

## Basic Electricity Primer - Part 1

by Jim Atkinson

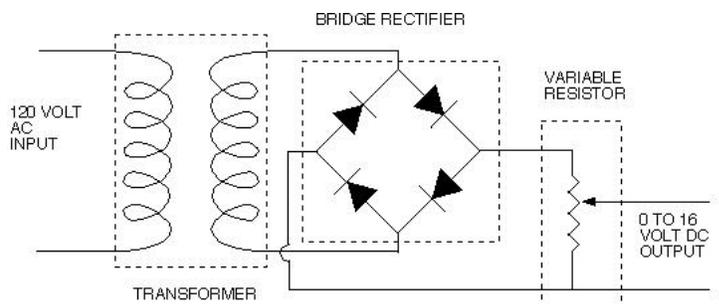
*[This begins a series of articles by Jim Atkinson that will appear as a serial in the next several issues of the LOCAL. Unfortunately, the length of these comprehensive articles prohibits their inclusion in a single issue. Ensuing articles will include the conclusion of this article plus articles on LEDs - Little Marvels (Parts 1 and 2), Simple Signaling with LEDs, Semaphore Signals (Parts 1 and 2), and The Right Tool - Ed.]*

Many modelers shy away from the electrical side of model railroading. This is probably due to a lack of understanding of the subject reinforced by a shock or two from an appliance in the past. Electricity is an invisible force that is very much a part of our lives. We have to respect it, but with understanding there is no need to fear it.

Electricity comes in two forms. The more common Alternating Current (AC) is transmitted to our homes and businesses. It comes to us at 120 Volts (V) of force and up to 200 Amperes (Amps) of current. Think of electricity as water flowing in a pipe. Volts are equal to pressure pushing the water through the pipe and amps are equal to the amount of water flowing (current) through the pipe. Large wire can carry more amps than a smaller one just as a large pipe can carry more water than a smaller one will.

Our model trains operate on 12 volts of direct current (VDC), the alter ego form of electricity. Our 'power supplies' change the incoming 120 VAC to the needed 12 volts DC. They use three basic internal items to accomplish this. A transformer changes the 120 VAC to 18 VAC. Properly manufactured, the transformer

eliminates the possibility of a 120-volt shock in the following low voltage circuits. Transformers can change any AC voltage to another AC voltage depending upon their design. Transformers purchased at Radio Shack, for example, rate their output voltage from a standard 120 VAC input. A 16-volt transformer produces a 16 VAC output from a 120 VAC input. The second item in the power supply is a bridge rectifier that changes the AC to DC. Rectifiers restrict electrical flow to one direction like a clapper valve controls the flow direction in a water pipe. The third and final item in the power supply is a variable resistor (speed control) that allows you to vary the DC power output of the power supply from zero to usually about 16 VDC. Electronic



Typical cheapo power supply (not electronic) power units do the same thing as the cheap units but in a more sophisticated manner.

Other power needs occur on our layouts as well. For example, Tortoise switch machines need 9 VDC. Kadee electric uncouplers need 16 VDC. Lighting in buildings can require from 1.5 volts to 16 volts or even more depending upon the bulbs you use. Bulbs work

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## 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.

## Letters to the Editor

*In some cases the format of the following letters may have been modified to better fit the allocated space. Under no circumstance have their underlying thoughts been altered.*

### Credibility.

The article "Gauging Credibility" in the Jan - Feb 2001 LOCAL didn't include the author's name and it was listed in the Table of Contents with the wrong title and on the wrong page. Also, on P. 2 in the boxed name and address lists, some phone numbers show the area codes in parentheses whereas others are hyphenated. Also, most zip codes show the 9-digit version while others show only the first five without the four-digit appendage.

*Raymond W. Fisher*

*Apologies are in order for omitting Mr. Fisher's name from his article and for listing the wrong title and page of his article in the Table of Contents. Those were oversights on my part. As for the other discrepancies concerning phone numbers and zip codes, our thanks for bringing these to our attention. We will try to be more consistent in the future. Editor.*

### Nostalgia.

I was pleased to see the article by John Dorsam in the Jan-Feb 2001 LOCAL. John and I go way back. I too was in GATSME in the late '50s and joined the NMRA and MER on that same convention trip to Elizabeth, NJ which John described. As MER President, John got me to take on the LOCAL for a few years, which led subsequently to my becoming MER Secretary, VP, President/Trustee, and finally NMRA Eastern Vice President. Losing a bid for Executive VP, I concentrated on the Achievement Program Certificates and layout building.

*Dave Renard*

*continued on page 5*

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## President's Column

*Norm Garner*

The MER Board of Directors met on January 13 for our regular business meeting. First item on the agenda was replacement of Don Yingling who resigned his position. Noll Horan (President of Northern Virginia NTRAK) was recommended as a replacement to fill the position until elections are held in October. The BoD approved the recommendation. Noll was contacted and has agreed to finish Don's term. The BoD also approved funds to purchase a laptop computer and printer. We deemed the purchase necessary to enhance our ability to give the MER members more up-to-date reports on the MER. The MER by-laws are also to be reviewed. Some of them are outdated and there have been changes in the NMRA and MER that need to be added to our current by-laws. Changes recommended by the BoD will be published in the Local.

On February 4th, Jim Kellow (Vice President) and I attended a meeting of the Northern Virginia NTRAKers. Jim took the opportunity to talk to those members who had attended the MER Rails to Sails Convention in Portsmouth, VA. Jim asked why the group hadn't participated in the contest held at that convention. They said they simply didn't know they could participate as a group even though individually they are NMRA members. They also feel that a void exists in the MER with the N-scalers. As I said in my previous columns, that's going to change during this administration. We must do a better job in welcoming all scales of the hobby into the MER. Since the Rails to Sails Convention, the NTRAKers have received several merit awards at subsequent MER conventions.

