

## Thoughts on Model Contests and Merit Judging

*By Alan Mende*

*Assistant Editor, MER-AP Mailbag*

Recently, I attended Rails to Sails, the Spring Mid-Eastern Convention in Portsmouth, VA. In addition to serving as a Model Contest and Merit Award Judge, I presented the NMRA Achievement Program Assistance for Modelers Clinic. The main reason for developing this clinic stems from the fact that, all too often, modelers are reluctant to have their work judged for Merit Awards. I've heard many of their reasons, e.g.:

- I don't think my work is good enough.
- You have to be a scratchbuilder.
- Most of what I've built are kits; they'll never qualify for a Merit Award.
- The judges will nit-pick it to death.
- There's too much paper work involved.

There are lots of other reasons that modelers give for not getting involved in the Achievement Program. The clinic I gave was designed to encourage people to get started with the AP. One gentleman who attended the Thursday night session brought along one of his models for an evaluation. It was a kit-built tank car. You know the kind. It has all the details included in the kit box: grab irons, full brake gear, etc., and it's already painted and lettered by the manufacturer. He felt that the plastic grab irons weren't strong enough to survive handling so he made replacements from phosphor-bronze wire. He also weathered

the car but his feeling was sort of like, "What's the point in entering it in the modeling contest to get it merit judged? It's just a commercial kit that I built."

I told him that when merit judging is done, the judges look for added details, but it doesn't matter if the modeler went out and bought separate details or if the manufacturer supplied them in the kit box. Details are details. Judges look at craftsmanship. How carefully did you assemble the model? Are the joints between parts tight or are there gaps? Is there excess glue showing? It doesn't matter if the parts came out of a kit box or if you scratchbuilt them all before you put them together. Craftsmanship is craftsmanship.

Judges look at scratchbuilding. Sure, on a kit-built model that already has a lot of separately added parts there is no scratchbuilding involved. But who says you can't replace some of them with parts you make yourself, like grab irons. They're relatively simple parts to make, but scratchbuilt is scratchbuilt.

Judges also look at the finish and lettering on a model. How was it applied? How complex is it? How well was it applied? Obviously, if you are going to have a decorated kit merit judged you

*continued on page 4*

## MER LOCAL

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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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Life Membership in the MER is ONLY available to NMRA Life Members. For quotation, apply to the Business Manager with your date of birth.

Send all dues and membership inquiries to:  
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## President's Column

Bill Gruber

The last four years have really flown by. It's hard to believe this is my last "official" President's Column for *The Local*. Mid-Eastern Region Board Members during this time have had far more good times than bad in dealing with the business of the Region. There have been some tough and controversial decisions made. Hopefully the Region is better off now because of them. As for our Divisions, I hope we were able to win their confidence and help them by formulating sound and responsible policy. It was a pleasure to see so many Division Superintendents regularly attend our BoD meetings and actively take part in the formulation of some policies as well as in updates to our Division Handbook.

As I look back on some of the major accomplishments by the BoD over the last four years, rebuilding *The Local* and expanding its staff comes to mind. Thanks go to Dick and Judy Foley, Ron Baile and a small group of people who met in Ron's home. They "pasted" up the transition editions and set the format and foundation for the current Local. Stan Knotts came on board after several successful editions and promptly raised the bar before the current staff took over this year.

Our Convention Committee provided two conventions per year. All have been successful. Our first freight car project was equally successful and Roger Cason was given his marching orders with our second freight car project. Roger has enough materials to keep providing MER-sponsored freight cars for quite a while. The CNJ car is nearly sold out after only six months on the shelf. Incidentally, these projects help provide the funds necessary to maintain our Life Memberships and keep dues stable well into the future. The Region is in good financial shape!

Unfortunately, there are several items still unfinished. Others need fine tuning before implementation. For instance, the single dues concept as outlined by the NMRA is one of those requiring still more dialogue with the home office in Chattanooga. However, when implemented, it would allow us to collect dues, issue memberships and offer fund raising projects through the National Organization. Having the National do all the mailings and maintenance of the MER database has the potential for reaching far more "would be" members than we or the Divisions ever could on our own.

Another item we would like to have provided was an MER web page. The good news is that there is an excellent chance we will have one up and running in short order as several have stepped forward to donate the time and web space to the Region. As a matter of fact, Clint Hyde, who is already working as Publisher of *The Local*, has started developing one. I previewed it and it looks great. Stay tuned!

