

The Crank Calls



President	Paul Denham	pedenham@comcast.net
Secretary	Your name here!	Please consider volunteering
Treasurer	Deirdre Denham	dedenham@comcast.net
Events Coordinator	Steve Hazelton	steve.hzltn@gmail.com
Webmaster	Mike Byrne	mgbyrne3@comcast.net
Editor/Printer	Wes Wagon	weswag@ix.netcom.com

MEMBERSHIP \$25.00 US

Contact Paul Denham at
pedenham@comcast.net

NEXT MEETING

**Saturday, ~~May 17~~ May 31, 2025, at the
Golden Gate Live Steamers clubhouse site in
Tilden Park, Orinda, CA**

Gate opens at **9:00 am**
Meeting starts at **10:00 am**

Upcoming Events

- May 16-17: Farm & Tractor Days – Branch 13
- **May 17, 31:** BAEM meeting at GGLS
- May 31-June 1: GGLS Spring Meet/Open House
- June 21: BAEM meeting at GGLS
- July 19: BAEM meeting at GGLS

See below for more details regarding events. Watch Crank Calls, BAEM emails and BAEM web page for updates. BAEM meetings are usually 3rd Saturday of the month except December.

MEETING NOTES

The Bay Area Engine Modelers met at the Golden Gate Live Steamers clubhouse on April 19, 2025. Thirteen members attended.

Paul Denham reported that he has been traveling instead of machining.

**The May BAEM meeting will be held on
Saturday, May 31, same day as GGLS Spring Meet.**

NEW MEMBERS/VISITORS

BAEM members are reminded that visitors are welcome at our club meetings, and we're always looking for new members.

TREASURER REPORT

Annual \$25 dues are payable for 2025. Please give your check to Paul Denham, or mail it to Deirdre Denham at 1937 Merchant St, Crockett, CA 94525. Make checks payable to "BAEM".

CLUB BADGE

If you are a member in need of a badge, contact Mike Rehms (editor@modelenginebuilder.com) who has offered to produce them.

SHOWS AND EVENTS

Shows present an opportunity to show off our fine engines and meet potential new members of our club. After all, what could be better than spending a day hanging out with people who are fascinated by our model engines, and want to hear all about what we've been doing?

Rio Linda Farm & Tractor Days – May 16-17 EDGE&TA – Branch 13

Rio Linda Historical Society, 6852 Dry Creek Road, Rio Linda, CA 95673. Jason Green is the coordinator for Branch 13. (916) 716-6845 ducks2k@comcast.net. Ray Fontaine is coordinating for BAEM. Raftus2@outlook.com (925) 447-0213. He will be attending.

Note that Ray is the coordinator of BAEM participation in EDGE&TA – Branch 13 events. The events highlighted here are those that might be of particular interest to BAEM members. The entire calendar of Branch 13 events can be found [here](#).

GGLS Spring Meet and Open House

May 31-June 1 we have the GGLS Spring Meet and Open House. Saturday is just for the GGLS folks, who always appreciate our work. Sunday is open to the general public. Steve Hazelton is coordinating. steve.hzltn@gmail.com (707) 501-3535

Note: May 17 meeting moved to May 31 to be same day as GGLS Spring Meet.

Edge&TA-Branch 13 – July 31-August 3

Amador County Fairgrounds, 18621 Sherwood Street, Plymouth, CA. Robert Facino (916) 417-8732 rtsco@netzero.com is the Branch 13 contact. Ray Fontaine is coordinating for BAEM. Raftus2@outlook.com (925) 447-0213. He will be attending.

FIRST POPPS

George Spain was in the spotlight this month, earning "First Pop" honors with his nicely finished straight six.



George Spain's straight six

George Spain ran his straight six that he has been working on for some time. Genesis was a block and crank shaft he acquired from Dwight. The engine pistons operate as three pairs operating 120° apart. Engine has a three-coil ignition, electric starter, water cooling, and a Walbro carburetor that requires a very small screwdriver for adjustment.



George describes learning opportunities

George shared a number of “learning opportunities” he encounters with the project. Many involved iterative machining to get working parts. The engine produces considerable exhaust and runs with a deep combustion tone. Peter Lawrence remarked that he found the engine sound very appealing.