I was pleased be fulfilling my commitment to reach out to the other groups as an MER official attending their meeting. Jim and I listened attentively to their concerns and recommendations. These are some of the issues they brought to our attention:

- MER conventions should be open more to the public.
- Concentrate the membership program on modular groups.
- Integrate more modular clubs into division activities. Explain the benefits of the club members joining the division and the division members joining the club.
- Do a better job of publicizing the benefits of the NMRA.
- Have the contest judges provide more feedback to contestants including how they reached the final score and how the entry could be improved.

These are legitimate issues. Your BoD must determine how to improve the MER and a step in that direction was taken with the NTRAKers. As a result of this February 4th visit, I am happy to report that we learned a great deal from N-trackers and were also able to recruit some new members for the region. As usual, I encourage each of you to speak up if you have any suggestions for the BoD to consider for improving the MER. You can call, e-mail, write or speak directly to any of the BoD members. We look forward to hearing from you. Until next time.

I can be contacted on line at [Ngrail@aol.com](mailto:Ngrail@aol.com), by phone at 757-484-0772 or by mail at 3408 Wilshire Rd., Portsmouth, VA 23703.

An extra thought: if you have any videotape of recent MER conventions, I am interested in having a copy. We'd like to make a composite tape of several different ones, to pass around to our Divisions to show as "advertising" to attract additional members to attend the conventions.

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### Errata for Vol. 56, No. 1

P.6—Right column, 2nd paragraph, 11th line. Change "1.5v DC meter' to "15v DC meter'. Add: Radio Shack Part No. 22-410.

P. 6—second "Ed:.", 6th line. Change "it" to "if".

P. 7—Ron Baile's article, 3rd line. Change "car shops" to "Juniata Locomotive Shops"

P. 7—Ron Baile's article. Last line—omit the word "too".

P. 13—"Gauging" Credibility. Add: by Ray Fisher.

P. 16—Inside this Issue. Change "Gauge credibility?..12" to "Gauging Credibility..13"

## Editor's Column

*Art Thomas (with Clint Hyde)*

In this issue we're going to list a few guidelines for preparation and submission of articles and other material for publication. Some are applicable to everybody whereas others may not be. Please bear in mind that they are a list of preferences. They are not compulsory—only preferred. We realize that the range of writing tools and capabilities among contributors is very broad. We simply ask that if any of the following capabilities exist, that contributors would please conform to the guidelines insofar as possible. Questions concerning text, style, composition, and grammar should be directed to the Editor. Inquiries concerning photos, illustrations, drawings, diagrams and other graphics should be directed to the Publisher. The preferences are:

### Composition:

- Use plain white unlined bond 8 1/2" by 11" paper. No colored or toned papers.
- Nothing on lined paper except when needed for certain graphics.
- Single spaced, full length text left to right with standard margins and no columns except for tabulations.
- Submissions on pages separate from accompanying messages. (Attachments).
- Components of the article to be the title, the name of the originator, the text, and with all graphics properly positioned and identified (captions, etc.).
- Times-Roman 14 point font for titles and 12 point font for all other text. Pica rather than elite if typed on a conventional typewriter.
- Cleanest type possible. (Optical character recognition programs don't work well in interpreting scanned text that is slurred or smudged, if we had to scan a printed page.)
- Limited use of capital letters, underlines, italics, bold presentations, and so on.
- Contractions and abbreviations clarified when first used in the article (except for such well known ones such as NMRA, MER, and accepted standard dictionary abbreviations).

### Submission:

- Use MS/Word or similar word processor with embedded graphics\* combined only for determining page space requirements.
- Each graphic separated as an individual (unshared) file—TIFF and GIF preferred (24-bit color) with JPEG as the third choice (please contact Clint before sending this). Other formats are acceptable BUT we are unable to extract \*graphics from Microsoft Word documents.
- Plain text in any word processor format. MS/Word is preferred.
- Printed graphics that can be scanned -- no disks unless files are huge.
- E-mail transfer as opposed to regular mail for those on the Internet.
- Deadline for submission of material to the Editor is set as the first day of the month preceding the date of the issue to be published. For example, if the issue is for Jan-Feb, material must be received by the Editor by December 1.

Again, with the exception of the submission deadlines, these are ground rules only for those who have the capabilities for complying with them. In no way should they be interpreted as restrictive nor are they intended to discourage any writers from submitting articles and other material for publication. Your Editor and Publisher are both confronted with a mountain of work to publish each issue of the LOCAL. Anything you can do to help facilitate this process will be appreciated.

**Opinion.**

Count me among those wishing to see more write-ups/photos of layouts. I don't have a layout myself but perhaps I could photograph/interview other MER members down the line. I'd like to suggest that those who would like to have their layouts immortalized in the LOCAL meet a requirement of providing at least one good modeling tip of a technique they used in the construction of their pike or any of the scenery, rolling stock, or motive power. What may seem like second nature to them might be a revelation to others.

*Peter Mosiondz, Jr. - MER L-179*

**More About GATSME.**

The NMRA Info-Pack article in the Jan-Feb LOCAL contained a typographical error that might cause some confusion. The meter is 15.0 VDC, not 1.5 VDC. The Radio Shack Part No. it is 22-410.

