*Layout Article***Berkshire Air Line  
Railroad Company**

A New England Prototype HO  
Scale Railroad

*By Bob Rosenberg*

The model railroad in my basement that eventually became the Berkshire Air Line was started shortly after we moved into our current home in McLean, Virginia on June 21, 1971. It was "completed" for presentation purposes on February 28th, 1999 about 10 minutes before a large contingent of Potomac Division members began to arrive for that month's home layout tour. Suffice to say, there were many reasons for the incredible length of time between those two dates, primarily professional and family responsibilities, but one that I probably can't make fly is the excuse that I did not have enough time to get it ready.

Looking back through the retroscoper, where vision is always 20-20, I now realize the problem was that I had fallen victim to a condition that is common in model railroaders: Perfectionitis. I was trying to build a railroad by myself that was too big, too detailed, and much too serious, mostly because I had the space and, I thought the time to do so. That was why it had gone virtually nowhere for the past 18 years. When I was asked back in May of 1998 to host an upcoming division meet, I knew that if I was to ever have anything presentable I would have to either

bring in outside assistance, lower my expectations or both. I decided to completely re-evaluate my original concept and came to two conclusions: The first was that what I really wanted was not so much a large operating model railroad as a series of small, connected dioramas portraying a region that I liked and was familiar with from my earlier years, that coincidentally had a

**Survey**

It's your money! Every year you pay dues, and do you get what you want? Now is your chance to tell the board what you want. We would like to know what benefits you want and what you do not want.

In this issue of the LOCAL you will find a two-page survey. Do photocopy if you want to keep your LOCAL intact. This is anonymous, so give it to us straight. A member, Len Beck has volunteered to tally the results. He will provide the board and the committees with the comments, separating the surveys from the envelopes (to keep it anonymous).

The survey covers (in order) the LOCAL, conventions, Achievement Program, volunteer status and general information. The last section is for comments, and do use additional sheets if necessary.

Please respond now while you are thinking of it. Thanks to all of you who participate. You are making for a better MER and, remember, it is your money!

railroad running through it. The second was that I wanted to lighten up on the whole thing and have some fun with it.

The finished product that evolved from these revelations is a replica of a rural short line railroad, typical of many of those that were built by local entrepreneurs in the late 19th and early 20th century. They were usually constructed to give the area farmers and businessmen some measure of independence from the predatory practices of the major railroads that served them, but their fragile financial conditions often led to their sale or lease to a larger road.

The Berkshire Air Line is a fictional joint lease operation of the New Haven and the Boston and Maine in western Massachusetts. It weaves through the New England countryside from the Springfield line of the B&M at Northampton southwesterly across the Berkshire hills to the Pittsfield line of the New Haven at Ashley Falls, a distance of about 43 miles. It crosses the Boston and Albany (New York Central) at Crescent Mills, crests the Berkshires at Big Pond and Cold Spring, and sends two branches from Montville; one south to West New Boston and Roosterville and the other north to Hephzibah Heights and Monterey. A third branch to Big Pond is not currently in service because the expanded use of mechanical refrigeration has reduced the need for harvesting ice in winter.

The model is a 125 foot single

*Continued on page 4*

## MER LOCAL

*Official Publication of the  
Mid-Eastern Region, NMRA  
A Tax-Exempt Organization*

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The MER LOCAL welcomes articles, photographs and model railroad related material as contributions to members' mutual enjoyment of the hobby. Materials should have a wide appeal. Editors will exercise all due care of submissions, but contributors should not send originals without having back-up copies of both articles and photographs. Editors, by definition, reserve the right—and have the responsibility—to make corrections, deletions and changes to accommodate space.

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## *President's Column*

### **On the California Zephyr**

*by Bill Gruber*

It's that time once again when most model railroaders hibernate into the basement to start the annual ritual of beginning their dream layout (maybe for the umpteenth time) or working on their existing pike. For those starting a new railroad, the motivation is obvious. After all, you've spent hours at the drawing table with pencil and paper (I mean, computer and CAD program!), just as much time in the basement with tape measure and imagination, countless hours pouring over the magazine articles and visits to many model railroads.

For those whose layouts near completion (as if one can ever build to that level) or who have achieved most of the goals originally hoped for, I would like to pose a simple question. What is the one thing that you do that keeps your interest in model railroading peaked season after season?

For instance, I used to spend about 10 to 15 hours a week in the basement. The railroad was built, operating sessions were held, scenery, cars and structures were built and the layout gradually neared each goal I had envisioned. I'm lucky to spend a handful of hours a month there now!

I did try one thing this Fall to keep my interest going. Our vacation consisted of taking Amtrak train #6, the California Zephyr, from Chicago to Denver and San Francisco.

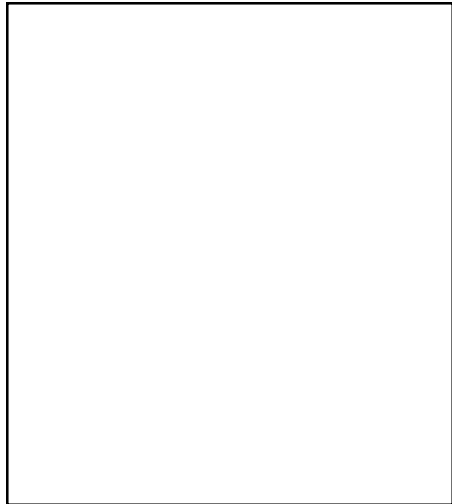
While trying not to focus too much on the railroad portion of the trip and taking the ordinary photos and videos of the downtown regular attractions and sites (after all, they would be

shown to much of our non-railroad friends and family), I found myself mixing in shots of the Chicago Elevated and Metra, BNSF, Amtrak, UP and BN units, Pikes Peak Cog Railroad, The Georgetown Loop Railroad, D&RGW and SP units, Caltran and SF units. Yea, I know there is no more SP, D&RGW, BN and SF but the paint schemes still abound. I was fortunate to meet a newly-hired conductor/railfan before departing Denver's Union Station for San Francisco. He noticed me with all my camera gear and promptly greeted me as a fellow railfan before offering me an open window in the downstairs vestibule to video our ascent and descent through the Rockies and Sierra Mountains! This was his second tour of duty on Amtrak #6 and I think he would have done it for free if he had to!