BITS AND PIECES

To get back underway following his travels, Paul Denham brought in a partially machined flame eater he acquired from one-time BAEM member Tim Horn. This was a complete German kit *Flammenfresser Kurfürst Bengs Modellbau*.



Paul Denham's German flame-eater

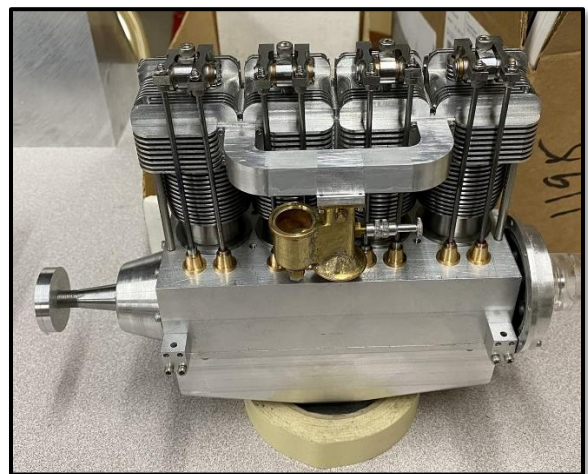
An eight-year-old YouTube video was found showing the engine running.

https://youtu.be/V5QZNSxa22Q?si=s-26XUqXEW_MthvE

Interesting features include the tall exhaust pipe and the build in flame burner. We look forward to Paul's progress on this build.



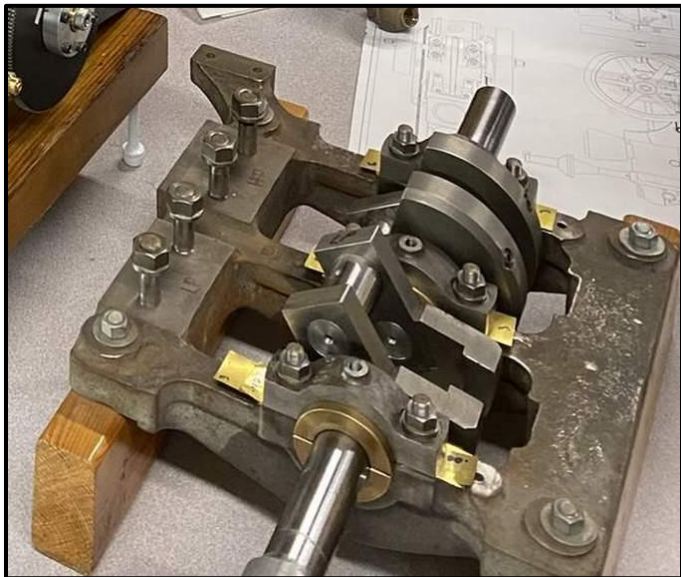
Peter describes machining challenges



Peter's Cirrus

Pete Lawrence continues to make impressive progress on the Cirrus aircraft engine model. The block, head, and oil pan are assembled. Oil and water pumps

have been installed. Rocker arms and lifters were installed. Machining challenges included grinding broaches for 1/16 thick woodruff key slots and the need to develop a technique for installing 0-80 screws in the carburetor butterfly valve (hint: it involved super glue). Peter also described challenges when machining clear acrylic distributor parts, keeping the parts transparent.



The bottom end of Charlie's Stuart 6A

Charlie Reiter brought several items to show. He acquired a Stuart 6A twin cylinder vertical steam engine. It is the largest of the Stuart engines and intended to propel an 18 to 20 foot launch. It is a compound engine with 3-inch stroke and bores of 2.5 and 4 inches. He brought in the base casting with crank shaft and bearings and described challenges in aligning crank centricity.

Charlie also brought in his Challenge locomotive which was set up on the GGLS round house.



Charlie's impressive locomotive admired by BAEM members

Dwight Giles had some pencil making kits and offered them to anyone who would assemble them.