Concerning rotary switch machines, some may wonder what they are. They are a cylindrical motor-like device about two inches in diameter and about two inches long. They are WWII aviation devices that rotate about 60 degrees and are fitted with one or more multi-contact wafers (another reason why model railroad clubs loved them). When fitted with a 1/8th inch brass shaft they make a really super switch machine. The drawback is fitting the shaft. That took a lot of "doing" and some special equipment which led to their abandonment by most users. Not GATSME though. I introduced them to GATSME in 1956. We now have over 500 in service on our layout. When properly installed and wired they last just about forever. We've had very, very few problems with them. One other drawback is that they require really large power packs. They draw current while in the operated position. If you know of anyone who still uses rotary switches I'd like to hear from you.

Incidentally, GATSME will celebrate its Golden (50th) Anniversary next year -- 2002!!! It started in Honorary Member Jim Greener's basement in 1952.

*John A. Dorsam, 1425 Brittany Point, Lansdale, PA19446*

**HOW DO I HOST A CONVENTION?**

This is a re-print of a LOCAL article published several months ago. Why? Because we have only two conventions "in the bag" right now! We have nothing scheduled after October 2001. So come on folks, take the plunge—host a convention. It's a lot of work, but it's a blast!

OK, you ask, what's first? Well, actually it's pretty simple. First, you need to make a phone call or send an email to your MER Executive Convention Committee (ECC) Chairman, Bob Martin, who will be glad to explain what's involved in hosting a Regional convention. A successful convention requires about 18-24 months of planning effort and a core committee of four to six dedicated people. Of course when you get closer to the convention date, you'll need to expand your core committee a bit. Of course, a hotel is required. It 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 will sign the hotel contract on behalf of the MER so you don't have to worry about financial liability. Any other contracts such as for buses will be 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 which will be given to you. You will also be given a convention handbook. It contains detailed instructions on what is expected of your committee and what you need to do to have a successful convention. Bob Martin 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 northern and southern MER whenever possible. Right now we're looking for locations for the Spring 2002 convention and beyond. If you're interested, contact Bob Martin at 717-848-3640 or at [cprrboss@aol.com](mailto:cprrboss@aol.com).

Bob Martin - Convention Chairman

# How's the Weather?

by Ron Baile

While driving along one fine autumn day, enjoying the brilliant yellows and reds of a dwindling October, my mind wandered to model railroading. First I thought this was a fine time period in which to model a railroad. Then, shortly after, I was reading a book about the venerable old Maryland & Pennsylvania R.R. The "Ma & Pa" was constantly battling floods and the damage they cause. Then I thought, "Why not model a flood?"

It doesn't have to be a major catastrophe like Johnstown, PA experienced in 1889. A small stream breaching its banks

would "fill" the bill. Of course it would be a good place to pose that model of the Jordan spreader you just had to have and now don't know where to use it. Try modeling a shoofly track around the flood damage. You could model a higher roadbed being built because a stream is taking over the lower roadbed. A washed out trestle scene might be nice too. Then you don't have to build the trestle. Just build a few bents and pose a crane picking up the pieces.

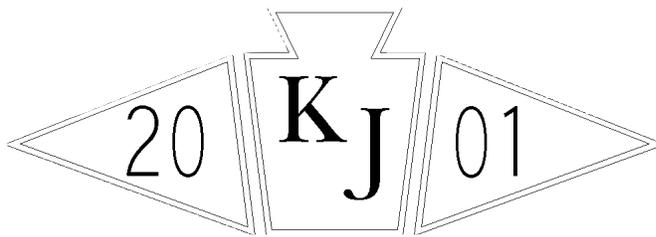
Let's face it. Most modelers depict perfect weather conditions. Some model snow scenes. I would like to see someone try to model stormy weather. There's the challenge. Any takers? If anybody has or will, I'd like to see it written up on the pages of the LOCAL. [Ed.: Me too.]

## Keystone Junction '01

Mid Eastern Region, NMRA

Frazer, PA

March 29 - April 1, 2001



Visit our web site at: <http://www.kj2001.com>

## Keystone Junction 2001 Contests

By Ray Bilodeau - General Contest Chairman

The contests at the MER Spring Convention in Frazer, Pennsylvania will have a judged Model Contest and a separate popular vote Photo and Arts and Crafts contest. All contests are open to current NMRA and MER members.

### Model Contest:

Categories include motive power Steam and Diesel; Freight cars; Passenger cars; Non-Revenue cars; Structures on-line; Structures off-line; Dioramas; and Modules. The model contest will be judged using the most recent standards and criteria set up by the NMRA. The highest score in any category will receive a first place plaque from the MER. Certificates and ribbons will also be awarded to the modelers who score sufficient points for second and third places in every category of the Model Contest. Those who score 87.5 points or above will receive an AP Merit Award. If anyone wishes to have models judged only for the Achievement Program, this can be easily arranged. Please speak to the General Contest Chairman, me, Ray Bilodeau.

### Photo Contest:

The Photo Contest will be a popular vote contest. There will be two categories: Prototype and Model. You may submit up to five entries and the prints should be matted and not framed. Each photograph must be at least 5" x 7" and no larger than 8" x 12" and mounted on rigid board in any color in sizes 8" x 10" to 11" x 14".

### Arts and Crafts Contest:

The Arts and Crafts Contest will also be decided by popular

vote. The two categories will include Rail and Non-Rail related subjects.

### Special Awards:

The **Clyde Gerald Award**: an MER sponsored contest for kit-bashed models. The award will be presented to the best entry in this category.

The **President's Award**: an award for the best model of a bridge or trestle.

