

Museum display gets on track

'Choo Choo' Charley likes little trains in a big way

By John Bozza

The first person who called Charles Burt "Choo Choo" thought he was giving Charley the nickname.

It didn't work. Charley liked the nickname. Now he even has "Choo Choo" printed on a desk nameplate.

Choo Choo refers to Burt's lifetime avocation-toy trains.

"As far back as I can remember I've been interested in toy trains," Burt said. "In 1924 my brother, who is three and one-half years older than me, received an American Flyer wind-up for Christmas.

"From then on I was sold," Burt said. "I can still see myself pushing that train along the floor and going 'Choo Choo!'"

A longtime Redford resident and electrician by trade, Burt began collecting the antique toy trains 26 years ago. He now has 200 locomotives, about 1500 cars and six miles of track.

Most of Burt's collection will be on display Jan. 13 through Feb. 11, at Southfield's Burg Museum, located at Burg Road and Civic Center Drive. The museum is open 2-5 p.m., Saturdays and Sundays. Visitors may arrange an appointment by calling 646-2845.

BURT'S FAVORITE piece is the first train he ever owned, a Lionel Number 33 Locomotive.

One of the more valuable items on display is a burgundy and olive colored replica of a 1931 Ives Lines locomotive. Although the replica is only one year old it's worth \$500. The original is worth \$1500.

Learn about tax forms

Madonna College in Livonia is hosting a workshop dealing with the preparation of tax forms from 9 a.m. - 4 p.m. Jan. 27.

The seminar will focus on changes in the tax laws and provide an explanation of all schedules and forms related to the 1040 individual form.

Answers to individual problems will

"I have an average size collection," Burt said. "Some guys have enormous collections. In total it's worth about \$7000."

Dollar values of the items may vary with such a small thing as its color.

"A Lionel Number Eight is common in red or orange, but rare in mojavé. Just because of the color it will go from a \$50 item to a \$150."

Choo Choo has the identical train his brother received in 1924, which initially tickled his fancy. The American Flyer locomotive has a U.S.R.R. Express

U.S. Mail, a Pennsylvania R. & R. and an Express Baggage cars.

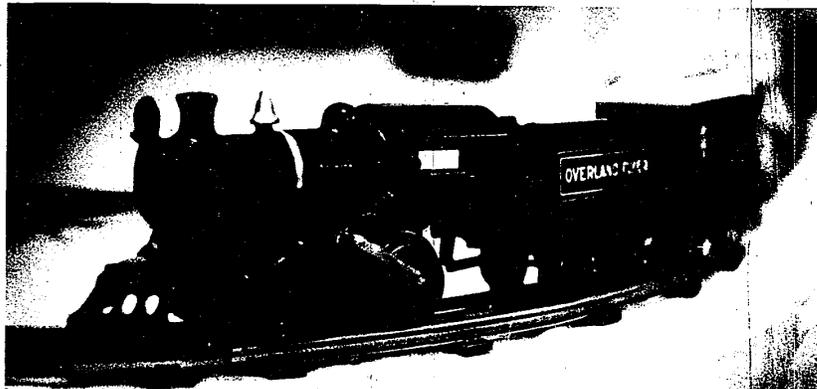
There are also some old train catalogs on display. A 1926 Ives catalog explains, "An Ives invention. Push the button and any Ives Series R locomotive will reverse itself at your will, wherever it is on the track, Marvelous!"

One real find is a never used 1923 HO Locomotive, made by the Bing Co. of Germany. It is the first electric train made by that company, Burt said.

"I found it in the Salvation Army," Burt said. "I hunt places like the Salvation Army looking for trains. But most of my trains were obtained through other collectors."

ALTHOUGH HE IS AN avid collector, no one will ever find Choo Choo Charley wearing an engineer's hat and running toy trains in his basement.

"I'm ashamed to admit it," Burt said, "but all my stuff at home is packed in boxes."



Antique trains such as this one provide an interesting but expensive hobby for some model train collectors. (Photos by Allen Schlossberg)

Free blood pressure screenings offered

Henry Ford Hospital West Bloomfield Center is offering free blood pressure screenings two days a week. In addition to the screenings that have been available on Tuesdays from 1-4 p.m., testing is done on Thursdays from 1-4 p.m.

The screening is painless and takes five minutes. No appointment is necessary. The center is located at 6777 Maple, 2 1/2 miles west of Orchard Lake Road. Participants don't have to be patients at the center in order to be tested.

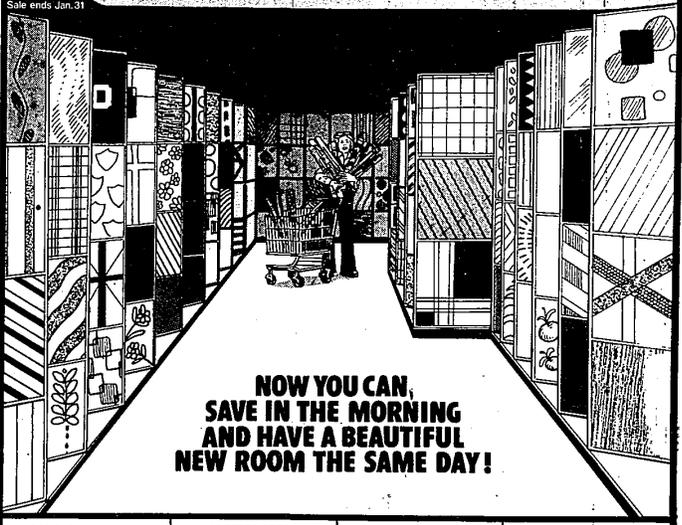
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