While there is still plenty to do, we have come a long way in setting the stage for the future of the MER and its newly elected Officers. There is still much to be done to maintain and build our relationships with our Divisions and provide some real member benefits.

As a challenge to the new BoD Members I would ask that they act, not in their own interests either as a Board member or individually, but rather for the interests of the entire membership by: a) Moving forward in developing a unified dues structure with National. b) Extending this service to each Division at no additional cost. c) Continuing the sound financial status of the Region by providing additional sources of income such as the freight car projects. And, most importantly, d) Using good common sense, imagination and creativity in formulating policy and providing for the day to day running of the Region. Above all, STOP, LOOK and LISTEN to all the members!

On a final note, I'd like to thank all the BoD Members, Committee Members and "plain ole' members" who have helped in even the smallest of ways over the past few years in the true spirit of making the Mid-Eastern Region one of the best regions of the NMRA. Happy Railroading!

## Editor's Column

*Art Thomas*

As might be expected, I'm seeking more authors for *The Local*. The contributing editors we have now (see mast-head) are doing a great job. However it puts considerable pressure on these few to come up with new, interesting, and pertinent articles to share with the membership every two months. True, there are several other contributors who also provide excellent inputs but availability of their articles is somewhat unpredictable. There is usually no way to know if and when the material is going to be provided.

I seriously doubt that there's a single member of the MER who doesn't have some knowledge or experience about model railroading that's just aching to be told. Why not sit down with pencil and paper and just let it flow out of you? You'd be surprised at how easy it is and what a good feeling you'll get from seeing your work in print. The article or story doesn't have to be fancy or grammatically correct. We can take care of that end of it. All your editorial staff needs are the basic facts. We'll make a story out of them. Don't forget photos and drawings if there are any. They help a lot. Just remember, one picture is worth a thousand words. So convert those latent literary talents into kinetic reality and share those thoughts with the rest of us. Doing so will provide you with happiness and contentment, I can guarantee it.

The second need we have is for ideas on ways in which to improve *The Local*. I'd like to know if anyone has any suggestions of better ways to present the publication. Do you like the cover page? Are the layouts and formats the way you want them or would you like to see them changed? What about the banner at the top of the cover page? Do you think it should display diesel and electric as well as steam or would you prefer something else entirely? Would it be improved if the colors contrasted better than the blue and black do? Is there anything about it you'd like to see changed, added, or deleted?

I'm happy to inform you that the "Made in the MER" column that Roger Cason introduced and so diligently wrote for nearly three years is being resurrected after being absent from the last couple of issues. It has been taken over by Dr. Ed Kuser, a retired educator from Boyertown, PA. The column reappears elsewhere in this issue. Ed has written a bio for this edition to introduce himself. He will begin his first industry write-ups in the Nov - Dec *Local*. Also in this issue is some last minute news concerning the Tri-regional Juniata Junction to be held in Altoona on October 5 - 8, 2000. It sounds like it's going to be a great convention and everyone who is able to is urged to attend.

That's it for now. See you in the Nov - Dec *Local* in which we should have at least a preliminary report on the Fall Convention.

## New Achievement Program Staff in the Potomac Division, MER

There are two new Co-Chairmen for the AP Program in the Potomac Division. One is Ed Price at 15814 Lazy Day Lane, Montclair, VA 22026. Telephone: 1-901-388-5367. [edmund.w.price@Usace.army.mil](mailto:edmund.w.price@Usace.army.mil). The other is Bill Roman at 12569 Council Oak Drive, Waldorf, MD 20601. Telephone: 1-301-745-2035. [Wroman@starpower.net](mailto:Wroman@starpower.net). Each of them have provided a short biographical sketch.

### Ed Price - AP Co-Chairman Potomac Division - MER

I model The Southern Pacific in the late 1950's and am also interested in northern California narrow gauge logging. I am an active member of the Potomac Modular crew. I have modeled HO since I was a kid but have only been actively modeling as an adult for the past six years. I have several modules that I built and run in my basement but don't have a fixed permanent layout. Digitrax DCC is the running system. I am currently building a yard module. I have a Golden Spike Award and am working on my scratch building as I'd like to work on the AP myself. I presented a slide show clinic on Athearn engines at our last mini-convention. I have attended two NMRA National Conventions in the past three years and plan to go to San Jose this summer. Also I like to railfan and recently visited the Mt. Rainier Scenic Railroad near Seattle. The highlight was watching a tripleheader with geared locomotives in Washington State. I look forward to the Potomac Division Membership keeping me busy with them in the AP Program.