The **Blue Lantern Award**: for a judged contest model containing not more than 40% commercial parts, which best represents a branch line, short line, or private line equipment and/or facilities. The award is sponsored by the Narrow Gauge Car Shop.

The **Philadelphia Division New Modeler Award**: this award is given to the highest score achieved by a first-time entrant in a judged model contest at an MER convention. The Division will award a cash prize along with a plaque for this contest.

**Best In Show Award**: this award is given to the entry with the highest point score in the model contest.

### Hours:

The contest room will be open during the following hours: Thursday 7 PM to 10 PM; Friday 9AM to 9 PM; and Saturday 8AM to 9 AM. Judging begins at 9:30 AM on Saturday morning.

While judging is taking place - 9:30 AM to 12 PM - please come in and quietly cast your ballot for the Photo and Arts and Crafts Popular Vote Contests. Entries must be picked up after the awards ceremony.

# MER Convention Photo Contests

*by Jim Atkinson*

As Photo Contest Chairman, I want to thank each of you from the MER, NER, and MCR who submitted entries in the contest at the Juniata Junction (JJ) Convention. There was a record number of ninety-nine photos and slides entered. Slides were included to accommodate the MCR and NER. There were many excellent entries and judging them was difficult. Single region contests won't be as large as JJ was but you are strongly encouraged to enter your photos in future contests regardless.

I have been asked, "What is it that makes a winning photograph?" Quality of the print is important. Depth of field is noticed. Fuzzy backgrounds and worse yet, fuzzy foregrounds, detract from quality. Overcome this by using small aperture settings, which is the feature on film-type cameras that governs the depth of field (i.e., how much of the photo will be in focus). You should attempt to have an evenly illuminated photo. Camera mounted strobes alone won't do the job because they create harsh shadows. Overhead fill lights from several angles should yield a more natural lighting. Experiment until you get it right.

Composition is equally important. A winning photo draws the viewer to a strong central theme. In our case, for example, that could be a train passing or stopped at a terminal. Surrounding details are important. They must add to the central theme and be well executed, but at the same time not detract from the importance of the central theme. An example would be a locomotive idling in an engine terminal with one or two workers attending to it. This would be better than showing a large terminal with several engines and many workers. The second scene would be too busy and would have several 'themes' versus one strong one. Personally, I feel an 8x10 photo is the best size for viewing, but our contests do allow smaller and larger sizes.

This brings us to some questions for you to ponder. Photography, like everything else, is chang-

ing dramatically. Conventional cameras and film processing techniques of the past are no longer the only way to get a finished photograph. There are computer programs now available that allow basic photos to be enhanced by almost anyone. Steam and smoke can be added and unwanted clutter can be eliminated. Obviously this should yield an 'ideal' photograph, giving a contestant an edge in any contest. Keep in mind, however, that standard techniques can also put smoke in a scene. Also, by careful editing, unwanted clutter can be eliminated from a scene with regular photography. This too will yield a great image for an accomplished photographer. Do we attempt to create a new category for computer enhanced photos? In most cases we'd have to rely on the contestant to tell us if his entry had been enhanced.

Then there's the digital camera. They have a much deeper depth of field, virtually eliminating the focus problem when doing close-up photographing of models. They also have an equally wide range of light capability, yielding more evenly lit scenes. My next camera will be a digital. Even though the finished digital photo is easy to spot compared to a 'standard' one, do we need to create a new category for digital photos?

I am genuinely interested in your answers to these questions and any comments or suggestions you may have about model railroading photo contests in general. Contact me at 120 Colebrook Road, Elizabethtown, Pa, 17022 or at [atkinson17022@juno.com](mailto:atkinson17022@juno.com). One more thing. As a point of interest, the new 2001 Walthers HO Catalog contains several photos by our own Paul Backenstose. Congratulations Paul.

## Special Notice

Please note the enclosed re-print of the Keystone Junction '01 Registration Form. It contains two items inadvertently omitted from the previously printed Registration Forms. The first is the addition of Item 201 - DCC Clinic. The second is the hosting hotel's registration information appearing at the bottom of the form. We apologize for these omissions and any inconvenience this may have caused convention registrants.

KJ '01 Convention Committee

**KEYSTONE JUNCTION 2001  
TENTATIVE CLINIC SCHEDULE (January/01)**

**Thursday Evening**

**Session 1 (6:30 pm)**

A	“Intro using CADRAIL 7.11”	Bob Clegg	Oxford (North)
B	“Steel Mills – New Stuff”	Mike Rabbitt	Astoria
C	“Railfanning the Delaware Avenue”	Tim Palmer	Oxford (South)

**Session 2 (8:00 pm)**

A	“B&O’s Central States Dispatch”	Steve Stewart	Oxford (North)
B	“Customizing Plastic kits”	Ken Montero	Astoria
C	“TT/TO on the Susquehanna”	Steve Salotti	Oxford (South)

**Friday Morning**

**Session 3 (8:30 am)**

A	“DCC Intro”	Steve Salotti	Astoria
B	“Last 5 years of the Reading in Allentown”	Jim Hertzog	Oxford (North)
C	“Travel w/ the NMRA”	Bob Charles	Oxford (South)
D	OPEN		Westminster

**Session 4**

A	“The Tunnel at Town Talk – part III, Done”	Bill Schaumberg	Astoria
B	“Creating your own prototype; combining lines in a new way”		George Way Oxford (North)
C	“Dallee sound decoders in GG1’s”	J.B. Brown	Oxford (South)
D	OPEN		Westminster