RAMBLINGS

Longtime BAEM member Carl Wilson was recently caught in the act of reminiscing about the early history of our club. He was parting with his collection of past issues of Model Engineering Magazine and thinking back to how he first discovered model engineering. With some gentle persuasion, he was convinced to write down what he could recall about the Bay Area Engine Modelers and another related club, the West Valley Live Steamers. Carl was involved in both clubs, knew some of the founding members, and had obtained some of their written accounts.

Here's Carl's story:

In 1969, Charlie Cardona was my helper for a couple of years. He was a highly skilled builder of plastic scale model airplanes. I mentioned to him that I

had a small lathe and was interested in building a little steam engine like the ones I occasionally saw in *Popular Science* and *Popular Mechanics* magazines. He said “you gotta look at the *Model Engineering Magazine* in the news-stand on South First Street in San Jose.” I may have broken some speed limits getting there, and I was promptly hooked. There would be no escaping the hobby now. And no escaping a subscription to the magazine that I maintained for many years.

For me, *Model Engineering Magazine* opened up a whole world of hobbyist model-making. Problem was, it was a British magazine, focused on the hobby in the United Kingdom. I hoped to discover people with such interests in the San Francisco Bay Area.

My second or third issue of *Model Engineering Magazine* provided a solid lead. The editorial column contained a letter from Dwight Durkee of Cupertino, California. Dwight was an avid model steam train enthusiast and had a 7 1/2" gauge track on his orchard property. Beyond that, I only knew that he lived in Cupertino. A librarian searched a 1965 Cupertino city directory and provided Dwight's address. I eventually found his house, which was well off the street and surrounded by his orchard. I boldly rang the doorbell and his wife Marion answered. At the time, I was a young guy with a beard, and I guess she was a little uncomfortable, but she told me about the West Valley Live Steamers (“WVLS”) that Dwight had co-founded and how they met in the community room of a nearby bank. I joined WVLS in Feb. 1971 and was a member for 30 years or so.

Over the years, I learned more about other clubs in the San Francisco Bay Area that were focused on model engineering. Bay Area hobby clubs focused on constructing models most likely began in 1898, with the founding of the San Francisco Model Yacht Club (“SFMYC”), which meets at Spreckels Lake in Golden Gate Park, and today is still an active, functioning club. Here's a link to a website regarding the history of the SFMYC: [San Francisco Model Yacht Club](#)

The next major Bay Area model engineering club was the Golden Gate Live Steamers (“GGLS”), focused on live-steam model railroading. It was founded by Victor Shattock in 1936, at a meeting in his house in Oakland. It is based in the Berkeley hills, and is still an active, functioning club. A comprehensive history may be found here: [Golden Gate Live Steamers](#).

The two decades following World War II saw a major transition of the Southern end of San Francisco Bay from an agricultural area into what became known as “Silicon Valley.” In 1963, several members of GGLS

grew tired of the long commute from the Cupertino-Sunnyvale area to the Berkeley hills for GGLS meetings. They decided to form a model railroad club in their area. They wanted it to be informal, compared to GGLS: no dues, no property, no track, no work days, and no Robert's Rules of Order. They named the new club West Valley Live Steamers (“WVLS”), and it remained informal for all its life. They held monthly meetings and mailed out a postcard reminder notice. They first met in member's houses or shops and took advantage of Dwight Durkee's 7 1/2" gage track around his orchard. In May 1966, WVLS met for the first time in the community room of a nearby bank. That would be its home for many years.

One of the early members of West Valley Live Steamers was Gordon French, a mainframe computer programmer. In 1975, Gordon French co-founded another hobbyist club in the area. This club was for electronics hobbyists interested in building home computers. They met in Gordon's garage in Menlo Park for the first couple of meetings. They were an informal club with monthly meetings and a newsletter that featured “Bits and Pieces” from last month's meeting. They were called the Homebrew Computer Club. Club member Steve Wozniak credits that first club meeting as the inspiration for his development, along with Steve Jobs, of the Apple I home computer.

Gordon French left the Bay Area later in 1975, moving to Baltimore to work for the Social Security Administration. By 1993, he had returned to the Bay Area and had resumed attending meetings of the WVLS.