The trip did revive my railroad interests. Upon my arrival home, I wasn't sure whether to keep what I had, switch to a western railroad, or really switch directions by changing scales and modeling Colorado narrow gauge (or maybe EBT!)! At least it gave me something to ponder over the long winter months!

On a sadder note, it's with great sorrow that we report the death of Ron Gaines. Many from the MER knew Ron, as he played an integral part in at least two Region Conventions as well as a key role for Valley Forge Express in 1993. Ron was a life member in the NMRA and was Technical Department Chairman for a number of years. He played an important part in revitalizing the NMRA's conformance program by re-inviting many manufacturers to participate in this worthy NMRA function. Ron

*Continued on next page*



## RONALDE GAINES

Ron 39, a life member of the National Model Railroad Association, a mechanical engineer, and an avid sports fan, died on Tuesday, September 28 from fulminant septicemia at University of Kentucky Medical Center, Richmond, KY.

Before moving to Kentucky about a year ago, Ron was a life long resident of Haddonfield, NJ. Ron was an engineer for GRW Engineering Inc. in Lexington, KY. for the last year, and previously worked for Hubbard Engineers for a period of 15 years.

Ron was an avid model railroader. Besides building his own home layout, Ron took an active part in the Jersey Division of the MER, the Delaware Valley HO Track, a local modular group, and was a major organizer for the 1993 "Valley Forge Express" NMRA Convention and the 1996 MER Convention in Mount Laurel. Ron's model railroading activities lead to the position of Technical Department Chairman of the NMRA in which he served for three years.

Ron graduated from Haddonfield High School in 1978. Ron was an avid baseball player and captain of the high school team. Ron attended Alabama University and graduated from Drexel University in 1983.

Ron's enthusiasm and dedication to model railroading will be missed.

— Bob Hubbard

## President's Column

*Continued from page 2*

was also a regular operator on my Reading Lines and often brought new operators to the railroad.

Ron's enthusiasm for model railroading was shown by the number of people with whom he shared it. He maintained a good balance between model railroading and his other obligations and priorities. When I asked him to co-chair Jersey Limited '96, he jumped at the chance just a year or so after dedicating much of his time to the 1993 National in Valley Forge! When he moved to Kentucky a little over a year ago our rather large circle of model railroaders missed him. When he passed on in September, little did we know just how much.

I'd also like to take this opportunity to inform you of the recent election results for MER Directors. Congratulations go to incumbents Jim Atkinson and W. Terry Nesbit as well as newly elected Director Don Yingling. Jim, Terry and Don will serve for the next two years as Director. It's hard to believe that in a few months the Region will again be looking for a new slate of candidates for President, Vice President, Secretary and Treasurer. Here's the chance to serve your Region while at the same time helping to steer the Region into the next century. It's as simple as dropping Alex Pope a note, phone call or meeting up with him at a Convention. Alex can inform you of any qualifications for these offices. Won't you consider running?

Oh well, that's it for this month's column. I just remembered a couple of projects I started last year in the basement. Now if I could only remember what I did with those scrap parts!

## Editor's Column

By the time you read this issue, the MER fall convention in Hagerstown will be over. The report of the convention will be printed in the January/February issue of the Local. I am looking for some new assistant editors for the LOCAL. Several of my current support staff who have provided valuable help over the last several years are now wanting to move on. I am looking for someone with electronic publishing skills to replace Judy Foley who has been invaluable in taking the material I assemble for each issue and formatting it in a pleasing and professional manner for printing. I am also looking for a replacement for Roger Cason who has been doing the interviews with MER manufacturers and providing the "Made-in-the-MER" column each issue. Both of these functions are extremely important yet take relatively little time per issue to do. The work of both Judy and Roger has been a big factor in the success of the Local over the last few years. If you are interested please contact me at 301-990-7287 or by email at [HYPERLINKmailto:srknotts@erols.com](mailto:HYPERLINKmailto:srknotts@erols.com) [srknotts@erols.com](mailto:srknotts@erols.com).

Earlier this year I installed a DCC system and am slowly putting decoders in locos to run them under DCC. This seems to be a growing phenomena and that has obviously not been overlooked by the locomotive manufacturers who have begun to bring out locos pre-wired for DCC. Since I run mostly steam, I have been pleasantly surprised by the improved quality of some of these new locos such as Bachmann's. They look great and run great. They have almost brass quality appearance and run much better than the average out-of-the-box brass loco. The times they are a-changing.

—Stan Knotts

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# HOW DO I HOST A CONVENTION?

Well, actually it's pretty simple. First, you need to make a phone call or send an email to one or both of your MER Executive Convention Committee Co-Chairmen, Bob Martin and Charlie Potter, who will be more than happy to explain what is involved in hosting a Regional convention. Both Bob and Charlie have experience in being a MER local convention chairman and both have worked on virtually all committees associated with a convention.