**Friday Afternoon**

**Session 5 (1:00 pm)**

A	“Scenery—the hard part is getting started”	Roger Cason	Astoria
B	“The PRR here and there in the 60’s”	E. Win Gross	Oxford (North)
C	“Operations w/ flimsies”	Andy Sperandeo	Oxford (South)
D	OPEN		Westminster

**Session 6 (2:30 pm)**

A	“Along the Maine Line”	Paul Backenstose	Astoria
B	“Railroad Station Architecture”	Garrett Nicholson	Oxford (North)
C	“Modeling with Modules”	Bob Minnis	Oxford (South)
D	OPEN		Westminster

**Session 7 (4:00 pm)**

A	“AP Achievement”	Flichmann/Mende	Oxford (North)
B	“Steel Mills”	John Glaab	Astoria
C	“Foam Core/Veneer”	Ken Spranza	Oxford (South)
D	OPEN		Westminster

**Friday Evening**

**Session 8 (6:30 pm)**

A	“Passenger operation on the New Jersey Northern”	Jim Dalberg	Astoria
B	“PRR Steel open hopper cars – secondary classes, oddballs, and footnotes”	John Teichmoeller	Oxford (North)
C	“Signalling”	Bill Ataras	Oxford (South)
D	OPEN		Westminster

*continued on page 9*

**Session 9 (8:00 pm)**

A	“Shamokin division update”	Jim Hertzog	Astoria
B	“Trustee Talk 2001”	Eric Dervinis	Oxford (North)
C	“NMRA”	Connie Rudder	Oxford (South)
D	OPEN		Westminster

**Saturday Morning****Session 10 (8:30 am)**

A	“Weathering rolling stock w/pastel chalk dust”	John Hammond	Astoria
B	“Grade Crossings”	Bill Ataras	Regency (South)
C	OPEN		Westminster

**Session 11 (10:00 am)**

A	“HO Scale knuckle couplers”	Bill Mosteller	Astoria
B	“Building turnouts”	Bill Ataras	Regency (South)
C	OPEN		Westminster

**Saturday Afternoon****Session 12 (1:00 pm)**

A	“Signaling your model railroad”	Bill Strassner	Astoria
B	“Pin-hole photography”	Norm Garner	Regency (South)
C	OPEN		Westminster

**Session 13 (2:30 pm)**

A	“Foam Core/Veneer”	Ken Sparanza	Regency (South)
B	“Neville Island-Steel on a Tabletop”	John Teichmoeller	Westminster

**Sunday Morning****Session 14 (9:00am)**

A	“Scratchbuilding in N-scale: relations in of shapes and common household items in creating structures”	Monroe Stewart	Westminster
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**Session 15 (10:30 am)**

A	OPEN		Westminster
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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)

**Mar. 21st, 1 - 4 P.M. Ocean County (South) Division Meet.** Silverton Fire Co., Tom's River, NJ. Contact: Michael McNamara - [mikemcnh@earthlink.net](mailto:mikemcnh@earthlink.net)

**Mar. 23rd, 7 - 9 P.M. Carolina Piedmont Division Meet.** 220 N. Salem Street, Apex, NC. Contact: Richard Matthews - [Kay1Mat1@aol.com](mailto:Kay1Mat1@aol.com) or phone 919-401-6210.

**Mar. 29th - Apr. 1st. Keystone Junction '01.** MER Convention.. Frazer, PA. Train ride, tour, etc. Contact: [keystonejunction@mindspring.com](mailto:keystonejunction@mindspring.com) or phone 856-467-3385.

**Apr. 21st, 10 A.M. NJ Division Trip on Cape May Seashore Lines.** CMSL in Cape May County. Contact: Michael McNamara - [mikemcnh@earthlink.net](mailto:mikemcnh@earthlink.net)

**May 12th, 1 - 4 P.M. Trenton Division Meet.** Christ Presbyterian Church, Klockner Road, Trenton, NJ. Clinics, layouts, contest. Contact: Michael McNamara - [mikemcnh@earthlink.net](mailto:mikemcnh@earthlink.net)

**Jun 2nd, 10 A.M. - 3 P.M. Southern New Jersey, Garden Layout Tour.** Throughout the area. Drive yourself - maps provided. Contact: Michael McNamara - [mikemcnh@earthlink.net](mailto:mikemcnh@earthlink.net)

**Keystone Junction 2001**  
**Mid Eastern Region, NMRA Spring Convention**  
**March 29, 30, 31 & April 1, 2001 Frazer, PA**

Names as you wish to have them appear on your badges:

Address Street: \_\_\_\_\_  
 City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ NMRA# \_\_\_\_\_ MER # \_\_\_\_\_  
 E-Mail: \_\_\_\_\_

	Amount	Total Cost
Full Registration _____	@ \$35.00	_____
Non-NMRA Member Fee _____	@ \$10.00	_____
Spouse _____	@ \$15.00	_____
Children (under 12) _____	@ \$ 5.00	_____
151 Taste-of Philly Buffet (Adult) _____	@ \$20.00	_____
152 Taste-of Philly Buffet (Child) _____	@ \$10.00	_____
153 Optional Box Lunch _____	@ \$ 5.00	_____
201 DCC Clinic _____	@ \$10.00	_____
301 Septa's Frazier Shops _____	@ \$15.00	_____
302 Amtrak 30th Street Station _____	@ \$10.00	_____
303 NH&I Fan Trip (Adult) _____	@ \$25.00	_____
304 NH&I Fan Trip (Child) _____	@ \$15.00	_____
401 Lukens Steel _____	@ \$25.00	_____
402 PECO's Eddystone Station _____	@ \$15.00	_____
501 Convention Car (Single) _____	@ \$15.00	_____
502 Convention Car (3 Pack) _____	@ \$40.00	_____
503 Additional Convention Pin _____	@ \$ 5.00	_____
504 Convention Shirt _____	@ \$10.00	_____ S M L XL XXL
601 Operations Call Board (Fri-PM) _____	@ \$18.00	_____
603 Operations Call Board (Sat-AM) _____	@ \$18.00	_____
604 Operations Call Board (Sat-PM) _____	@ \$18.00	_____
701 Longwood Gardens (Adult) _____	@ \$20.00	_____
702 Longwood Gardens (Child) _____	@ \$10.00	_____
703 QVC Studio _____	@ \$15.00	_____
704 Brandywine River Museum (Adult) _____	@ \$10.00	_____
705 Brandywine River Museum (Child) _____	@ \$ 7.50	_____
706 New Hope (Adult) _____	@ \$15.00	(No Train Ride)
707 New Hope (Child) _____	@ \$10.00	(No Train Ride)

