

### Sound for the Bowser F-line PCC!

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Of all the issues that we have had to contend with in bring a ready-to-run streetcar to market, the issue of sound has been the most elusive. Custom Traxx recognized the fact that sound was necessary to keep up with the rest of the hobby. All we had to do was hear the sounds of the any Broadway Limited steam or diesel locomotive and you knew that this was the future. When DC locomotives started to appear with sound, you knew that this had become a critical feature.

At the same time that development started on the F-line PCC at Bowser, Custom Traxx started looking into sound. We contacted vendor number one, which would be the start of a pattern. We would get a representative that gushed over the thought of making trolley sounds. Then we were shunted to an engineer who told us how to record the sounds. We would be told what equipment to use so we would go and record the sounds only to be told that the sounds were not acceptable. When we got past this hurdle, we would be told that there was a minimum buy of thousands of chips, way beyond what we would be willing to commit. The experience with sound vendor number two was identical. Vendor number three added a new wrinkle. They claim that they do not use any sounds that they do not record themselves. Of course I know for a fact that they did not personally record one sound they make as the represented locomotives were all scrapped long before they formed a company but that's a minor detail ...right? So our quest for PCC sound was derailed due to the sound vendors themselves.

Enter Fred Miller and his experimentation with the Digitrax Sound Bug. After a request made on the 'hotractionmodeling' yahoo group, Custom Traxx responded with PCC sounds recorded in San Francisco of the Westinghouse-equipped ex-Philadelphia cars.

Fred returned a Bowser PCC equipped with sound to Custom Traxx for testing just prior to press time so we will be telling you more about this in our next issue!

### More on the Con-Cor PCC!

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As soon as the Con-Cor model of the 1936 air-electric PCC hit the dealers in July 2010, almost every one started to give their impressions of the car, especially on one of the traction-oriented yahoo groups. So we will not revisit that topic here. What we will do is state one of the best features of this model, namely, the slow smooth running that this car exhibits. We acquired five of them and although no two ran at identical speeds, all ran slow and smooth. Some were noisier than others but they all ran well. On the other hand, we were also surprised that their "stop light" function did not work in DC, but only in the DCC mode and the car did not come with a decoder. We were extremely disappointed when we placed our M4T decoder into our test car and it initially appeared that the lights were not controllable by the decoder. This prohibited the brake light function to be used. So Custom Traxx sent one test car to Train Control Systems for examination and another to Charles Long, one of the East Penn Traction Club (EPTC) DCC gurus. The results of these exams will probably be reported in the 1 October Trolleyville Times.

Charles found it very interesting to find a peculiar comment on [page 3 of 5 of the instructions provided with the cars](#):

*"...When you slow the car down and it comes to a full "stop" the rear "Stop Lights" will come on brightly for a few seconds, and then slowly fade out, to represent the motorman pushing on the brake pedal and then releasing the brakes when he is ready to move forward again. Pretty neat, don't you think? This was a feature designed by one of our engineers to be a nice feature of this Con-Cor model, we see one of our competitors attempting to copy our idea. Very flattering, hope theirs will work as well as ours does..."*

We sincerely hope that the "stop lights" on any car that Con-Cor 'engineer' drives does not work like those on this PCC car or else he/she should be prepared for a lot of rear-end accidents. In an automobile, the 1938 air-electric PCC, the 1945 all-electric PCC car and the final 1951 model, the brake lights come on as soon as the operator puts his foot on the

### Lew English turns 92!

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Lew English, who is in the Model Railroad Hall of Fame, turned 92 early last month. Although now largely confined to a wheel chair, Lew participates in many of Bowser events and was totally involved in the decision to pursue the F-line streetcar. Lew's wife, Shirlee, turned 90 in June and still works almost every day at the Bowser facility.



