

Trolleyville Goes To China!

Touring Sanda Kan and AFFA Technology Facilities

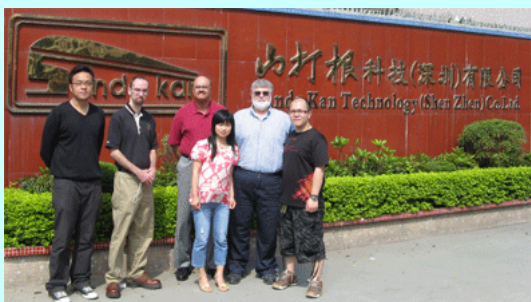
Bowser Manufacturing Co of Montoursville, PA, has been working with two China model railroad suppliers for some time and recently decided that the time was right for a face to face meeting with both Sanda Kan and AFFA Technology (K. K. Ku). Since there would be meetings concerning the new Bowser San Francisco 'F-line' PCC trolley to be released later this year, they asked George Huckaby, Product Consultant for the project since May 2007, to accompany them. Since George Huckaby had a valid passport, all three obtained business visas and the trip was on. Planning a trip to China involved a lot of preparation and long travel times.

Bowser President & CEO Lee English and Project Engineer, Matt Herman left Montoursville, PA early Thursday morning April 3rd arrived in Los Angeles at 10:30 AM after seven hours of ground travel to Harrisburg and air travel from Harrisburg by way of Cincinnati to Los Angeles. They were met by George Huckaby. The very next day all three boarded Northwest Flight 1 at 12:45 PM. After eleven hours of flight, they landed in Tokyo (Narita) airport. Two hours later, they continued to Hong Kong and arrived there Saturday evening at 10:00PM, getting in to their hotel rooms at 1:00AM Sunday, April 6th.

All day Sunday was spent riding the famous four wheel trams along Des Voeux Road Central, Johnston Road, Tennessee Road, Yee Road Street, Causeway Road, Percival Street and Tin Lok Lane.

The first leg of the trip to Sanda Kan began at 9:00 AM on Monday, April 7th when we were picked up by a Sanda Kan representative, Sun Yau, Business & Project Manager, who took us by taxi to a local MRT train station where we rode in the first class car in a commuter train to the border of the Peoples Republic of China (PRC). Then after clearing both exit customs of Hong Kong and entry customs of the PRC, we took a company car, a Buick Mini-van, which incidentally was the first American car that we had seen since we left LAX. We were told that that car had actually been built in China. By the time we arrived at Plant 5 of Sanda Kan in ShenZhen, 2.5 hours had elapsed.

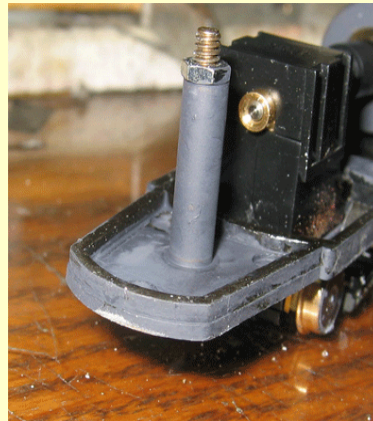
We were immediately taken to a local restaurant, Jungle Pub, where the Assistant General Manager for Engineering, Lawman M. K. Law, hosted lunch for us along with representatives from Atlas Model Railroad Company. When we returned we would meet with Sam Cheung, Senior Project Engineer and Selina Lau, Business Assistant. A day and one-half of meetings would commence late Tuesday evening. Prior to leaving the plant, the group posed for the photo shown below. Shown (l to r) are Sun Yau, Business & Project Manager; Matt Herman, Bowser Project Engineer; George Huckaby; Selina Lau, Sanda Kan Business Assistant; Lee English and Sam Cheung, Sanda Kan Business & Project Manager in front of the sign at the main entrance of the ShenZhen facility.



