ON THE RIGHT TRACK

SOFTWARE DESIGNER CREATES MODEL RAILROAD PROGRAM

By Robert Souza
CASTRO VALLEY FORUM

Computer software designer Jim Dill calls the unique "Train-Player" software he designed as "armchair model railroading." But after a quick glimpse of the program, it looks like a lot of fun for anyone.

"It appeals to guys with their own model railroads to perfect their yard techniques," Dill said as he demonstrated how quickly a train setup can be created in the program as tracks are laid and a three car locomotive bobs and weaves back and forth on lines created by the "drag and drop" click of a mouse.

The software, with more than 2,000 virtual tracks that can be customized, allows hobbyists to
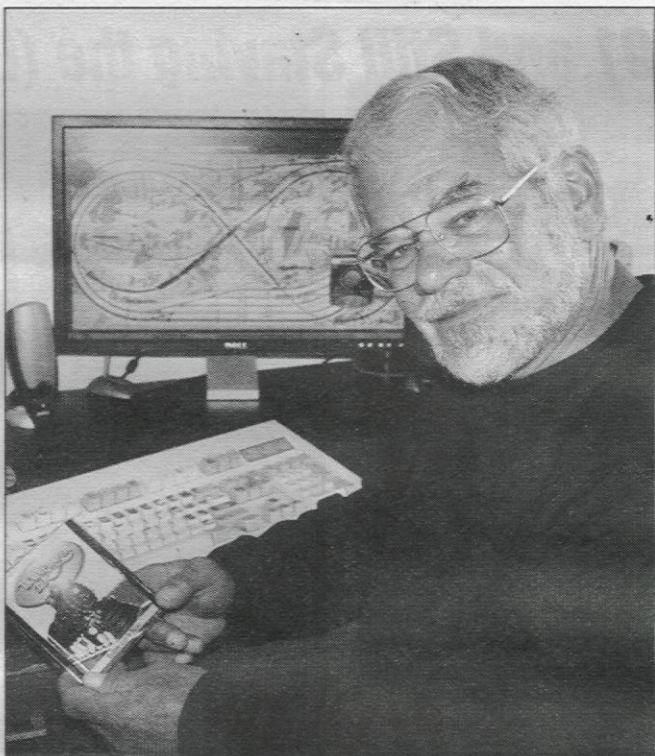
PHOTO BY ROBERT SOUZA

Castro Valley software designer Jim Dill created the TrainPlayer computer program for model railroaders to enjoy the hobby conveniently on their computer screen. It allows players access to a multitude of tracks and features.

Track: Online Railroading

participate in model railroading that would be both space- and cost-prohibitive.

"I've done a lot of development work. Software development is fun to begin with, but when it's a fun subject such as this is, it's even better. It's making something starting from nothing," Dill said.

A peppering of actual model train tracks and cars occupy one of Dill's work desks in his upstairs Castro Valley office, while boxes of decals and "tools of the trade" used in model railroading appear to be collecting dust nearby. Dill says he intends on putting another real track together, but between work and updating TrainPlayer he has little time.

Dill told the Forum that about 4,200 program discs have been sold while another 25,000 versions have been downloaded from the Internet. And, he said, an additional 500 names have been entered into the company database.

"I'm no businessman or sales guy, but we've got a really good following, I love programming," said Dill. "It's definitely fun and I'm having a good time with all of it."

For more information on Jim Dill's TrainPlayer computer program, visit www.trainplayer.com.