Trolleyville has known Lew and Shirlee since 1997 and have become much richer for it. Lew and Shirlee bought Bowser Manufacturing in 1961 and moved it from Redlands, CA to their basement in Muncy, PA. They acquired **Penn Line**, which dated back to 1947, in a bankruptcy sale in 1963. This outgrew the basement, so the move to Montoursville was made. Of course, they then acquired **Pennsylvania Scale Models (PSM)** from Felix Bass. PSM produced a 1945 all-electric PCC streetcar, a 1906 Brill Semi-Convertible streetcar and a 1930 Lightweight Interurban. These were three zamac bodied kits with a then revolutionary motor mounted on the power truck which allowed operation on very small radius curves. These kits were the basis of HO traction modeling for many years. In 1976, Lee English, current Bowser CEO and his older brother Lew English, Jr. joined the company. Lee became Production Manager and Lew took over office management. Next they acquired **Selley Finishing Touches**, originally in Winter Haven, Florida and tooling for several Varney locomotives, including the GG-1 and the Aerotrains. Meanwhile, they added many locomotives to the former Penn Line stable from the diminutive PRR A-5 0-4-0 switcher to the mammoth UP 4-8-8-4 Big Boy. **Cal Scale** was purchased in 1985 and moved from Fresno, CA to Montoursville. **Cary Locomotive Works** was added in May 1988, **Menzies** in 1990 and **Arbour Models** in 1991. Of course, **Stewart Hobbies** was acquired in 2004 and that led to many of the Executive Line locomotives that are available today.

All of this started in a basement in Muncy, Pennsylvania and with their current line of products, the future for Bowser looks very good.

[Allman, from column 1]

I was content to pursue the traction hobby as a photograph collector-chasing the historic photo treasures and visiting what systems I could. Along the way, I established friendships with some of the best of the traction photographers: Les Wismer, Ed Miller, Dave Cope, Chick Siebert, Bob Lewis, and Jim Shuman. Some of those are also recognizable as superb modelers. I went in a different direction and developed some very solid darkroom skills, thanks to the tutelage of my longtime friend Fred Schneider, whom I met my freshman year of college. Still, the trolley modeling itch would not go away. For reasons that can only be described as impulsive and not well thought out, I started buying HO trolleys. The madness accelerated: I started to have the cars painted. At some point, these very nice cars would need to run somewhere. I began looking for layouts. Several layouts in the Traction Guidebook by Mike Schaeffer (Kalmbach-1974) sort of captured my imagination, but most were either too small or too large.

Finally, in the early 1990's, I settled on taking two layouts from that book and combining them into one. I took the layout on page 116 - Indiana Terminal Railway and the one on page 117, Liberty Bell Traction, both figure eight layouts,

brake to slow the car down and the lights will stay on during the deceleration and the final stop as his/her foot will remain on the brake pedal until the car is to be moved again. So it is very obvious that their 'engineer' had no idea of how the stop/brake lights on a PCC car actually work. We can assure readers that no one at Custom Traxx or TCS ever intended to "...copy (their) idea..." since their concept was totally unrealistic!

The effort to get a working PCC type brake light actually began with the effort that was reported in the February 2008 Schoolhouse Lesson ([See Room 5, Lesson 4](#)) by Charlie Long that produced a brake light for the Bachmann Peter Witt. We felt that if he could do it with hardware, we could do it with software. Neither Bowser nor any other model railroad manufacturer had anything to do with the development of the M4T decoder which recreates the brake/stop light function as found actually on the prototype PCC car. To get the desired prototypical brake light function, it was known from the beginning that both DCC and a decoder would most likely be necessary. The M4T decoder was developed from a joint effort of John Forsythe of Train Control Systems (TCS) of Blooming Glen, PA and George Huckaby of Custom Traxx, West Los Angeles, CA. John Forsythe came up with the automatic car stop/start [F6] function as a laggiappe.

TCS and Custom Traxx collaborated on the M4T decoder that not only gave the correct stop/brake light function, but also an automatic passenger stop function [F6] and the unique tail light function for the San Francisco F-line PCC cars. It was intended that the M4T also work in the Con-Cor PCC and version 52 was created to allow it to work not only in the Con-Cor PCC but also the Bachmann Peter Witt. Since Bachmann wired the car pretty much in accordance with NMRA standards, the M4T works well there. But Con-Cor did not wire their car in the same manner so the M4T does not work unless modifications can be made that are still under pursuit at the present time. During the M4T development process, Custom Traxx did try to get a pre-production model of the Con-Cor PCC to ensure that the decoder would work but were unsuccessful. Again, as stated before in the Times, traction modeling is not national defense. Better models can be obtained by working together. In this case, it just might have prevented this blunder.