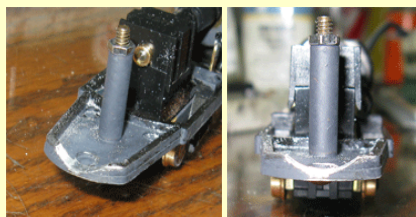
Sanda Kan incorporated in Hong Kong in 1973 and since then has accumulated over thirty years experience in the development and manufacturing of high quality precision products and is now owned by the CCMP Capital Asia (formerly known as JP Morgan Partner Asia). Sanda Kan started as a model railroad and road race developer and

Adding a Headlight to the Bowser (125210) PCC

When Bowser updated their traction drive in 1999 and revised their four traction shells, (i.e. PCC, Brill, IRR and Jewett) to accept the new floors that accompanied the new drive, they replaced the old headlight jewel indentation in the PCC and Brill shells with an opening that could be used for a true headlight. When we attempted to install our first headlight, mounting it in the shell, it worked fine until we inserted the floor, then it would not work anymore. We did this a few times with the same result until we discovered that when we installed the floor and tightened the front mounting screw, the front of the floor casting was literally smashing the light bulbs. This was not obvious to us because we use shrink tubing to surround the bulbs on the inside of the cars to keep the light from illuminating the interior. The 1283 floor is used on both the Bowser 125210 PCC streamlined trolley kit and the 125141 PCC mechanism for the older Bowser / Pennsylvania Scale Model (PSM) PCC shells. The front of the Bowser 1283 floor is shown as originally configured before the required modification to eliminate the problem.



We have been using a #407 Dremel 1/2" Sanding band to remove enough material from the front of the #1283 floor to clear the headlight. The results are shown in two separate views below.



This procedure needs to be used with almost any PCC shell using the 1283 floor or the 125141 Bowser mechanism. Our first experience with this problem when we were evaluating the first MTS Boston "Picture Window" PCC shell for fit with the Bowser mechanism. We have never forgotten how many lamps we broke before we realized what the problem really was.

After much discussion with Bowser, it appears that the #1283 floor will be modified in this manner in the future since the same modification will be needed to accommodate the headlight on the new PCC car.

manufacturer. They have since broadened their capabilities to such products as high quality electronics, filtration systems and submersible pumps. Sanda Kan is an O.E.M. / O.D.M. producer catering to customers throughout the world including the U.S.A., Canada, Germany. Sanda Kan opened its' first factory in mainland China in 1984.

Since then they have grown to ten factories in two major complexes. The first is located in the Wan Jiang District of Dong Guan City [Sanda Kan Industrial (Dong Guan) Co, LTD] and serves as the Toy Factory. The other complex is located also in Guang Dong Province in the Xi Tou District, of Song Gang Town, Bao An, ShenZen [Sanda Kan Technology (ShenZen) Co, LTD], and serves as the Model Factory. These factories total 1,200,000 square feet and are approximately a two-hour drive from Hong Kong. They have a collective workforce of 10,000 in China, Macao and Hong Kong, which includes 60 designers, 260 product and production engineers, 45 business engineers and 400 skilled toolmakers. Sanda Kan has 208 injection molding machines, 870 paint booths, 455 pad printing machines, 89 punching machines, 12 die casting machines and 357 miscellaneous machines for such operations as drilling, grinding, Electrical Discharge Machining (EDM) and engraving. At the Song Gang facility 2,000 employees work mainly on model train products. There is an employee dormitory on the facility which along with the factory is guarded twenty four hours a day. Many employees have origins far away in China and reside in the dormitory except when they return home during Chinese New Year (February). Despite all the rumors that we have heard, we found that all the employees were professional, schooled in their crafts and seemed to enjoy their work. The work day is eight hours with a two-hour lunch period from 11:30 AM to 1:30 PM. The workday starts, at 7:30 AM and ends at 5:30 PM. Some photos below were taken in the plant showing several of the operations in progress.



And of course.....Miller Time!