A successful convention requires about 18-24 months of work and a core committee of four to six dedicated people. Of course when you get closer to the convention, you'll need to expand your core committee a bit. A hotel is also required and must have at least 150 rooms, four to six meeting rooms for seminars and a banquet room. As local host chairman, you will not

contract with the hotel. Bob or Charlie will sign the hotel contract so you don't have to worry about financial liability. Any other contracts, such as for busses, etc, are the responsibility of the host committee. The MER will stand

behind your committee financially as long as you comply with the terms of the MER agreement you will be given. You will be given a convention handbook, which contains detailed instructions on what is expected of your committee and what you need to do for a successful convention. And, Bob or Charlie will meet with you and your committee during the planning process and provide advice and guidance.

The MER holds two conventions each year, one in the Spring and one in the Fall. We try to alternate the location between north and south whenever possible. Right now, we're looking for a location for the Spring 2001 convention and 2002 and after. If you're interested, contact Bob Martin at 717-848-3640, email: [cprboss@aol.com](mailto:cprboss@aol.com) or Charlie Potter at 717-843-2513, email: [potterele@aol.com](mailto:potterele@aol.com).

## MER Upcoming Conventions

Hagerstown, Md

Nov. 11-14, 1999

Portsmouth, Va

April 27-30, 2000

Altoona, Pa Tri-Regional

Oct. 5-8, 2000

Chadds Fords, Pa

Spring 2001

Lancaster, Pa

Oct. 5-7, 2001

## Berkshire Air Line

*Continued from page 1*

track mainline with passing sidings, configured as a two level walk-in dogbone around a 12' by 30' room. It

is designed for point to point operation, but a hidden staging yard/connecting loop allows for continuous operation. The maximum grade is 3% and the minimum radius is 30'. The layout features include

some hand-laid track and custom built turnouts. Scenery is Hydrocol dipped paper towels and cloth, with some temporary materials. No benchwork is visible. The painted and ground foam removable

*Continued on next page*



*BAL Gas Electric approaches the Cold Spring, MA, Station. Gas Electric by Bachman*

## Berkshire Air Line

*Continued from page 4*  
backdrops depict the wooded hills and valleys common to the area. The small towns are typical New England with their turn of the century architecture that can be so beautifully reproduced with the many fine structure kits currently available. There are two local cabs, three walk-around modified TAT-4's and a central panel with rotary block control. The mainline rail is code 100 and the yards and sidings are code 70. The time frame is the late 40's to the middle 50's, the transition period in that region from steam to first generation diesels.

Following the decision to downsize, the extensive yard trackage originally planned for both ends was reduced to 3 at each end with leads doubling as small industrial sidings. One of the 5 foot diameter loops originally programmed for a large engine servicing facility with turntable and multi-stall roundhouse became a large dairy farm with pastures and animals, and only a house and barn for structures. Skirted on the outside by a single track, this characteristic country scene was inspired by, for those who remember it, Bill McMillan's HO scale Ma & Pa.

In keeping with the lighter approach mentioned previously, the name itself is a satirical reference to the mid-19th century "Boston and New York Air Line" (later the New York and New England and the New Haven) which, on the map, appeared to be a straight line between the two cities but, because of the many sharp

*Continued on page 10*

## Selecting Wire Components for your Model Railroad

*By John Dorsam*

We model railroaders don't seem to mind spending for a brass locomotive, slow acting switch motors or other similar devices, but we seem to want to really economize when it comes to the electrical end.

We don't seem to realize that reliability can't be "added later." Wire size and where to buy it can be confusing. Recent control options have lead us to believe that our wiring problems are almost over — and it can all be done with "two wires." DON'T BELIEVE IT. While we probably don't need as many wires as we did before, what we do need is better, more sophisticated wiring practices.

Employing a variety of wire sizes, each with its own color system, while much touted, is just plain an economical impossibility unless you are in a club-like atmosphere. Actually, one can select a single size wire for almost all of the feeders between the control panel and the various points of use.

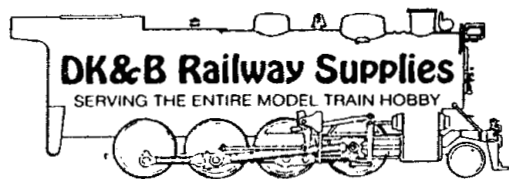
U/L approved lamp cord has almost been overlooked as a wiring system, yet it is readily available and inexpensive when purchased in 250 foot rolls. It comes as a two conductor pair that is easily divided for two single conductors. It is available in many colors and two conductor sizes; #18 is rated at 10 amperes and costs about \$20 for a 250 foot roll, and #16 is rated at 13 amperes and costs about \$32.

Lamp cord can be used for track feeders, and power for switch machines, accessories and lighting. You will need some smaller gauge wire, especially inside control panels where many conductors can emanate from the same switching device. Each rail section, no matter how small, should be connected to a rail feeder. HO code 100 rail is the rough conductive equivalent of #25 wire and should be augmented by a power bus under the layout parallel to the mainline. Using at least #18 or #20 copper wire. This will help overcome the voltage drop normally encountered in the rail joiners. Loose rail joiners and poorly soldered connections are the biggest source of voltage loss in the rails.

It is good practice to gap both of the running rails for each block or isolated section, and use 2 feeders back to the control panel. This will permit installation of a detector system later if so desired.