### Bill Roman - AP Co-Chairman Potomac Division - MER

Ed Price and I live on opposite sides of the Potomac so we decided to sort of divide up AP activities along geographic lines yet work closely together. I'm recently retired from Federal service and now intend to devote more time to prototype and model railroad activities. My model railroad background spans nearly 30 years, with about the first twenty-five engaged in free-lance N-scale. This was followed by a switch to Western Maryland in HO-scale about five years ago. My new layout is well underway but with no completion date in sight. I hold two AP certificates; one for scenery on the old layout and one for Chief Dispatcher as a result of a round-robin club I've belonged to for 25 years. I try to attend all MER conventions and have thoroughly enjoyed most of them. I'm anxious to begin assisting the Potomac Division Membership with their AP initiatives.

*continued from page 1*

couldn't expect to get too many points in this category because somebody else did the work. But weathering counts and the questions at the beginning of this paragraph apply to weathering just as they do to paint and lettering. But when it comes to weathering don't let anybody tell you that it's necessary. If you model a car as though it had just come from the paint shop, weathering isn't applicable and judges can't deduct points because it's lacking. Just let the judges know on the entry form that you modeled the car "paint shop fresh" and it will be judged accordingly.

Judges look for the model's conformity to prototype. This is where "paperwork" comes into play. But you don't have to write a book. (Actually, judges generally prefer that you don't because they don't have the time to read it all.) What sort of documentation did I see in the modeling contest? Chuck Davis' beautiful HO-scale Erie 50-ton covered hopper had the standard contest entry form. On it, Chuck told about how he constructed the model, which parts he scratchbuilt, how he painted, lettered, and weathered the model, and how it conformed to the prototype. He referred to a Model Railroader article he followed and included a photocopy of a plan and prototype photo that appeared in a Train Shed Cyclopaedia. That was it for paper work! Not a book. Just a couple of sheets of paper.

Why was that paper work important? It was important because, as a judge, I would not have been able to tell which parts were scratchbuilt and which were commercial. Without having the prototype plan available, I wouldn't have been able to tell if the arrangement of the brake gear was prototypical nor would I have been able to tell if the lettering on the model matched the full-size car had Chuck not included the photo. Deservedly, Chuck was awarded first place in the contest's Freight Car category and given a Merit Award for his work.

What freight car model took second place? That kit-built tank car that had been brought to my

clinic. If I'm not mistaken, this was the first freight car Roger Cason had ever entered in a contest. He did it primarily for merit judging and to get the comments we judges are required to write for every model. Roger's entry was a good way for him to benchmark his modeling efforts. His kit-built tank car with factory paint and lettering, scratchbuilt phosphor-bronze grab irons, and weathering achieved 72 points in merit judging. That's just 15.5 points away from a Merit Award. Our judges' comments gave him pointers on how he could improve his scores the next time, and we told him what we liked about his model.

What paper work did Roger include? The standard contest entry form which told us what he had done, the kit instructions (hey, they count), and a photocopy of a prototype plan from (I believe) a Train Shed Cyclopaedia to prove that his model conformed to a known prototype. Without these three sheets of paper, only one of which Roger had to spend any time on preparing, his model would not have scored 72 points. Okay, so Roger didn't get a Merit Award, but he got valuable information about how, through his modeling efforts, he *can* get Merit Awards in the future. And his tank car model still counts toward the requirements for the Master Builder Cars AP category. In a nutshell, the requirements for that AP category are eight models of four different car types, all "super-detailed". One model must be a passenger car. Four of the cars have to be scratchbuilt and four (not necessarily the scratchbuilt ones) have to get Merit Awards. For Roger, that's one down and seven to go . . . not bad for a first effort.

So now, for all of you who are still riding the fence, "Should I or should I not get involved in the Achievement Program?" finish that model or take it off the layout and dust it off, scribble out a few words about what you did to build the model, make a couple of photocopies, and get it merit judged. You might just be surprised by how well you do.

# Update of MER Affairs

*by Eric Dervinis - MER Secretary*

## The Staff Roster

The Mid-Eastern Region welcomes a number of new volunteers to the roster. Philadelphia Division elected a new Super, Tim Palmer. James River's new Superintendent is Tom Sullivan. Many thanks to Jim Hart and Ken Montero who are the retiring Superintendents in the respective divisions. Ray Bilodeau has stepped up to General Contest Chair replacing John Johnson. In Division 2, Ed Price is the new AP Chairman replacing the late Ken Berthoud. Ken was a faithful and long time volunteer. He will be missed by all who knew him. Nominations Chairman Alex Pope attended Ken's interment in Arlington Cemetery on behalf of the NMRA/MER. Welcome to all of the new volunteers and good luck!