In 1993, Dick Pretel and Karl Van Dyck were members of the San Francisco Model Yacht Club. The SF Model Yacht Club had traditionally emphasized model sailboats. Dick Pretel built the first radio-controlled sailboat. He had developed an interest in model boats powered by internal combustion engines. Dick and Karl were working on some model engines that needed a camshaft. Dick saw an ad in a magazine, *Strictly I.C.* magazine. The ad offered to custom grind a cam to the user's specifications. The ad named Gordon French as the contact person for the cam grinder, Paul Bennett.

Dick and Karl met with Gordon at several meetings of the West Valley Live Steamers. On the way there one night, Dick remarked that there must be other people out there that build internal combustion engines, that it would be great to see what they were doing, and if these people could get together for a meeting, they could share information. Dick brought up the idea with Gordon and asked him what he thought. Gordon said

that he could get a list of people who subscribed to *Strictly I.C.* magazine and lived in the 94xxx zip codes, and fire off a letter to them, inquiring if they would be interested in meeting.

About 30 people showed up at the first meeting in December 1993. The group decided to meet on the third Friday of every month. Gordon was the president of two or three other clubs that met on the first, second, and last Friday each month. That was how the third Friday meeting schedule was established. The group settled on the name "Bay Area Engine Modelers" ("BAEM") and agreed that Gordon would function as president.

The initial meetings of the BAEM were at the Hayward Hof-Brau & Chinese Restaurant on Hesperian in a side room that would hold maybe 20-25 people. We could close the door so as to not disturb others, but we couldn't run engines.

Gordon French had to end his participation in BAEM, and it looked like the club might collapse without his leadership. Mike Rehms and Carmin Adams, across-the-street neighbors, picked up the torch. They mailed out invites to keep it going. The restaurant was not the best meeting place. Eventually Paul Bennett stepped forward and said that we could meet at his shop in Hayward.

Mike has led from behind for many years. He recounts: "I printed postcards, and Carmin and I then stuck stamps on them and mailed them. I started the first newsletter a little later than the startup. I had an inkjet printer so I could print a single page of photographs. The printer was so slow that it took all night to print that page. Then Carmin and I would assemble the pages and staple them."

When Bob Washburn retired from producing *Strictly I.C.* magazine, Mike took up the yoke and began *Model Engine Builder* magazine in 2005. Hundreds of engine designs and a lot of technical information has been disseminated via the magazine. Mike pushed and prodded BAEM to produce the Western Engine and Model Exhibition, a yearly public display of engines built by BAEM members. The BAEM remains active to this day.

Today, the West Valley Live Steamers no longer exists as an active club. While not a club, the Portola Valley and Alpine Railroad on private land is an offshoot of West Valley Live Steamers, and many

members of WVLS contributed to building and operating a large 7 1/2" gage railroad.

Model engineering in the San Francisco Bay Area is still alive today, and relatively well. The San Francisco Model Yacht Club continues to attract those interested in model boating. Golden Gate Live Steamers remains a major focal point of model engineering craftsmanship and live steam model railroading. And the Bay Area Engine Modelers continues to provide a gathering place for those with a shared passion for engineering and mechanical skills enabling the construction of functioning model engines.

It's been a long time since I closely examined my first copy of *Model Engineering Magazine*. I've made some interesting friendships, enjoyed lots of stimulating conversations regarding engines, and witnessed lots of "first pops."

--Carl Wilson

Working on an interesting project? Got a great BAEM story? Share it with us here. Send us pics and project details, and your hard work will be shared with the entire club.

FOR SALE

BAEM member Marvin Miller of Santa Cruz offers:

-\$2500: Cole's casting kit of American LaFrance fire engine.

-\$1700: Little Engines American 4-4-0 locomotive, partially built.

Contact Marvin for more information.

marbenjam2@gmail.com

Got something you'd like to sell? Your ad is free and will be seen by likely customers.

NEWSLETTER CONTRIBUTION

Your contributions to this newsletter are appreciated: workshop reports, tech articles, reviews, historical pieces, whatever. You contribute, we'll figure out how to post it. Send your contributions to either or both of us. Thanks!

-Mike Byrne at mngbyrne3@comcast.net

-Wes Wagon at weswag@ix.netcom.com