When planning the wiring for switch machines, motorized accessories, or structure lighting it is convenient to use a common return

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**COMPILED BY ROGER L. CASON**

**THE MYRON J. BIGGAR GROUP**

In model railroading, thank goodness for family-operated businesses! Case in point: the very successful Myron J. Biggar Group operated by Myron Biggar and his daughter Barbara Saslo. In the case, "Group" is a group of businesses related to O gauge model railroading. It includes the magazine O Gauge Railroading, a line of instructional books and videotapes, and a line of O-gauge model building kits.

You can probably guess how it all started. It's 1937. Myron got his first Lionel train set, and around and around the Christmas tree it went. (Note: he still has the set, and it still runs!). This led to a lot of father-and-son model train activity. Most of us can relate to this sequence. Been there, done that!

Time moved on. In due course, non-model activities grew - girls, automobiles, school activities, college, and - eventually - a doctor's degree in business administration. For many years, Myron worked as a credit and collections manager for a variety of industries. He then spent several years as a consultant, principally presenting seminars for Dunn & Bradstreet.

When Myron's son was seven years old, they happened to walk past a hobby shop shortly before

Christmas. His son saw a particular Lionel locomotive in the window, and stated in no uncertain terms that he wanted that locomotive for Christmas. Myron found himself back into model railroading in a big way. Over the ensuing years, the Christmas purchase led to the construction of a series of larger and larger layouts.

In 1981, Myron subscribed to a then-existing magazine called O Scale Railroad. The publication schedule proved to be "whenever," in part because of the owner's ill health. Myron offered to buy the magazine: his offer was quickly accepted. By his own admission, Myron knew less than nothing about publishing a magazine. But he was sure that the magazine had hit a low point. More important, he was sure that a large untapped market existed for the right publication. In June 1986, working out of a room on the back of his Nazareth, PA home, he oversaw the creation of his first issue. Total print run was 1,317 copies. Postal zip code sorting was done on his living room floor.

Fast forward to the present. The magazine has been renamed *O Gauge Railroading* to more accurately reflect the content which includes everything pertaining to 1/4" scale. Myron's daughter, Barbara Saslo, now

helps manage the business. The operation is located in a building in downtown Nazareth that Myron purchased. (Fortuitously, the space was once occupied by Trainland, USA.) There are seven issues of the magazine per year, each with a circulation of about 34,000. Circulation is still growing 10%-15% per year. Half of the sales are by subscription, and half are via hobby shops and news stands. The magazine and related businesses now employ seven people. An additional twenty-three people work on a part-time or contract basis. Essentially all contractors and full-time employees are active O gauge model railroaders. When you talk to them at a show, they are speaking from a base of actual personal experience. For example, Myron's past layouts have been (in succession): a layout on an old door, a layout on a 4' x 8' piece of plywood, a layout that combined the door and the plywood, and a 6' x 16' open benchwork layout. He is now actively building a 20' X 24' multi-level G-shaped layout, and is installing Lionel command control. Myron describes the magazine operation as a "cyber office," with editorial work, printing, and business management divided between locations in Pennsylvania, Connecticut, New Jersey, Texas, and California. Printing is "perfect bound" (like a book) rather than "saddle stitch" (folded and stapled). Other than the regular columns, articles are contributed free by readers. Editorial content focuses on people who are "operators" rather than scratch builders. There is also a regular column on collecting. Myron estimates that 90% of the readers are three-rail people. The O gauge

*Continued on page 13*

# MERSURVEY 1999

The officers of the Mid-Eastern would appreciate your feedback via this survey. The results will be used to improve the benefits you receive from the organization.

	Best				Worst
1. Rate the LOCAL for its value to you:	5	4	3	2	1
2. Overall, what do you want to see in the LOCAL:					
Regular Features	more		less		same
Layout articles	more		less		same
Model / Construction articles	more		less		same
3. Do you attend MER conventions?					no
If no, skip to 6, if yes continue:					
4. Please rate the last MER convention you attended:	5	4	3	2	1
5. How many MER conventions have you attended?	_____				
6. Overall, what do you want to see at MER conventions?					
Self guided layout tours	more		less		same
Industry tours	more		less		same
Railroad prototype tours	more		less		same
Local history tours	more		less		same
Hands on clinics	more		less		same
Train show	more		less		same
SIG rooms	more		less		same
7. Even if No on 2, do you plan to attend a future convention?				yes	no
8. Are you participating in the Achievement Program?				yes	no
9. Rate the AP program overall:	5	4	3	2	1
If no, skip to 12, if yes continue:					
10. Have you ever entered a contest?				yes	no
11. Are you working on or have received a certificate(s)?				yes	no
12. Do you know of the Golden Spike program?				yes	no
13. Have you served on a committee in a division?				yes	no

# MERSURVEY 1999

## page 2

- |  |     |    |
|--|-----|----|
| 14. Have you served on a committee in a region?                  | yes | no |
| 15. Have you served on a committee at the national level?        | yes | no |
| 16. Have you served as an officer in a division?                 | yes | no |
| 17. Have you served as an officer in a region?                   | yes | no |
| 18. Have you served as an officer for the national?              | yes | no |
| 19. Do you belong to a division(s)?                              | yes | no |
| 19a. If yes, do you attend division meets?                       | yes | no |
| 20. Do you have an operating railroad?                           | yes | no |
| 21. Do you belong to a model railroad club?                      | yes | no |
| 22. Do you participate in operations (home railroad or another)? | yes | no |
| 23. Do you have an email address?                                | yes | no |

What is your email address? (Optional)

What other kind of benefits could the MER provide to you:

What do you like or dislike about the Achievement Program?

If you have not served as an officer or volunteer, what might induce you to?

