

Master Model Railroaders

178

by Rick Shoup

Pliny Guernsey Holt MMR # 178

Born in Stockton, California on September 8, 1910, Pliny Guernsey Holt is the son of Pliny E. and Florence Guernsey Holt. Pliny's father was the nephew of Benjamin Holt, The inventor of the Holt Caterpillar tractor, and one of the founders and Vice President of Engineering of Caterpillar Tractor Company, having some 50 tractor patents to his credit.

Pliny learned the game of golf when he was 10 years old from Peter Hay at the Del Monte Golf Course in Monterey, California. He was on the Stanford Golf Team with Lawson Little. In 1971, Pliny became the first American to win the Queen Victoria Jubilee - Match Play Championship of the Royal and Ancient Golf Club at Saint Andrews, Scotland. He still plays regularly, often shooting in the mid 70's.

Pliny was in the class of '32 at Stanford University. In September of 1935, Pliny, along with his brother Frank, entered the Navy in the fourth class of Aviation Cadets. He served in flight tests and later as head of the Instrument Laboratory at the Naval Aircraft Factory Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, where he was awarded some 15 patents for aeronautical navigation instruments and auto-pilots. After a Navy career that spanned parts of four decades, he retired as a Captain in 1968. Pliny

finished his working career as an Aviation Consultant to IBM for five years.

Pliny grew up with Lionel and Ives electric trains. He started building OO trains in 1938 and stayed with this scale through the war. In 1946 he became intrigued with TT gauge when he was transferred to



Washington and had several large TT layouts over a period of many years. When he retired in 1968, he had time to start building 1" scale live steam locomotives. Pliny had over 500 feet of track which completely circled the house and was laid in the concrete of his driveway. Like many railroad crossings, the rails remain in the concrete even though the rest of the track was removed in 1985.

Pliny built a Southern Pacific prototype 4-4-2 from Little Engines parts and scratch-built a fee-lance 2-8-2. When the live steam was sold, TT parts were unavailable and he

switched to N scale. His current layout depicts his favorite Southern Pacific operations from the Oakland Mole which, with its ferry slip, serves as the centerpiece for the lines to Donner Pass through Stockton and also the line south through Niles Canyon.

Pliny was a member of the Rockville (MD) Society of Model Engineers for many years. He built their turntable and many of their double slip switches. The framework for the club's layout at the Trolley Museum located in the Wheaton Regional Park was built by Pliny in his home woodworking shop, using aircraft construction methods to create plywood beams. He was also a member of the Northern Virginia Model Railroaders. He refined the methods of construction used to build the frame work for the Rockville Club to design the framework for the NVMR. He prefabricated all of the components in his shop, and they were assembled in the train room of the Club in the Vienna station of the Washington and Old Dominion Railroad. He also made the turntable, the four-track signal bridge with eight operating semaphores, and the 100-plus motor-driven turnout machines.

Pliny has been a member of the NMRA for over 30 years and a Life member for over 20 years. He became Master Model Railroader No. 178 in July 1991, holding Master Builder: Motive Power, Structures, Scenery, Prototype Modeler, Engineer-Electrical, Engineer-Civil, and Association Volunteer. 