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## First Car in new Geneva Car Barn Facility!

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On Wednesday, August 25th, the first Muni Car, Torpedo 1010, which was in maintenance at the time, was operated into the new facility and tested at least three of the six tracks for clearance and overhang tests.



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## Main Line Transit: Meets No FTA standards!

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put wye switches on the figure eights, and planned to put those two 9 by 5 foot layouts at a 90 degree angle and join them with a single track, roughly six foot run. I bought a bunch of lumber, made some benchwork with homasote mounted on it, then stood back and assessed the carnage I had created.

I had failed to put plywood under the homasote. For those who have never heard of this material, it is basically cellulose based fiber wall board, which is similar in composition to paper-mache. It is made from recycled paper that is compressed under high temperature and pressure and held together with glue. It is usually available in 4 by 8 sheets with 1/2" thickness. I thought I could do it on the cheap and bought a lot of brass rod for poles. I sort of had an idea regarding how much girder rail I would need, and with some gentle guidance from Dick Orr, sort of learned what I would need, including the dreaded Dremel tool. I surrendered my stinginess and bought a bunch of poles from Jason's Poles. A lot of people, including Tom O'Toole gave me advice about frogs and hangers, which I began to stockpile. I made a million excuses for the delay in construction, some legitimate, some just that-excuses. But, after the 1995 East Penn Meet, I had run out of excuses. After fits and starts, bits of laying track, I decided that even if I make errors, how many errors cannot be unmade? Also at that time, into my life came a wise, helpful, skilled and very patient alter ego, Bob Dietrich. He showed himself to be an amazing problem solver and patient teacher. Together we got the needed plywood under the homasote, quickly got the damage to the track repaired from that retro fix, did the cookie cutter work for the grade on the layout and the necessary bracing, and over the ensuing months, got the track down, most of the gauging issues worked out, got the paving done for the girder rail (initially with the wrong stuff, that in early 2003 I dug up and replaced with more user friendly wallboard compound), gradually got the line poles screwed into place, and where needed, proper switch machines installed. By early summer of 1997, we were ready to hang overhead! Here again the gentle, patient presence of Bob Dietrich was indispensable, as was that of Gary Reign. We started the hanging on a summer night. Gary showed me the essentials of soldering hangers, placing frogs, the endless tweaking. Rather than simply do it for me, Gary forced me to learn it-and learn it correctly. Jack Spedden urged me to add more pull-offs and span poles in critical locations and by Labor Day, 1997, the layout ran! That was when I learned another bitter lesson: far better would have been to do much of the scenery before hanging wire; I did it backwards. The few odd structures on the layout were random and lacked any unifying themes. This was pointed out to me by my wife, who made most unfavorable comparisons of my layout with Bob Dietrich's-by this time our families had become very close friends. With the passage of time, I learned several things: I love to go down and run the layout, I am borderline addicted to building new cars, I have a zero tolerance for dewirements, and I needed a theme. How I have addressed the things I have learned will occupy the remainder of this story.

Love of operation above all else: this is my difference from Bob, whose great love is building and scenery. I have done a lot of scenery construction, but all in the service of providing background for operation.