If you have never attended an MER convention, why is that?

General comments and suggestions:

Mail to: MER Survey c/o L. Beck, 201 Heatherwood Rd, Havertown PA 19083-5536



# Selecting Wire Components

*Continued from page 5*

system. This is a large size (#14) bare wire (RS278-1329 antenna wire is a good choice) run through screw eyes generally following the track sub base underneath the benchwork. All of the above units can be connected into this wire. After completing the loop, it connects back on itself and is then connected to the various power sources. Don't worry about mixing AC and or DC, it all works out OK. There is a good illustration of this system in Kalmbach's "How to Wire" on page 63.

Each feeder should have a barrier type terminal strip at each end. This is particularly true of block feeders. At this point it is good practice to hang a string tag with the block number on it. It is also good practice to mark each block end up under the track base. These two practices pay off during future trouble-shooting.

Here are some recommendations. Switch machines and other intermittent devices are best operated from a separate, dedicated power source. This eliminates flicker of structure and other lighting. Develop a simple numbering system for feeders. Assign numbers 1 to 99 to main line feeders, 100 to 199 to switch machines, etc. Convenient, inexpensive wire markers are available at your local electrical supply house. Wear eye protection under the railroad as an errant wire sticking out or a drop of solder can cause eye problems. Avoid running wires through boards. Pressure type connectors are a better choice than wire nuts which can come loose. Arrange wire joints so they can't touch each other. This is particularly true of through-the-track-base wire drops. It is good practice to extend the manufacturer supplied terminal

strip on a switch machine by about 18" and install another terminal strip. That means that when you wire it up on the layout it can be installed at a convenient point, not buried high up on the track base. All 120 volt wiring must be done according to local code. A master cut-off switch should be installed so that the entire railroad layout can be turned off at a single point.

If you have access to NMRA data sheets there are two that could be helpful. D7e.01 covers wiring in general and D7e.3 covers common rail and common return systems. Both are by yours truly.

As a bit of information, the original 14' x 40' GATSMELINES railroad (now relocated to Prospect and Madison Avenues, Ft. Washington, PA and modified to 45' x 45'. Meetings Thursday night at 8 pm) was wired in its entirety with #18 lamp cord. It was a free running, trouble-free railroad.

## Put People in Your Layouts

*by Ron Baile*

Does your railroad have an adequate population? It only takes a handful of people to bring a model railroad to life. You don't have to spend a fortune on them either. You can usually find some cheap people made by Life Like or Bachmann at the train shows. Merten makes real nice people, but they go for top dollar. There are some available that you have to paint yourself — at about \$12 per 100, that's a good deal.

Pose two or three people in a



mini-scene. You could have an auto accident caused by one driver looking at an attractive girl or have a dog attacking a mailman, which causes him to spill the mail all over. There are several sets of railroad workers out there. These are great for making a small scene where they might be building a new siding or replacing ties along the main line. You can repaint some of the railroad workers to more civilian colors and have several of them digging a grave behind



a church.

Remember the population is diverse. People of color should not be left out. You could make a small hole in a road and mount half a person to represent a guy doing down into a manhole. How about putting the legs that you cut off the guy in the manhole sticking out as if he's working under and automobile? Two mini-scenes for the price of one person.

If you are a little patient, you can do some minor rearranging of arms and legs to get them to pose the way you want them to. When the census takers come to visit your railroad make sure there is somebody there to count.

## Mid-Eastern Region Achievement Program

By Jim Kellow MMR Regional AP Chairman

I got a lot of response to the article I put in the last issue of the LOCAL so I thought I would write another one. First I have three new members of the MER AP staff to announce.

First, is Bill Mosteller at bill.mosteller@sterling.com 2813 Hogan Court Falls Church VA 22043 703 264 8335 who has agreed to work on the MER AP website. The website is now operational at [www.widomaker.com/~jkellow/MERAP](http://www.widomaker.com/~jkellow/MERAP). I hope you will get an opportunity to view it. If you have any suggestions please let us know.

Second, we have two new Assistant Editors for the MER AP-Mailbag electronic newsletter; Tommie L. Phelps 509 River Road New Bern, NC 28562 252 637-4026 email: wa4eme@coastalnet.com and Arthur R. Thomas 228 Lovely Road Alum Bank PA 15521-8448, 814 276-3104 email: athomas@bedford.net If

you have an e-mail address you can get the MER AP-Mailbag electronic newsletter by going to the MER AP website and signing up. Again any suggestions or comments about the newsletter will be appreciated. I also need to correct the AP Staff Roster that was printed in the last LOCAL. Frank Folght III does have an email at BLUEGRAYF@aol.com Also, Art Thomas has volunteered to work as a Co-Chairman of the Div 10 AP Program to help Frank. Also William Nesbit does not have an e-mail address that works for MER AP members. It is only for military use.