Help for Catenary Modelers!

At the Bakersfield Train Show in March 2008, we encountered the "Irish Tracklayer" who had developed some nickel silver catenary hangers. These O-scale units could just as well be used by HO scale modelers that are erecting their own catenary for interurban or heavy electric operations. In any application, these hangers should make the task of erecting compound catenary much easier.

The Irish Tracklayer, John Houlihan, is making two products available for the traction catenary modeler.



Each of the above packages has ten of the graduated vertical supports required in an 150 span of catenary. T-103 requires soldering to both the top of the contact wire and the bottom of the messenger while T-104 has a loop at one end for the messenger to pass through. For more information, contact John Houlihan via fax at (559) 435-2873. [Data obtained from the Western Railway Museum, Fairfield, CA were used in the development of these items.](#)

Car 162 makes maiden voyage!

San Francisco Class B car 162, originally built in 1914, retired and sold to the Orange Empire Railway Museum in 1958, was re-purchased by Muni in 2003 and completely restored. The refurbished car took to the rails for the first time with passengers on April 19th. There was a small dedication for the car and the Market Street Railway donors who had helped purchase the car. Several came from as far out of town as Iowa, Chicago and Washington DC.



The car performed perfectly on a very windy day. The car traveled out the M Oceanview line to the L Taraval line and then to the beach at 48th and Taraval. The fine job on the interior done by the Muni shop people is evident in the next photo:



Heavy snows in China this year caused major damage to the electrical power network forcing scheduled blackouts two or three days each week. Sanda Kan has adjusted for this by changing employee schedules to prevent losses in productivity.

Early in the morning of Wednesday, April 9th, we were driven to the facilities of AFFA Technology Limited, located north of ShenZen in the city of ShiLong. We were given a plant tour of the facilities by the Director, Kwok K. Ku. Although the current AFFA facilities are crowded and older than those seen at Sanda Kan, they have similar capabilities and possibly more as their policy is to do as much work in-house as possible. AFFA is about to open two brand two buildings just behind their present facility. As with Sanda Kan, the workers are provided with dormitories, which allow work hours to be shifted during the power outages and the resultant work interruptions that also plague this area. This company also provides free lunch and dinner for all employees using funds and arrangements managed by the employees themselves. Two hours is provided for lunch allowing a brief nap in the dormitories. Factory workers are given breaks every two hours, with normal working hours of 7:30 to 11:30 AM and 1:30 to 5:30 PM. The workers actually control their own destiny in a lot of areas. They are challenged to meet production goals and participate in their own success. By allowing the workers to choose how to make up hours lost to power outages. In many ways, the factory literally runs itself. Mr Ku began the formal business by explaining his philosophy of project and plant management. He started by telling us that he was here to help make our project a success. He can show us technically the best, fastest and most cost-effective means to accomplish any task but success of any project is only as good as the Project Manager. He believes in doing nothing to destroy initiative in his workers. When he first opened his factory about ten years ago, he used to, almost on a weekly basis, relate this philosophy to his workers by having meetings to mutually exchange ideas. This may have been viewed as radical in China as school integration in the United States South. Today, he has created and maintained a core of experienced workers who recruit and train their successors. The plant manager and his wife essentially run the facility.

Several recently finished Bowser freight cars were reviewed. Meetings were held with factory engineers concerning a problem with the Stewart 100 Ton 3-bay N&W Bicentennial Hopper Car. The next photo was taken in that meeting chaired by Director Ku with the lead painter (l) and Lee English (r).



The AFFA Technology LTD design engineer assigned to the Bowser PCC project was G. H. Liao who is shown at his station in the next photo.



In the next photo, the car is shown on the Bernal cut on the J Church line. The car also ran over the K Ingleside line and the J line to Glen Park, and Back to Geneva Car House.



The car also ran over the K line and the J line to Glen Park, and Back to Geneva Car House. Add one more car for San Francisco!