**Total FEES Enclosed \$ \_\_\_\_\_**

Make Checks payable to: **Keystone Junction '01 • PO Box 447 • Swedesboro, NJ 08085**

For convention information call 856-467-3385 or e-mail [keystonejunction@mindspring.com](mailto:keystonejunction@mindspring.com)

P. J. Mattson Registrar      All Activities are a la carte including the Banquet.      Parking is FREE at the Hotel.

Payment must accompany registration form. Bounced 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 March 15, 2001. Allow 4 to 6 weeks for processing of your refund. DO NOT mail a registration after March 15, 2001; 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.

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# S-Scale Modeling

By Bill Fraley

While many of you don't know me, I've been a member of the MER for almost forty years. I've attended many conventions over the years. Yet, I'm sure I'm a stranger to most of you. I can also say that about my model railroading. You see, I model in a minority scale. It's called S-gauge and I model in 3/16th inch scale.

Let me explain. S-gauge is broken into four groups. (1) Tinplaters and Collectors (2) Hi-rail Modelers. (3) Scale Modelers (4) Sn3 Modelers. I'm sure many of you remember A. C. Gilbert's American Flyer train sets. A. C. Gilbert was the first toy train manufacturer to try and get the track right when the two-rail system began. While most of American Flyer trains during the 1950s were amateurish displays on Christmas Gardens, there were many people who actually modeled in S-scale. (In reality, there are known S-gaugers dating back into the 1940's). Still they wanted even more realism so they took American Flyer equipment and scaled it down. You could call it converting, chopping, bashing or whatever, but the S-scalers eventually broke away from the tinplaters/collectors. At the same time, S-scale had help from a small group of manufacturers, mostly individuals, who began producing 3/16th inch scale kits. If you couldn't kit- or scratch-build, you were in trouble in this gauge. But, to many, that is what made modeling in S-scale so popular.

Over the next forty years S-scalers contentedly struggled along with their scale modeling yet even today they are still a minority group. But S-gauge itself has come a long way. It now has very capable manufacturers in American Models ([www.americanmodels.com](http://www.americanmodels.com)), S Helper Service ([www.showcaseline.com](http://www.showcaseline.com)), B.T.S. ([www.btsrr.com](http://www.btsrr.com)), S Scale Locomotive & Supply

## S'Comin' Out

*This commences a series that we intend to become a regular feature of the LOCAL -- S-scale among our membership. Because S-scale is one of the more minority scales of model railroading compared to N, HO, O, and now even G, its activities are often overlooked or under-publicized. For this reason we are going to devote space to S-scale to keep others informed about our S-scale brothers' activities and to arouse interest among those who may be trying to decide in what scale they'd like to model. Read on!*

([www.sscaleloco.com](http://www.sscaleloco.com)), Pennsylvania Heritage Models ([www.paheritagemodels.com](http://www.paheritagemodels.com)), River Raisin offering brass locomotives and rolling stock, Greenbrier Railroad Models and Southwind Models also offering brass locomotives and detail parts through BTS. This is to just name a few who offer a variety of S-scale models in ready-to-run or kit form.



S-Gauge also offers a very fine bi-monthly magazine that covers all types of S scale modeling. It is called the S Gaugian. You can find

the S Gaugian in hobby shops. What we are most proud of though is our organization called the NASG (National Association of S-Gaugers). It publishes a bi-monthly magazine called the Dispatch. This excellent periodical covers all aspects of S-scale. This national organization establishes, maintains, and promotes S-scale standards which, as you can imagine, is sometimes very difficult. The NASG Website can be viewed at: <http://trainweb.com/nasg/>

The S-scalers do admit that our manufacturers cater to the tinplaters/collectors because they are in the majority among us and also have better buying power (partly because there are more of them). Without the collectors/tinplate sales though, S-scale probably just wouldn't survive, at least as well as it does now. That is why our emblem shows clasped glad-hand couplers. As Abe Lincoln so aptly put it, "A house divided against itself cannot stand." So it is with those of us in the "S-scalers/tinplaters/collectors/etc. model railroading family." I plan to cover more characteristics of 3/16th inch scale modeling in future issues of the LOCAL. Meanwhile, I welcome your inquiries. And please, scan the web sites mentioned above to learn more about S- and us. You'll be glad you did.

## WHO'S WHO IN THE MER?

Ever wonder who some of the hard working people are who operate behind the scenes for each of us in the MER? Most of us have a pretty good handle on who our principal officers are because they recently had short biographies appear in the LOCAL. But what about all the others who also devote their time and energy in various different capacities keeping our region active and enjoyable for all of us? This being the first issue of a new year and, yes, a new millennium, it's an opportune time to start giving some of these people the broader recognition they so rightly deserve. It's also a way to say thank you for the hard work they do. We'll kick off this feature with a chat about the MER's Official Photographer and Contributing Associate Editor, Ron Baile. You've all seen his fine work appearing in these pages. Now meet him.