Lastly, the e-mail for Charles Hladik the Div 5 AP Chairman should be changed to RutlandCGH@aol.com

I was invited to attend the Div 5 September 18 meeting and was very impressed. In addition to two clinics, one on how to obtain the AP Scenery Certificate, the Div included layout tours, door prizes, a 50-50 raffle, and model judging. One of the members received a merit award for an HO Scale locomotive. The Division is really promoting the AP as they have a clinic each meeting on one of the

AP Certificates presented by a member who has obtained the certificate or by Charles Hladik the Division AP Chairman. I think this is a great way to communicate about the AP and hope that if other Divisions don't have this type of program they will consider starting it. I have had several people ask about the time required for them to receive their Achievement Certificates and Gold Spike Awards after they have submitted the paperwork

As far as I am concerned, a member who submits his paperwork to his Division Chairman should be able to know within no more than a few weeks certainly not more than one month that he /she has qualified for the award. The member may not be able to actually get the award for awhile longer as it must be prepared by the National AP office and sent to me. I will make every effort possible to notify the appropriate Division AP Chairman and have the award presented as soon as possible. If you have any questions about the status of your certificate and the Division AP Chairman can not answer your question please don't hesitate to contact me and I will get you an answer. There are two Divisions that are presently inactive. These are Division 6 Blue Ridge and Div 8 North Carolina that have no local Division AP Chairman. I believe it is very important to have a local Division AP Chairman to work with members who live in the Division area about the AP. Therefore if you live in either one of these Divisions and would like to become the local Division AP Chairman please contact me. Best of luck in your modeling efforts.

Jim Kellow MMR 104 Elizabeth Page Williamsburg VA 23185, (&57) 258-4973

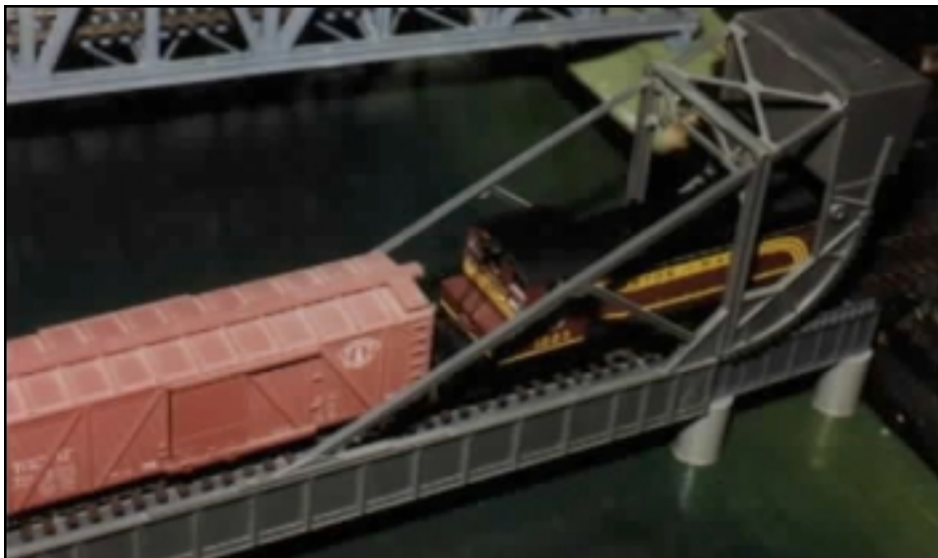
e-mail [jkellow@widomaker.com](mailto:jkellow@widomaker.com)  
Please visit my site at <http://www.widomaker.com/~jkellow>  
Please visit the Mid-Eastern Region Achievement Program at <http://www.widomaker.com/~jkellow/MERAP/>

## Berkshire Air Line

curves and steep grades dictated by the topography of the region, was actually the opposite. The towns on the line, all real places taken from the Delorme Street Atlas software pro-

*Continued from page 5*

gram, were purposely selected to be so obscure that even people familiar with the area never heard of them. I have created a history, maps, time-  
*Continued on page 13*



*B&M Switcher crosses the Connecticut River on the BAL Draw Span. Locomotive: Life Like*

# RAILS MEET SAILS

MER Spring Convention — April 27-30, 2000  
Hosted by the Tidewater Division of the MER/NMRA

## Non-Rail Events

Tour of Olde Towne Portsmouth  
Special Cooking Clinic  
Quilting Techniques  
Tour of MacArthur Mall in Norfolk

## Silent Auction

## Dealer Tables

## Contests

Model Contest  
Photo Contest  
Craft Contest

## Layout Tours

### Navy Tour (all day Friday)

Tour both Oceana Naval Air Station (includes buffet lunch) and a fleet aircraft carrier at the Norfolk Naval Base

### Norfolk Southern / NIT Tour (Saturday)

Tour both Norfolk Southern's Lamberts Point coal pier and the Norfolk International Terminal (intermodal)

### Newport News Tour (Saturday)

Visit Pier IX, which exports petroleum, coke and coal and imports cement  
Tour Dominion Terminal Associates (DTA), a ground-storage bulk coal loading facility  
Both Pier IX and DTA are served by CSX trains

### Harbor Cruise (Friday)

See the waterfront of Norfolk and Portsmouth while you enjoy a great dinner  
See Lamberts Point, Portsmouth and Norfolk intermodal terminals, and Norfolk Naval Base from the harbor

### Ford Plant Tour (Friday)

See Ford pick-up trucks assembled at this prize-winning plant served by the Norfolk-& Portsmouth Belt Line RR

**At the Holiday Inn — Olde Towne Portsmouth, VA, just off I-264**  
For information contact: Jim Kellow at (757) 258-4973 or J.M. Johnson at (757) 562-5917

## Clinics

Railroads and the Coke Industry  
50 Years of Freight Car Kits  
Installing Flawless Couplers  
Weathering with Pastel Chalks  
Scratch-building in N Scale

*And More to Come!*

## Displays

## Door Prizes

## Banquet



# Convention Registration Form - Rails Meet Sails – April 27-30, 2000

Name of Primary Registrant: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_ NMRA Number: \_\_\_\_\_