## The Jersey Central Boxcars

The Jersey Central Boxcars are selling fast. This fundraiser is already half sold out. It is a hit with our members and is a unique and authentic scheme not commercially available on such a good quality car. The models will be going to the National in San Jose, CA and will be at the Juniata Junction Convention in October. Blank order forms are on the back page of this issue. Send your order form to Nelson Garber, the Business Manager, before all the cars sell. And please, tell your friends about our "new" boxcar. Special thanks go to Roger Cason for organizing the second MER car project. Super job, Roger!

## Hosting the National Convention

The last time the National Convention was held in the MER was in 1993. The National Convention Chairman, Brian Kampschroer, has now asked the MER to consider sponsoring another National. The MER's next chance to bid is in 2001 for the 2006 extravaganza. Possible first tier qualifying cities in the MER include Philadelphia, Baltimore, Richmond and Washington. Second tier cities are also a possibility. The NMRA provides considerable support to local committees.

What's needed? Well, for starters, the national convention needs about 6000 hotel room nights with 1000 on the peak night. At least 150,000 square feet are required for the Train Show. A convention hotel with the space to handle the clinics and other inside activities is a must. An eager core of volunteers to get things started is indispensable. Once the planning begins to snowball it grows larger faster and faster as more and more volunteers come forward to participate. So now's the time to step up to the proverbial plate if you want to do something for your region and your hobby. We've got plenty of the best model railroaders in the world right here in the Mid-Eastern Region, you among them. Let's prove it by going after this National Convention. Contact Brian Kampschroer if you're interested or if you have any questions. By the way, I don't have to tell you that it will take a lot of work but the fun, camaraderie, and inner satisfaction will make it worth it. Believe me, I have personal experience.

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### MER Upcoming Conventions

Altoona, PA Tri-Regional  
Oct. 5-8, 2000

Frazer, PA  
March 29-Apr 1, 2001

Lancaster, PA  
Oct. 5-7, 2001

### ANNUAL BUSINESS MEETING

The Mid-Eastern Region, Inc., a non-profit Maryland corporation, will hold the 2000 Annual Business Meeting in conjunction with the fall convention. Officers will present their annual reports and time will be allowed for questions from members. The meeting will be held Sunday, October 8, 9:00 A.M. at the Ramada Inn, Altoona, PA. All members are invited to attend.

Eric Dervinis, MER Secretary

# Juniata Junction

MER Fall Convention — October 5-8, 2000  
Hosted by the MER, MCR, and NER Regions  
of the NMRA  
Altoona, PA



## LATE CONVENTION INFORMATION

(as of August 15, 2000)

### Contests

by Ray Bilodeau  
MER General Contest Chair

Since the last issue of the LOCAL, we have received the following information on Contests.

The Photo and Slide Contest will be divided into these categories: Model Steam, Diesel, Electric, General Interest, and Night; Prototype Steam, Diesel, Electric, General Interest, and Night. The MER will award a Best In Show for Photos and Slides.

The Mid-Central Region will present these awards: The Dick Fullerton Award — given to the Best of Show in the Photo Contest; the Chester Muszalski Steam Engine Award — given to the steam locomotive model which best captures the romance and allure of steam engines; and the George Mueller Memorial Award — a contest model for Best Of Show chosen by Popular Vote.

The Juniata Junction contests will be open to all convention attendees. The MER and MCR will share in one another's special awards. We are still awaiting word from the Northeastern Region concerning their contests and awards.

### Accommodations and Tours

By Bob Martin - Co-Chairman  
Executive Convention Committee

The convention hotel, Ramada Inn, is sold out! The second backup, Comfort Inn, has 51 rooms remaining in our block. The third backup, Hampton Inn, is sold out! The fourth backup, Days Inn, has 35 rooms remaining in our block. I'm giving you this information because two unrelated sources have told me during the past three days that they were told that all four hotels were sold out. THIS IS NOT TRUE! There are plenty of rooms left but our room block will have to be released on September 4!

Also, we are still selling confirmed space on the Saturday and Sunday RAILFEST Horseshoe Curve Excursions and I expect that to continue until at least the end of next week (August 26). RAILFEST only tickets will be sold until our Registrar cuts off registration by mail.