Ron Baile was raised in Gloucester City, N. J. within sight of a PRSL branch line. He's 52 years old and has been married to his wife, Gwenne, for 30 years. As with many of us, his interest in model railroading began with the fabled Lionel set around the Christmas tree when he was four years old. Every year he acquired additional accessories or cars until they all wouldn't fit beneath the tree. At that point he commandeered a ping-pong table in the basement and it continued to grow. Ron's dad helped him out a lot even though he wasn't a model railroader or a railfan. His grandfather who he had barely known had, however, worked for several railroads in his younger years. So, to some extent, railroading was in his blood. Ron got his Lionel HO set around 1960 and immediately burned out the motor in the GP-9 rubber-band-drive loco by applying alternating current to the rails. His wife continues to harp at him about not reading instructions.

He joined the NMRA in 1961 when the dues were only \$3.00 and included a track gauge and some other "goodies". In 1966 he joined the Army's Signal Corps and served for three years in Okinawa, Korea, Arizona, and at the Edgewood Arsenal. After discharge in 1970 he was hired by the New Jersey Bell Telephone Company. He began as an installer and during the ensuing 28 years worked his way up to becoming a Central Office Technician as well as a

Computer Maintenance Technician. He also joined the MER and its New Jersey Division during the same week he started with New Jersey Bell. It wasn't long before he was elected to the BoD of the division and a few years later he was elected Division Superintendent, a post he held for about five years. At the same time he served as President of the Gateway Model Railroad Club after having been its secretary for 12 years. Ron was a Director of the MER after being appointed to fill a vacancy then was subsequently re-elected twice. Following that commitment he served as the MER Secretary for six years. He also played a key role in

organizing the RAILCON Convention in Princeton in 1975, Chaired the Boardwalk Flyer Convention in 1985, and was on the Executive Committee of the last two South Jersey Conventions. He's helped to put on several other MER and national conventions and was on the Executive Committee for the Valley Forge Express.

Ron enjoys modeling the mid-1950's on his HO-scale Delaware & South Park Railroad, which, incidentally, has nothing to do with the DSP&P of Colorado fame. Its theory is that the Lehigh Valley R.R. had a subsidiary that paralleled the Jersey Central into Southern New Jersey. Recently he has also been involved in the construction of the Emerald Hills Railroad, a G scale pike in his back yard. He's

a long time member of the Gateway Model Rail Club of Brooklawn, NJ, having joined it when he was about 15 or 16 years old. As usual, besides being a member of the Gateway group he was also its secretary for twelve years and its president for several more.

Ron's been writing articles for the MER LOCAL and the NMRA Bulletin for many years. He has also had several articles published in Model Railroader and RMC and a photo spread in the Gazette featuring a friend's layout. He is currently the N. J. Division Achievement Program Chairman. He holds six achievement awards and needs only one more to become a Master Model Railroader. Ron's abiding philosophy is that you get out of something only what you are willing to put into it. He enjoys meeting people and giving a helping hand whenever possible. He has many friends in the hobby, mostly met through the MER and Division. Model railroading is a great hobby and he's convinced it has something for everybody.



# Mid-Eastern Region Staff News -- a/o January 2001

Greetings. As the new MER Secretary, I'm pleased to follow Eric Dervinis into this position and hope to provide all the service and support which characterized his tenure. He has turned over all his records to me and I'm still sorting through them to gain a better idea of where we've been as an organization, and how to face future issues.

*William Roman—Sec.*

## Upcoming Events.

1. March 29 - April 1 - MER Spring Convention, Fraser, PA
2. July 8-15 - NMRA National Convention, St. Louis, MO
3. October 5-8, 2001 - MR Fall Convention, Lancaster, PA

Due to expiration of terms, there will be vacancies on the MER Board of Directors. It's not too soon to think about candidates for these positions. Please contact Alex Pope, our Nominations Chair, if interested.

## Speaking of Conventions

While MER has the two above-noted 2001 conventions booked and well along, Bob Martin, our Convention Chairman, is still seeking future convention hosts. Potomac Division has expressed interest for fall of '02, but no group has come forward neither for spring '02 nor for later years. Since conventions require considerable advanced planning and work, Bob would certainly appreciate hearing ASAP from anyone desiring to host future conventions. He can be contacted at [cprrboss@aol.com](mailto:cprrboss@aol.com) or 717-848-3640. On the NMRA level, in case you haven't heard, Cincinnati will be the host city for the 2005 National and there is the possibility that MER will bid for the 2006 National. While a National typically involves only one city and one Division, there are usually many opportunities for participation by members throughout the Region, either during the planning phase or at the convention. Such work may be creditable in the AP—Volunteer category.

## New Business Manager

Rita Lynam has succeeded Nelson Garber as the MER Business Manager effective January 2001. Her address is: 9 Roosevelt Ave., Wilmington, DE 19804-3044. Telephone: 302-636-0888 or E-mail: [ritalynam@aol.com](mailto:ritalynam@aol.com). Her name has been added to the masthead of the LOCAL.

## Treasurer's Report

At the present time, the assets of the MER are as follows:

<u>Account</u>	<u>Balance</u>
Checking	\$4,529
Money Market	\$6,945
Cert. Of Deposit	\$50,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$61,474</b>

1. The total assets have increased by \$11,423 from a year ago. When the Certificate of Deposit was renewed in July, \$3,000 was transferred from the Checking Account and \$7,000 was transferred from the Money Market Account.

