutes and yields an unbelievable change in locomotive performance, especially slow speed operation.

WANTED



Imaginative Loads!
Too many empty cars are
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