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### Your Convention Officials

Believe it or not the motley crew in the photo below is your Executive Planning Committee for the Juniata Junction Convention in Altoona on October 5 - 8, 2000. They gathered at the home of Bob Martin, Executive Chairman, in York, PA to go over last minute details to make this tri-regional convention among the best ever held in the MER. The planned activities, tours, clinics, contests, and other events at the convention will be tremendous as they coincide with Altoona's "Railfest Weekend". If you haven't registered yet you're urged to do so without further delay. As of August 15th hotel rooms in the convention's reserved block were still available. Watch for the pictured officials below. They'll be there to help you enjoy your convntion. Pictured, left to right, are: Tim Palmer - Storekeeper; Eric Dervinis - MER's BoD Representative; Art Thomas - Layouts; Bob Martin - Chairman and Host; Don Yingling - Raffles; P. J. Mattson - MER Registrar/Treasurer; and Charlie Potter - Manager.



# JUNIATA JUNCTION CONVENTION

Print names exactly as you wish them on your name badges

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

Spouse Name \_\_\_\_\_

Child Under 18 Names & Ages	Age
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

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

City: \_\_\_\_\_

State & Zip \_\_\_\_\_ REGION \_\_\_\_\_ NMRA #: \_\_\_\_\_ REGION # \_\_\_\_\_

**FARE CALCULATION**

Activity Number	Activity Name	Number of Tickets	x	Cost Per Ticket	=	Total
_____	_____	_____	x	\$ _____	=	\$ _____
_____	_____	_____	x	\$ _____	=	\$ _____
_____	_____	_____	x	\$ _____	=	\$ _____
_____	_____	_____	x	\$ _____	=	\$ _____

Primary Registrant	\$35	=	\$ _____
Spouse .....	\$10	=	\$ _____
Children..(under 12 FREE) # _____ x	\$10	=	\$ _____
Non NMRA Fee .....	\$15	=	\$ _____
<b>Total (add all activity and registration fees)</b>			\$ _____

Payment in US Funds only. Sorry NO Credit Cards. Make Check Payable to "JUNIATA JUNCTION 2000"

P. J. Mattson - Registrar Information Telephone: (856)467-3385

Send completed registration form and payment to:

JUNIATA JUNCTION  
P.O. BOX 447  
SWEDESBORO, N.J. 08085

All Activities are a la carte including the banquet.  
Parking is FREE at the Hotel.

Payment must accompany registration form. Returned checks will not be put through twice - you will be required to pay your entire fee by money order or Cashier's Check through the mail or in cash at the convention. You will be responsible for all bank fees charged. DO NOT enclose hotel room reservation requests with your registration. If you pre-register and later need to cancel, a full refund will be given only if the request is received by the Registrar in writing by Oct. 1, 2000. Allow 4 to 6 weeks for processing of your refund. DO NOT mail a registration after Sept. 15, 2000; register at the door. DO NOT staple your check to your registration form. Call (856)-467-3385 for a recording of current changes and updates. All activities are subject to change, substitution, addition or cancellation.

**EXTRA FARE CONVENTION TOURS**

**601 - RAILFEST with Horseshoe Curve Rail Excursion - \$25.00** Saturday 10-7-2000 3:00 PM

**602 - RAILFEST with Horseshoe Curve Rail Excursion - \$25.00** Sunday 10-8-2000 9:15 AM

**603 - RAILFEST without Horseshoe Curve Rail Excursion - \$15.00**

**JOHNSTOWN TOUR**

Friday 10-7-2000 8:00 AM      604 - Adults \$21.00      605 - Children (6-16) \$17.00

<b>BANQUET</b>	Saturday Night	
	151 - Roast Top Round of Beef	\$20.00
	152 - Grilled Chicken Breast Dijon	\$20.00

# Do It Now

by Ron Baile

Do you have a closet full of kits that you are going to build someday? Are you going to build that dream railroad some day when you (pick one) A. get the time, B. get the money, C. get the inspiration, D. get the space, E. all of the above.

My brother-in-law was one of those people. He was going to build that dream railroad someday. He had boxes of stuff. He was going to fix up the basement. He was going to rewire the place. He accumulated kits for years. He hardly ever built any. One day he came home from work, moved a piece of furniture, sat on the couch and dropped dead. He was only 50 years old.

I inherited the chore of disposing of his model railroad equipment. It wasn't easy. It took me two days to catalog the stuff. Some of it was brand new in the original boxes. Some of it was junk; some of it apparently had sentimental value to only him. As we examined each item in the forty or so boxes my sister-in-law remarked how he "...really wanted..." each item, "...had to have it...", even though they couldn't always afford it. Unfortunately, on the used equipment market there is no value for sentimentality.

