

# Lifestyles

Thursday, July 5, 2007

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## Church hosts puppet show

A family puppet show will take place Wednesday, July 11, at the Orchard Park Community Church, 7451 E. Quaker Road. Open to the public, the event will feature a group from Niagara Falls called Heir Force. Refreshments will follow the show and an offering will take place. For more information, call 662-0850.

# ALL ABOARD!

## Collector's joy found in backyard

by AMY MASTERSON  
Reporter

When Bob and Lois Rodgers were visited by some neighbors one evening, it wasn't because they wanted to borrow a cup of sugar or some apples for a homemade pie.

They wanted to know if they were going crazy.

Their Orchard Park neighbors came to the Rodgers home certain they were hearing trains in their backyard and wanted to know if they were the only ones.

The answer was no. The sounds came from Bob's miniature train set scooting around Lois' garden-through the mini tunnel, around the mini waterfall where white, orange and black fish are swimming today, and past Lois' perennials.

The 376-foot track extends around a fair portion of their yard where Bob loves to spend sunny, 80 degree afternoons, opposite his wife, who prays for rain and 70 degree days to feed her garden.

However, both feel they complement each other well: Bob being the "creative one" and Lois, the cook and gardener. She grew up on a farm not far from her home and loves every aspect of the outdoors, even memories of

**Bob Rodgers** owns a German train set which cruises along 376 feet of track. He enjoys running it through the course around his wife Lois' garden.

rising at 4 a.m. every day. Sunday was the exception: they went to church and relaxed. Now, her main concern is keeping the deer and rabbits from her flowers. Luckily, they don't bother the trains.

While Lois tends to the garden, Bob spends time with his model trains, radio-controlled planes and functions as Mr. Fix-It around the house.

"He can fix anything," Lois said. "He's the creative one. I don't like arts and crafts. We have seven grandchildren, and they love sitting on the swing watching the trains."

Bob started his train set three years ago.

"I read a lot of magazines and saw things on the Internet," he said.

When asked if he uses a manual while assembling the trains he replied: "You use what's between your ears," pointing to his head.

His train is a German LGB. He owns 96 cars and 15 engines.

It took three days to put the track down and now, with his authentic conductor's hat, he operates it like a pro.

"Anybody can do it," he said, when asked if he thought building models takes special know-how.

It may not. But in his case, experience has been built over a lifetime. Bob started to assemble model planes when he was six years old, under the tutelage of his grandfather. He added that several other members of his family are professional mechanics.

"I built two hot rods from scratch," he said. "I sold them."

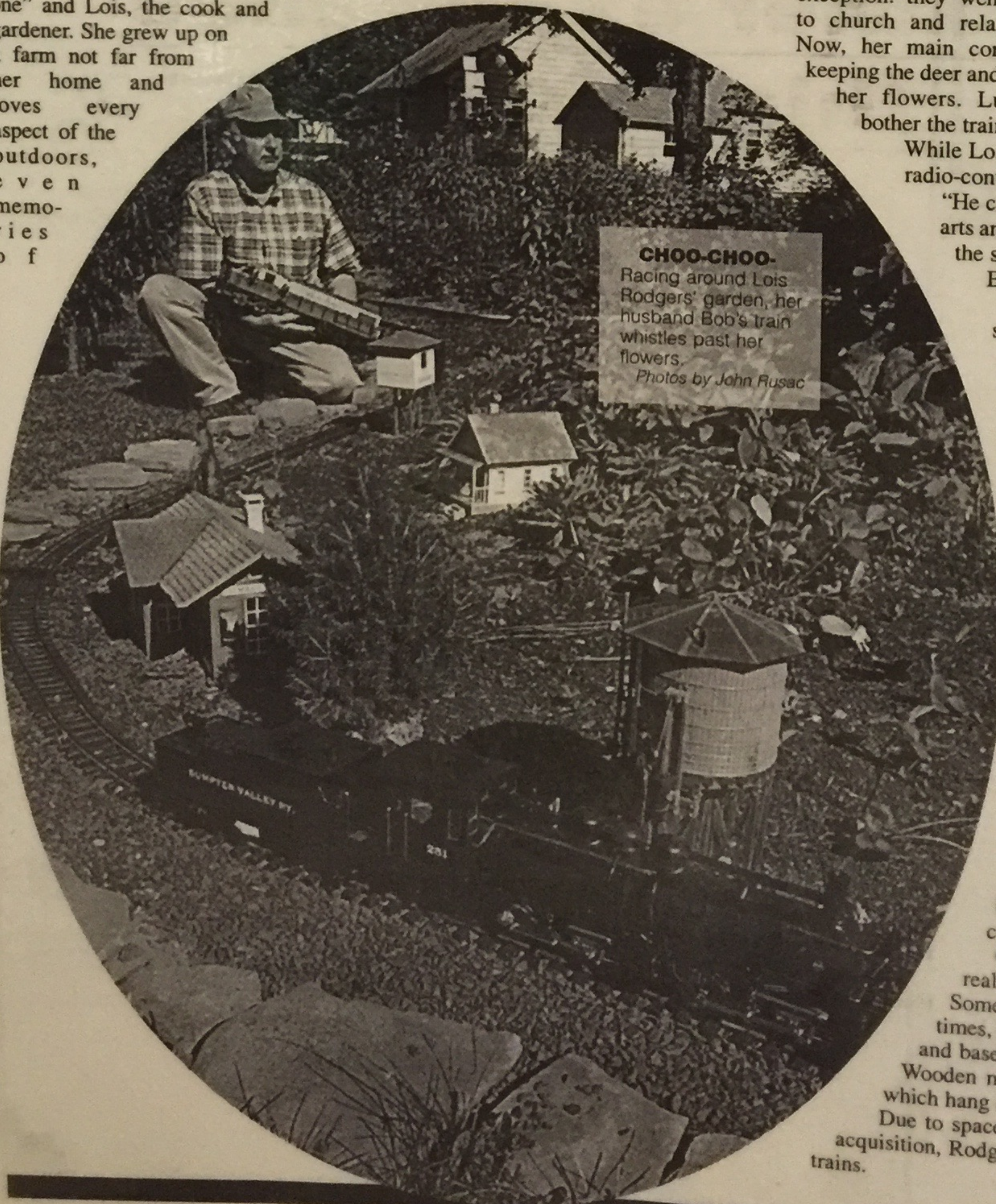
Bob also owns 32 planes, which he designed with occasional advice from the Flying Knights of Hamburg, a club that visits North Collins to fly their many World War II models. Bob is a member of the group.

Most models fly up to 300 feet in the air, 200 or more miles per hour, and have a radio range of three miles. Bob has been able to resurrect most of them from the occasional crash-landing, which isn't a rare thing among frequent flyers.

One plane, the B-25 Mitchell Bomber, is 1/8 the size of the real thing. It weighs 36 pounds and has an eight foot wing span. Sometimes he paints his planes as they appeared in real life; other times, he uses his creative license. In any event, his entire garage and basement are filled with finished products or works in progress.

Wooden models on the tables rest beside their finished counterparts, which hang serenely by wire from the ceiling.

Due to space constraints, which get harder to manage which each new acquisition, Rodgers hopes to build a new shed in his backyard to house the trains.



**CHOO-CHOO-**  
Racing around Lois Rodgers' garden, her husband Bob's train whistles past her flowers.  
Photos by John Fusac