City/State/Zip+4: \_\_\_\_\_ M.E.R. Number: \_\_\_\_\_

Early Full Registration (before 2/1/2000)	\$30.00 x _____	=	\$ _____	
Early (non-NMRA member)	\$45.00 x _____	=	\$ _____	
Full Registration (after 2/1/2000)	\$35.00 x _____	=	\$ _____	
Full Registration (non-NMRA member)	\$50.00 x _____	=	\$ _____	

Name of Spouse: \_\_\_\_\_

Spouse	\$10.00	=	\$ _____	
Children (under 18)	\$ 5.00 x _____	=	\$ _____	
Children (18 and over)	\$10.00 x _____	=	\$ _____	
Ford Plant Tour (Friday)	\$10.00 x _____	=	\$ _____	(limited to 92 people)
Navy Tour (all day Friday, includes lunch)	\$32.00 x _____	=	\$ _____	(limited to 92 people)
Norfolk Southern/Norfolk Int'l Terminal Tour (Sat.)	\$10.00 x _____	=	\$ _____	(limited to 46 people)
Newport News Coal Piers Tour (Saturday)	\$10.00 x _____	=	\$ _____	(limited to 92 people)
Friday Layout Tour	\$10.00 x _____	=	\$ _____	
Saturday Layout Tour	\$10.00 x _____	=	\$ _____	
Walking Tour of Olde Towne (Saturday)	\$2.00 x _____	=	\$ _____	
Cooking Clinic	\$17.00 x _____	=	\$ _____	(limited to 30 people)
Craft Clinic	\$7.00 x _____	=	\$ _____	(limited to 30 people)
Gift Basket-making/Va. Food Sampler Clinic	\$3.00 x _____	=	\$ _____	
Harbor Dinner Cruise (Friday)	\$30.00 x _____	=	\$ _____	

Banquet (Saturday)

Meal #1: Roast Round of Beef Au Jus Meal #2: Chicken Marsala

Number of Meal #1 ordered _____	x \$25.00	=	\$ _____	
Number of Meal #2 ordered _____	x \$25.00	=	\$ _____	

**TOTAL AMOUNT ENCLOSED** \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Convention cancellations must be received by April 15, 2000 for a full refund of registration/banquet fees.

Make checks payable to: "Rails Meet Sails"

Mail registration form and payment to: Jim Kellow, 104 Elizabeth Page, Williamsburg, VA 23185

*cut here*

Hotel Registration Form: N.M.R.A. Mid-Eastern Region Spring Convention

Send this portion of form to: Holiday Inn – Olde Towne. 8 Crawford Parkway, Portsmouth, VA 23704

Phone (757) 393-2573 or 1-800-456-2811

Special Group Rates: Standard Accommodations – Circle One:

\$65.00 single occupancy, King Bed      \$65.00 double occupancy, King Bed or Two Double Beds  
 \$75.00 triple occupancy, Two Double Beds      \$85.00 quadruple occupancy Two Double Beds

11% state and local tax not included

\*\*\* Please Note: If sharing rooms, only one (1) reservation form is required.\*\*\*

Reservation Name: (First) \_\_\_\_\_ (Last) \_\_\_\_\_

Sharing with: (First) \_\_\_\_\_ (Last) \_\_\_\_\_

Total number of persons to occupy room: \_\_\_\_\_

Arrival Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Departure Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone Number: Day (    ) \_\_\_\_\_ Evening (    ) \_\_\_\_\_

Guarantee: I have enclosed a check in the amount of \_\_\_\_\_

Credit Card # \_\_\_\_\_ Exp. \_\_\_\_\_

Special requests: (e.g., smoking, non-smoking, etc.) \_\_\_\_\_

## Made in the MER

*Continued from page 6*

market is increasingly moving away from kits and scratch building (of rolling stock, at least), and toward more RTR. "Lead time" is a seldom-appreciated aspect of publishing a magazine of this type. For example, the September-October issue is labeled "October" on the cover. It is shipped in late August. Deadline for input material is late in June. Thus, an organization wanting to publicize a train show in October must supply the information no later than June. Some issues have an even longer lead-time.

Over half of the Group's business activity involves the magazine. However, they also offer books, videos, and styrene O scale building kits and parts. Seven videos are now offered, three of which are new. Similarly, there are five instructional book offerings, three of which are new. Books are updated regularly. The Group also offers 13 commercial and industrial building kits, 20 building fronts for creating "flats," and a Cape Cod house kit that can be assembled in a large number of configurations. Many of the building fronts are prescored. Thus, you can convert a three-story front into a two-story front by snapping off the upper floor. Viola! Instant kit bash! All kits and building fronts are made in the USA. Not incidentally, bringing this line of products to the market involved an investment of a half a million dollars in dies. The Groups usually has booths at the York

TCA show, the Ft. Washington East Coat Hobby Show, most north east area Greenberg shows, the Springfield train show, and the Chicago National Model Hobby Show. Preferred method of sales for books, videos, and kits is through local hobby shops. However, model railroaders can also order direct, and/or can subscribe to the magazine, at PO Box 239, Nazareth, PA, FAX 610-759-0223.

## Berkshire Air Line

*Continued from page 10*

tables, a corporate headquarters, even stock certificates, to give the appearance of a railroad that either presently exists or at least existed at one time, neither of which is true. There are some interesting vignettes on the layout that are reminiscent of "Far Side" cartoons than of prototype railroading, and some unusual businesses and landmarks, many representing insider jokes often found on these projects. All of this is indicative, so my wife says, of my "warped" (I prefer "unique") sense of humor.