I now had the task of disposing of his things for the best price possible. Incidentally, he had to have those trains but he didn't see the need for a life insurance policy. Many of the model railroad items were real junk too. Instead of saving a bit to buy a good model he would buy the old AHM bargain basket jobs, three for the price of one. Unfortunately, not even one of them was worth the price of all three. Not a lot of resale value there. He favored the Union Pacific RR. I discovered that he was apparently the only UP modeler in South Jersey. There were not a lot of resale possibilities there either.

I hauled this stuff around to various division meets for over a year. I made a few hundred dollars here and there. Some people can be hard bargainers when you're trying to sell used junk. I actually gave some stuff away just to get rid of it. One day I got lucky and went to a train show. As I was unpacking all these boxes one of the dealers offered me \$400 for the whole lot. I didn't hesitate. After all, I'm not in the used train business. He asked if I had any more. Yes, I still had one closet I hadn't even touched yet. I brought it to him the next week. I'll never forget his words as he examined the contents of many boxes "I keep hoping I'll find the good stuff". Sorry, what you see is what you get. He offered me some money and I took it. I had to get rid of that stuff. I was tired of hauling it around.

You are probably wondering, "What's the point of this story?", if any. I propose that we all take inventory of that closet and then decide what we really need and what we can get rid of. Then get rid of it. You'll never build half of that stuff. Besides, there are new products coming out every week that are probably much better than what you have there. Furthermore, we ought to make an inventory of what we have along with the purchase price and the replacement value. If you don't want your spouse to know what that stuff is worth let a friend hold the list until your demise. Of course, I think the best approach is to get off your duff and start to build that railroad now so you can actually use that stuff. Quit procrastinating.

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## Publisher's note:

You'll notice that the photos continue to be grainy. I am not sure what the reason for this is—there are a number of pieces of software involved in getting a color photo printed for publication.

1. The scanner and its software.
2. An image manipulation software
3. The page-layout software.
4. The printer driver (converts page layout to Postscript for the printer).
5. The printer.

I have not figured out what I should do differently to get better performance; I am by no means a photo expert. If anyone has any ideas, I am interested in hearing them. I have tried a few suggestions this time.

— clint hyde, [chyde@bbn.com](mailto:chyde@bbn.com)

# Modeling Tips

by Ron Baile

## Men Working

Here's a fairly easy way to make a mini-scene. Simply cut a shallow ditch into the Homasote® or foam layer of your railroad, preferably where a road will be. Cordon off the area using some cones or wooden barricades or, if you are modeling modern times, use some Jersey barriers. Put a pipe in the bottom of the ditch. If you don't have enough depth in your ditch cut the pipe in half horizontally. This can be a piece of dowel, sprue or small PVC pipe. An old ballpoint pen often is suitable. Just cut off the tapered end. Put a few men in the hole and a cop directing traffic around the hole. Place a backhoe or crane nearby and park a truck or two at the scene. The lettering on the trucks could tip off the viewer as to what type of pipe it is; i.e., gas, water, sewer. Of course, you can letter them for your favorite construction company too. Don't forget some piled up dirt in the road or in a nearby dump truck. An actual visit to a construction site will provide you with many additional details.

## People

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 realistic looking people but they go for top dollar. Some are available that you will have to paint yourself. At about \$12 per hundred that's a good deal.

Pose two or three people in a mini-scene. You could have an auto accident caused by a 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 going down into a manhole. How about putting the legs that you cut off the guy in the manhole sticking out as if he is working under an 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.

## Loading Ramps

Do you have any loading ramps on your railroad? Many team tracks had one provided by the railroad so receivers of farm machinery, automobiles, and large bulky items could easily unload their boxcars. During the early days of railroading nearly everything was delivered in boxcars. The doors would be at about the same level as a large delivery truck but were nowhere near the same height as the bed of a pickup.

There was a major trucking company in the town where I grew up and they had the contract to deliver things for the telephone company. Practically every time I walked by the team track there was a carload of cable on large reels. These were at least six feet in diameter. There were also quite a few microwave horn antennas of the type they used on the tall towers you used to see every twenty to forty miles. These would make a neat load all crated up.