[China, from Column 1]

Also since plans and specifications for the new Bowser HO scale San Francisco 'F-line' ex-Philadelphia PCC car had been discussed and finalized, George Huckaby is shown below working with Mr. Laio to ensure that all the final details previously agreed are recorded in the computer program that will eventually be used to make the molds for the car. At this time, they are checking the final details of the front windshield and operator's window.



As the visit came to its conclusion on Thursday afternoon, we realized that all objectives had been met and exceeded. The design was finished and production was just around the corner.

Both Sanda Kan and AFFA are located in areas of China where the use of English is minimal. The biggest frustration outside of the language barrier are the signs on the buildings which consist purely of Chinese characters. Finding something as simple as cough drops could turn out to be nightmare. On the other hand, we did note that the factory seemed to be filled with content employees. The AFFA Director employs a management philosophy of incentives to improve performance rather than punishment for mistakes or failure to achieve and it



Working with Mr. Laio was extremely challenging since he spoke absolutely no English and we spoke absolutely no Chinese. Even the menus on his computer were totally in Chinese characters. Shown in the next photo are Lee English and Matthew Herman reviewing the corrections needed for the PCC floor with Mr. Laio.



All the required corrections were made and the master drawing had been updated by the end of the day. A final conference between all parties and K. K. Ku himself sealed the design of the car.



Several test samples of the new overhead wire contactor / roller which complies with the NMRA specification for the new Bowser trolley pole were obtained to be test run over the modules of the Southern California Traction Club and results documented by Custom Traxx.

A test contactor/roller was placed on Custom Traxx Philadelphia "Safety Car" PCC and had run over 75 hours on the Custom Traxx display module and the club test track by the end of April.

[See China, Column 2]

appears to work. AFFA is also erecting up two new buildings adjacent to their current facility that will greatly help in the streamlining of processes within the company, including new dormitories. We would love to see these facilities when they are completed. Our visit was considered complete by 2:30 PM on Thursday and we all boarded a mini-van for the drive back to Hong Kong. After stopping for fuel in China, which sells for about \$5.50 RMB per liter, we experienced "drive-thru" customs returning to Hong Kong and arrived at the Novotel Hotel in the vicinity of the airport about 5:00 PM.

Visitors to this section of China should be prepared to experience some first class hotels. The Bao Li Lai in ShenZhen and the Gladden in ShiLong were unbelievably grand while the service was outstanding and staying there amounted to \$50.00 to \$60.00 US Dollars per night. The entrance to our room on the 10th floor of the Gladden is shown below. the room is adorned generously with hand rubbed finished wood and marble.



Since building single story buildings is all but outlawed in China, people with fear of heights need to be on notice. Our hotel rooms were located from the 8th to the 18th floors. We have seen many residential buildings with more than 50 floors. The elevators in both Hong Kong and mainland China hotels were the quietest that we have ever experienced. Both the Pacific Island and the Novotel in Hong Kong had very small rooms, although they were outfitted nicely. Since for all three of us, this was our first trip to China, we had several reactions to all the things that we saw and encountered. We did document our observations in a separate article.

[For our impressions of Hong Kong, the Trams and mainland China, click here!](#)

NorthWest Short Line Status

According to information obtained directly from Fred and Sheryl Martin, owners of the company since its founding, Northwest Short Line (NWSL) did **NOT** close it's doors yesterday. There are lots of fine unusual items for true modelers still available. So if you have had your eye on something in their catalog, we recommend that "...speak up now, or forever hold your peace...".

It is no secret that NWSL is up for sale as the owners want to retire, see the world and play trains for a change. They are not accepting any custom orders as of May 1, 2008!

Baltimore Peter Witt Decal Set from Custom Traxx!

The Times has obtained a photo of four Bachmann Baltimore Peter Witt Cars either finished or renumbered using the new Custom Traxx CN-6119 decal set. Note the separate route and destination windows on all four cars. [Click here for a larger photo!](#)



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