Future plans include additional staging tracks, replacing visible manufactured turnouts with custom built, more detailed scenery and structures, new de-centralized control panels, independent operation with its own equipment when the current lease expires, trackage rights on the B&M branch to Amherst for interchange with the Central Vermont, and a year round vacation resort at Big Pond.

The railroad is scheduled for another Potomac Division layout tour in October 2000 (weather and Y2K permitting) but if you can't wait, or if you just enjoy the ambiance of a construction site, private showings can be arranged on request.

## CALLBOARD

*Coming Events*

Notices must be typed and have complete addresses. Use the style shown below and be brief as possible. Be sure to include a contact telephone number. Send items for CALLBOARD to Stan Knotts, 19808 Falling Spring Court, Laytonsville, MD 20882-1226. E-Mail to Srknotts@erols.com

**Chesapeake Bay Railroaders Open House** on November 20 & 21 and a Railroad Flea Market on the 20th. The 20th events are from 10am to 4pm, the Open House on the 21st is from 1pm to 4pm. Entry to the Open House is free, the Flea Market cost \$2.00. The club is located in Grafton Virginia about 5 miles south of Yorktown just off Route 17. There will be signs on Rt. 17 directing you to the club and the flea market. Visit our web site for a map: HYPERLINK <http://trainweb.com/cbw/> <http://trainweb.com/cbw/> We are an HO club with a large two level layout - helixes and all! The layout was started in the early 1980's and we are in the middle of constructing a major addition to the layout. It's a good opportunity to see the full range of layout construction from bench work to scenery.

Portsmouth Virginia, Mid-Eastern Region "Rails to Sails" Spring Convention, sponsored by the Tidewater Division of the NMRA. April 27-30, 2000 (Thursday to Sunday) at the Holiday Inn - Olde Towne, 8 Crawford Parkway, Portsmouth VA. Registration opens 3 p.m. Thursday April 27th. Fabulous tours: Oceana Naval Air Station & fleet aircraft carrier (all day tour); Ford assembly plant; 3 railroad coal piers; Norfolk International Terminal (intermodal); harbor dinner cruise; and more. Base registration \$35.00. For information contact James Kellow, 104 Elizabeth Page, Williamsburg, VA 23185; phone (757) 258-4973; email HYPERLINK <mailto:jkellow@widomaker.com> [jkellow@widomaker.com](mailto:jkellow@widomaker.com)

**ADVERTISE IN THE LOCAL**

**CALL 215-232-4926**

**Or send your ad for a quote to:**

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Philadelphia, PA 19130**

***Don't forget to fill out the survey  
in the middle of this issue!***

**MID-EASTERN REGION, NMRA, INC.**

13212 Bellevue Street  
Silver Spring MD 20904-1703

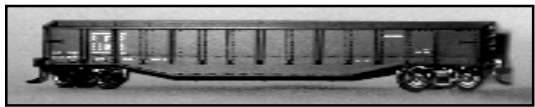
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**INSIDETHISISSUE**

- President's Column *page 2*
- Editor's Column *page 3*
- How to host a convention *page 4*
- Selecting Wire Components *page 5*
- Made in the MER *page 6*
- MER Survey *page 7*
- Put People in Your Layouts *page 9*
- Convention Registration *page 12*
- CALLBOARD** *page 13*

**MERRF&P MILL GON ORDER FORM**



GON	QUANTITY	MEMBER PRICE *	NON-MEMBER PRICE	TOTAL
#3306	_____	\$8.95	\$9.95	\$ _____
#3310	_____	\$8.95	\$9.95	\$ _____
			TOTAL	\$ _____
MARYLAND RESIDENTS ADD 5% SALES TAX				\$ _____
SHIPPING: _____ CARS @ \$2.50 PER CAR				\$ _____
<b>TOTAL AMOUNT ENCLOSED</b>				\$ _____

\* My MER # IS \_\_\_\_\_

MAKE CHECKS PAYABLE TO  
MID EASTERN REGION.

**SHIPTO:**

NAME \_\_\_\_\_  
ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_  
CITY \_\_\_\_\_ STATE \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP \_\_\_\_\_

MAIL TO:  
THE MID-EASTERN REGION INC.  
Business Manager  
13212 Bellevue Street  
Silver Spring, MD 20904-1703

The Mid-Eastern Region Inc., NMRA  
Business Manager  
13212 Bellevue Street

**MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION**

YOU MUST BE A MEMBER OF THE NATIONAL MODEL RAILROAD ASSOCIATION TO BE A MEMBER OF THE MID-EASTERN REGION

Name \_\_\_\_\_  
Address \_\_\_\_\_  
City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_  
NMRA # \_\_\_\_\_ Expire Date \_\_\_\_\_  
MER # \_\_\_\_\_ Expire Date \_\_\_\_\_  
Scale \_\_\_\_\_ Birth date \_\_\_\_\_ Tel # \_\_\_\_\_

**Remittance Enclosed for:**  
**National Dues:** q New q Renewal \_\_\_\_\_  
 q 1 year: \$32.00 q 2 years: \$64.00 \$ \_\_\_\_\_  
 Life membership cost is based on your age.  
 Send your Birth Date to the NMRA for a quotation.  
**Region Dues:** q New q Renewal \_\_\_\_\_  
 q 1 year: \$8.00 q 2 years: \$16.00 \$ \_\_\_\_\_  
 Life membership cost is based on your age.  
 Send your Birth Date to the MER for a quotation.  
 Lapel Pin/Tie Tack @ \$6 each \$ \_\_\_\_\_  
 Region Cloth Patch @ \$3 each \$ \_\_\_\_\_  
 Donation \$ \_\_\_\_\_