You can easily make a loading dock out of wood shapes. I use coffee stir sticks because I have a lot of them. A box of 1000 costs about \$3.00 at a restaurant supply. A little distressing with a knife blade or a small saw blade before staining creates a nice look. Don't forget to use a pointed object to emboss some nail holes. I use a frog probe that cost a nickel at Edmond Scientific. I use 12-inch or so square or round pilings and frame them with 2x10s. Use whatever you have in your wood box that looks right. Staining the wood first then applying a little white glue is all that's needed to hold it together. There is often a steel plate that is used to bridge the gap between car and dock. You could use a piece of a disposable aluminum pan, cardstock, or styrene for that. I use the lead seals that are found on imported wine bottles. Cut a piece about three feet square. Use a sharply knurled punch or other tool handle to emboss a diamond-like pattern in the lead. Paint the plate a rusty color and "weather" the ramp a little with some ink in alcohol. Now your people are ready to unload another boxcar.

## Structures

A uniform look to your structures helps your railroad look like everything belongs. Paint all railroad-owned buildings according to a standard color scheme. Many railroads used buff with a dark brown trim. This may have changed over the years so do some research along the lines of your favorite road. Other schemes were white with red trim, white with blue trim and gray with green trim. Of course, if you have another railroad represented such as at a crossing or interchange, the other road's buildings very likely would be painted in a different color scheme. Study your favorite prototype either in person or through books. Look for similarities that, when you look at your road's buildings, let's

you see they belong. Even cinder block and brick buildings used the same paint scheme on doors, windows and other trim.

### Signs

Signs also help to provide continuity of thought that your railroad follows uniform standards. Mileposts, whistle posts, and crossing signs should have a similarity to them. Use all the same type of block signals accompanied by the same

type of relay case and battery cellar. Study your favorite prototype either in person or through books. Look for similarities that, when you look at your road's buildings, lets you see they belong.

I make my signs on my computer. Just select a typeface and stick with it so all signs have that family look. Paul Locher runs Signs Galore. He will customize your station signs for you at a very reasonable price following the standards of your favorite railroad. Look for his ads in the model press.



**COMPILED BY  
EDWIN C. KUSER, ED D.**



*A feature profiling model railroad manufacturers located in the Mid-Eastern Region. To be included in a future issue, contact:*

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ECKRY184@aol.com

Have you missed the "Made in the MER" articles in the last two issues of *The Local*? Ever since Roger Cason wrote the first of the sixteen profiles of Mid-Eastern Region producers of model railroading products, "Made in the MER" has been one of the first things I turned to when my *Local* arrived at my mailbox. Maybe the reason I've been so keenly interested in it is because my hometown is Boyertown, Pennsylvania—home of the former Penn Line products. That interest was the major reason why, when Stan Knotts was seeking a new writer for the column, I contacted him and offered to help out. So, since I'll now be doing this reporting for you, let me introduce myself. Very few of you know me. While I've been a member of MER for a number of years, short of attending a South Jersey conference, reading *The Local* has been my only form of involvement. My interest in the hobby grew from the envy of a friend's Christmas layout. Despite living in the hometown of Penn Line, because my uncle could "get it for me wholesale," my first train set was American Flyer. When I left home for college my permanent but un-scenicked basement layout was dismantled and put into storage, along with the equipment and all active participation in modeling. Marriage plus employment as a business education teacher and then as a principal and administrator followed. Around 1980, when my son was about 10, he convinced his mother to buy him an HO train set. That brought me back into the hobby and began my interest in HO scale. Unfortunately my new enthusiasm, especially for building models and a scenicked layout, evidently diminished my son's enthusiasm. Things

simply moved too fast for him and he eventually lost interest. Doing research for modeling became my means of stress relief and, believe it or not, seventeen plus years as a high school principal does generate some stress. The interest in modeling railroads led quickly to an interest in railroad history. My interest in the "real thing", particularly the Reading, is as strong as my interest in uniqueness of the layout in that it blends from one time span to another as you move along the mainline. A thirty-six year career in public education, which included earning a doctorate in educational administration, drew to a close as the twentieth century faded into history. My interest in railroads continues—along with my interest in dabbling in photography and playing golf. Now I'll have modeling trains.

My current (third) HO layout is a fictitious eastern Pennsylvania bridge route, the Eagle Crest and Keystone. Motive power is primarily a mix of EC&K and Reading, with rolling stock limited to companies which operated in the Keystone state and to individual modelers' and model railroad clubs' fictitious railroads. Now I'll have the opportunity to share my interests with the entire MER Membership through the continuation of this "Made in the MER" series.

