



## Open the Drawer

by Gary Butts

**Oops!** There goes another coupler spring on the floor. Or grab iron or bolster screw or window glazing or #72 drill or, you get the picture. I don't know how many countless parts I have lost to the carpet over the years but once a small part flies out of my tweezers, that's it- It's gone. I'm sure that I'm not alone in this and I don't think it matters if you have carpet, linoleum or concrete flooring, the small parts that hit the deck evaporate. I think it is an undiscovered law of physics. Knowing this doesn't seem to make any difference, I still move the chair, get down on my knees and search for long periods of time, usually to no avail. Well, quite by accident, I discovered a solution that routinely captures maybe 95% of my escaping small parts.

My modeling bench happens to be a small desk. This desk has a typical desk drawer and one day while working with a particularly complex, took-forever-to-make, scratch built small part for my kit-bashed steamer, I had occasion to drop the part. It so happens that I had not completely shut the desk drawer after retrieving the last tool I needed from it. Well, sure enough my part fell into the drawer. After a minute or two spent shifting all of the tools around in the drawer, I was able to retrieve my part and save the day. It wasn't until I dropped the next part under the same circumstance some time later that it dawned on me that I might want to leave the drawer open a bit whenever I was working with super small parts.

I have now, after much experimentation, completely sophisticated my drawer capture device. I not only open the drawer a few inches, but add a layer of paper towels on top of the tools in the drawer. Part retrieval is a snap. There it is sitting on top of the paper towel. As a side benefit, I have come to find that having the drawer open a few inches gives me a place to rest my elbows below the work top bringing my steadied hands and arms closer to the work surface and my model vice.

I know that Rod Stewart (the musician) puts a towel in his lap when he models his structures for the same reason and I tried it, but I found it only partially effective. Not all benches have desk drawers but if I ever switch to a modeling bench that does not have one, I will pick up some plywood and a couple of drawer slides from the hardware store and make a simple part catcher tray. I might even put some low sides on it and a little indoor/outdoor carpet on the bottom to reduce the bouncing of a stray part. Meanwhile, I open the drawer.