Car building-guilty as charged. Currently I have two cars near completion, a Baltimore Brilliner 7501 and a Custom Traxx Boston ex-Dallas PCC. Like everything, much is on hold until I recover from my fractured right shoulder. I have begun very preliminary work on a Custom Traxx-Miniatures by Eric CLR.V. I am awaiting the arrival of a Miniatures by Eric Pacific Electric PCC, after which I can claim to have modeled every double-ended PCC in North America. When John Kennedy of KND Enterprises releases his LVT 701 and also, the LVT 700 series deluxe cars, I will do one of each, powered with the Bowser drive with 34 inch wheels. The same applies to John's proposed Red Arrow 40 series Jewett car that I rode as a little kid. Then, Bowser is hinting of a possible Cleveland St. Louis-built PCC with the roof monitor and the elaborate paint scheme-I'll have one, please! Then a Bowser Johnstown PCC-why not!? Then, if Custom Traxx does a St. Louis 1700 series PCC-hmmm-St. Louis? Shaker Heights? San Francisco? all of them? Then if anyone does Boston Commonwealth, Tremont, or all-electric series PCC's...How about a high quality Toronto air-electric PCC? I think you get the picture, plus who knows what else will catch my fancy. Funaro & Camerlengo are threatening to produce a Conestoga Transportation Company Curve Side car. An awful lot of wonderful Chicago cars could be tempting! I wish I could get better at, or at least learn to like better-or hate less-applying decal striping to cars-for me the

By Richard L. Allman, MD-to his friends, Rich

The is the story of an HO trolley layout, and how someone who knew nothing about anything got started, has progressed, and what is next; and something about me.

I am a physician; by training my specialty interests are Internal Medicine, Rheumatology, and Medical Ethics. Some of my writings on that subject can be referenced on Pubmed, the National Library of Medicine search engine. I work at Albert Einstein Medical Center, a large inner city hospital in Philadelphia, where I am a clinical educator, caring for patients and training medical students, residents, and post-doctoral fellows to become excellent physicians. I am a native of the Philadelphia area, though I lived in Germany for my junior year of high school, attended college in Lancaster, PA and Boston, medical school in Philadelphia, and lived in the Allentown, PA area for a total of 13 years, interrupted by a year in Boston and a year in Philadelphia.

I have been married for 41 years, have 2 grown children, a beautiful 2 1/2 year old granddaughter, and am eagerly awaiting the birth of my first grandson sometime this month. My interest in trolleys has been lifelong. As a small kid, my father took me to ride the P&W Bullet cars, the West Chester Pike trolleys, and when we visited my paternal grandparents in Boston, we would ride the Humboldt Avenue cars to Dudley Station, and then catch the Washington Street Elevated to downtown Boston. I would go outside my grandparents' home to catch the trolley action on Humboldt Avenue. One time I wondered a bit afield at age 4; I walked 1-1/2 blocks to the loop by Franklin Park to see the Mattapan-Egleston cars (Type 4s) whip by, and the Humboldt Avenue Type 5s loop. My father and grandfather successfully retrieved me. Trolley stuff was part of my relationship with my maternal grandparents as well. They lived in the Kensington section of North Philadelphia. I could walk 1/2 block south on Hancock Street to Berks Street and watch the PTC Route 3 cars turning out from under the Frankford El at Front Street and head out Berks Street. The one thing my father and I missed doing in the late 1940's was a ride on the Liberty Bell cars. By the time we might have done it, they were gone. My father bought me copies of Railroad Magazine, and I promptly found my way to Steve Maguire's Car barn Comment.

When I was 12 in 1955, the first organization I joined was the Delaware Valley Division of the ERA. Getting to those meetings on the fourth Friday sometimes meant taking the West Chester bus to 69th Street, then a Media or Sharon Hill trolley to Lansdowne Avenue. Later, I joined the Metropolitan Philadelphia Railway Association, and as I went through college, medical school and beyond, successively joined the Lancaster Chapter of the NRHS, the Lehigh Valley Chapter of the NRHS, and the Boston Street Railway Association.

We returned to the Philadelphia area in 1984. I contacted my dear old friend and mentor Dave Cope who invited me to his home for the September, 1984 meeting of East Penn Traction Club. I joined that night. Since then, I have been a member of East Penn, having been its first elected vice president from 1987-89 and club president from 1989 to 1991. I again served as vice president from 2000 to 2001 when Ed Torpey was forced to resign for health reasons and President again from 2001 to 2003. I have been a co-editor of the East Penn calendar since its inception in late 1986. I co-authored the introduction to the East Penn PCC Planbook. Through the years, I have had the sad honor of writing obituary pieces for the East Penn Newsletter.