Since I'm at the northern end of the MER, I'd like to hear from any member in the southern part of the Region who would be interested in working with me as a southern reporter, gathering information for the series from railroad hobby manufacturers in the Virginia-North Carolina area.

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1. On page 10 change the title from Juniata Junction Model Contests to Juniata Junction Contests.
2. On page 10 under Blue Lantern Award add: It is sponsored by the Narrow Gauge Car Shop.
3. On page 11 under Contest Miscellany delete the word "photos".
4. Under the Editor's Column on page 12, right side, second paragraph, line 6, change "... railroad laymen like you and me ... etc." to "... railroad laymen like you and I ... etc."

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## 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 Art Thomas, 228 Lovely Rd, Alum Bank, PA 15521 E-Mail to [athomas@bedford.net](mailto:athomas@bedford.net)

**Northern Virginia Model Railroaders, Inc. Open House.** September 16 and October 14, 2000. Washington & Old Dominion Railroad Station, 231 Dominion Road (at Ayr Hill Road), Vienna, VA 22180. 1:00 pm to 5:00 pm each day. Club meets on Tuesday evenings. For more information call (703) 938-5157 or web site: <http://www.geocities.com/Heartland/Plains/6120>

**Winslow Junction Scale Train and Railroadiana Meet. Winslow, New Jersey.** September 10, 2000 at the Winslow Fire Hall, Hall and Hay streets, 10 AM until 3 PM. Adults \$3.00, children under 12 free with an adult. Contact Bill Powell, 306 Broad St., Williamstown, New Jersey 08094. 609-728-1327 until 9 PM.

**Garden State Central Model Railroad Club, Inc. 38th Annual Model Railroad Show.** Asbury Park, New Jersey. October 20, 21, 22 and 27, 28, 29, 2000. Fridays 7 to 9 PM, Saturdays & Sundays Noon till 5 PM. Donations – adults \$3, children and seniors \$2. Operating HO gauge layout depicts trains running from Scranton, Pennsylvania to Jersey City, New Jersey. Information: GSC, P.O. Box 121, Oakhurst, NJ 07753, (732) 775-0881 (machine).

**Southern Junction Model Train Show,** September 9-10, 2000, Raleigh, NC Sponsored by Carolina Piedmont Division 13 Inc., MER, NMRA and North Raleigh Model Railroad Club, NTRAK. Eastern North Carolina's largest display of model train layouts. Features at least 6 model railroad layouts, including a large NTRAK layout. Approximately 100 dealer tables are available. NTRAK modules are most welcome in the NTRAK layout. To participate with a NTRAK module, contact Don Cariss at (919) 781-3359. Location: NC State Fairgrounds, Dorton Arena, 1025 Blue Ridge Road, Raleigh, NC Times: Saturday: 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Sunday: 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Admission: \$4 for adults, children under 12 free with paid adult Contact: For more information, contact Tom Staley, c/o Carolina Piedmont Division 13, P.O. Box 5183, Cary, NC 27512. Telephone: (919) 388-7246, e-mail: [tomstrains@mindspring.com](mailto:tomstrains@mindspring.com) or visit our web site at <http://www.trainweb.org/nrmrc/southern.html>

### **Southbound Model Railroaders Train Feast 2000 Show**

Dixie Classic Fairgrounds, November 18 - 10 AM until 4 PM. Adults \$5.00. Under 12 - free with adult Contact Blair Murray - Show Chairman, Box 25332, Winston-Salem, NC 27114, Phone: 1-336-760-6924

The **Tidewater Division of the NMRA** has scheduled its **Annual Train Show and Sale** for Saturday and Sunday, October 28 - 29, 2000. Location is the Virginia Beach Pavilion at 1000 Nineteenth Street, Virginia Beach, VA. Time is 10 A.M. to 4 P.M. both days. Admission: \$4.00. Contact: Steve Prescott, 1748 Nanneys Creek Road, Virginia Beach, VA 23457. Phone: 1-757-426-2811.

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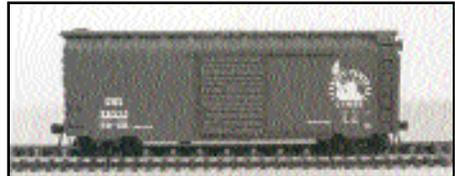
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**INSIDE THIS ISSUE**

Thoughts on Model Contests .....1  
 President's Column .....2  
 Editor's Column .....3  
 New AP Staff .....3  
 Juniata Junction .....6  
 Modeling Tips .....9  
 Made in the MER.....10  
 CALLBOARD .....11

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