Since childhood, I have been fascinated by trolley models. When I was 5, my father sort of "kitbashed" a railroad roof trolley from a Lionel coach; for him it was a labor of love. When I was 6, he took me to the old B&O Station in Philadelphia to see the huge O scale public display, which included some trolley operation by some who I later learned were founding members of East Penn Traction Club. Later, I had a Lionel yellow Birney, a Mantua single truck car, and when I was 13, a Pennsylvania Scale Models PCC car, that I painted Boston orange most primitively. From high school

traction equivalent of a root canal!

My zero tolerance for dewirements - my best friend, Bob Dietrich has urged me to lighten up, Bob rarely has dewirements on his layout, but when he does, he puts the pole on the wire and life goes on unless a pattern emerges. Not me-one dewirement and I am semi-crazed. Hanging the overhead took 5 evenings and one weekend; tweaking and perfecting it have taken 13 years, but I really have learned a lot. I have had superb advice from Bob, and also from Jack Spedden, Charlie Long, Gary Reign, Rich Kerr, George Huckaby, and Charlie Pitts. Bob has tried to teach me tolerance and before anything else to check the misbehaving pole. To that end, he has developed a very useful jig for assuring absolutely straight application of the contact shoe or wheel to the poles. Jack taught me about span wires and pull-offs. Charlie Long taught me about use of guy wires at the frogs. Rich taught me to watch what the pole is doing when it dewires. George taught me about pole length and to keep tightening the overhead, this past winter's endeavor. Gary taught me the very basics of hanging overhead which for too long frightened me and which with time I have mastered. Charlie Pitts taught me to follow the rules meticulously and to compensate for improper tip in troublesome frogs. I wish I knew early on what I know now!

The Theme for the layout: the two layouts merged as one gave me an opportunity to be thematic. The side drawn from Schaeffer's Indiana Terminal Railway became a late 1940's Pennsylvania small town. The section based on Liberty Bell Traction became a New England village, both acknowledging my roots and a lot of my interest. The two segments are joined by what became a side-of-the-road operation, a lot like I remember on West Chester Pike. Over the years I have become far more attentive to faithfully thematic buildings, nice trees, and other details to make the layout eye pleasing and logical as well as fun for me to operate. Last summer, Bob helped me add a nice backdrop to the Pennsylvania section. A backdrop to the New England section is in the planning stage.

The future endeavors for the layout are coming into focus. The first task will be to add a yard for the mushrooming fleet. The yard will join the layout in the back of the New England section. I hope to organize for thematic operation: Red Arrow operation, LVT operation, Baltimore and Washington area operation, Boston operation, all-PCC operation, all-Pennsylvania operation. A working yard with each theme easily marshaled might work quite nicely. Bob has been on my case to build a module to East Penn standards that could live attached to the yard between meets. Remember my mentioning the loop on Humboldt Avenue in Boston where the Mattapan-Egleston cars ran by? I am poised to build that! I have gotten all the necessary track and switches and hangers. All that I need is the impetus-Bob will provide that.

The work that I do in my profession is my prime obsession. The layout, officially named Main Line Transit is my principal diversion. The friends who help me with it are among my most treasured friends. Soon back to some serious car building!!!! For now, down to operate for a while. Among his many cars are:



Kansas City PCC model from Custom Traxx kit.



Detroit PCC model from Bowser PCC kit.

on, until my mid-30's when my five year old daughter asked for a HO train at Christmas, my interest in model railroading went to the back burner. I bought her a basic, kid-proof set. Her interest was fleeting, but mine was rekindled. I was drawn to the HO European models, which were exceptional in their detail and quality, and ran beautifully right out of the box. Trolley modeling: too much skill, too much building, too much soldering, too much of everything I could not master.



Richard Allman with his basement layout.

[See *Allman*, column 2]



PSTCo (Red Arrow) and Muni Double End Cars.

Trolleyville could only spend about one-half hour to see this layout between flights in April 2010 and that is when the photos were taken. the operation on the layout is flawless and smooth.

[Note: For the record, FTA refers to the Federal Transit Administration. This federal agency was in charge of city transit at the time the Mainline Transit layout was started.]

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