2. We have not received a check for the Altoona Convention.

3. We have 26 CNJ Box Car Kits remaining to be sold.

4. Membership:

	02/00	09/00	01/01
Regular	778	754	767
Life	218	223	223
Courtesy/Exchange	24	17	18
Life Subscriber	33	31	29
<b>Totals</b>	<b>1053</b>	<b>1025</b>	<b>1037</b>

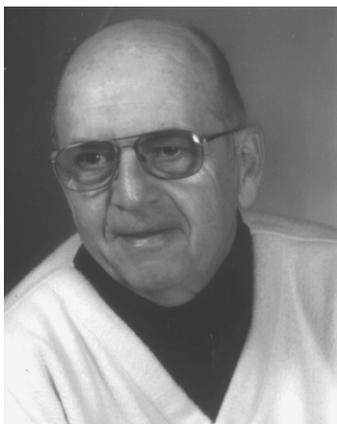
5. We are experiencing a decline in actual membership in the key category of Regular Member. While there is a flow of new members, there are slightly more that are not renewing. We must continue to actively recruit new members to replace those who are not renewing, but more importantly we need a more aggressive program to follow up on the non-renewals to determine why they are not renewing. There has been no activity by a Membership Chairman in at least three or four years.

6. In summary, the MER continues to be in a good financial condition and no problems are evident other than the need to increase membership renewals.

Ronald G. Schmidt - Treasurer



**COMPILED BY  
EDWIN C. KUSER**



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

Edwin C. Kuser  
184 Popodickon Drive  
Boyertown, PA 19512  
Telephone 1-610-367-8368  
ECKRY184@aol.com

Let me share a few thoughts about my experiences from volunteering to handle this feature of the LOCAL. I've noticed numerous articles that recommend sharing your interest in the hobby by volunteering to help the MER and other branches of the NMRA or by joining a local railroad club or by simply sharing the hobby with a friend or a youngster. Most writers then go on to outline how they have volunteered for years and years and have really benefited from the experiences. I'm sure many of you read that and decide, I simply can't give that kind of time.

It was about a year ago that I became motivated enough to e-mail the previous editor of the *Local* in response to his call for someone to volunteer to pick up responsibility to write the articles for *Made in the MER*. With the exception of sharing my work with a number of Cub Scout Packs, I had previously operated strictly as a "lone wolf". That initial e-mail process took about five minutes. Since then I've spent less than thirty hours in the effort. This time has been spent as follows: a) communicating with the current editor; b) reviewing a stack of materials and leads provided by the previous Made in the MER correspondent; c) finding two helpers in the southern part of the MER; d) developing a listing of more than 40 possible manufacturers for inclusion in the column, and; e) researching and writing the first two articles.

In exchange, and as part of the research noted above, I've had a first hand look at a layout featured in *Great Model Railroads 2000*. I've met

and spoken at length about this great hobby with two extremely accomplished modelers. I've doubled the number of conventions I've attended—and this time for the first time I was able to seek out and speak with individuals I now know, at least through e-mail contacts. For the first time the NMRA 2001 calendar held much greater significance when it arrived and I discovered the photo for June was submitted by Roger L. Cason (MY predecessor)! Additionally, I've had photos of my modeling efforts shared in the *Local*!

Probably the greatest benefit of volunteering was to reverse an earlier disappointing experience from joining a local railroading group. During the three years of membership with an historical society I received no responses to several offers of service, I received only about half the mailings I should have, and I was never asked to "re-up" at the end of the three years. My first article brought an e-mail from a member of a model railroad club I will probably join in the near future.

The bottom line: At a time in my life as a modeler when my passion could begin to wane quickly—my layout is essentially complete and I have no room for expanding my collection of equipment—for less than 30 hours of service sharing the hobby with you, my interest in the hobby has ballooned! Don't wait twenty years to take the step to expand the value of your MER membership. Get your money's worth now. *Keystone Junction 2001*—even if you only get there for one day—would be a great place to start.

## Merit Awards

Thanks to members like Bob Hazard of Hagerstown, Maryland, the Achievement Program in the South Mountain Division is alive and well. Bob has now received the prestigious award of NMRA Master Builder - Structures. He received both his Golden Spike Award and his most recent three awards for scratch-building structures during and shortly after the Juniata Junction Convention in Altoona. Congratulations Bob!

## New Assistants/ Judges Appointed

The South Mountain Division has recently acquired two new officials for its Achievement Program. They are Art Thomas of Bedford County, Pennsylvania and Bob Hazard of Washington County (Hagerstown), Maryland. Art and Bob will be working as Assistants to Frank Foight of

Harper's Ferry, W. Virginia, the current South Mountain Division Chairman of the Achievement Program.

Bob has a super HO scale layout in his basement that is about 95 percent completed. It's called the "Crabbit and Pitchahissee R.R." and it depicts a fictional but very realistic-clogging operation in the mountains of West Virginia. Art models a section of the Canadian National Railway west of Lake Superior in HO scale. His layout follows the prototype for the Eastern Prairie Region, Lakehead District of the CNR in 1955. Both Bob and Art invite anyone who wishes to visit to give them a call. Bob's number is 1-301-665-1133 and his e-mail address is: [Dhaza@aol.com](mailto:Dhaza@aol.com). Art's is 1-814-276-3104 with an e-mail address of: [athomas@bedford.net](mailto:athomas@bedford.net).

More importantly, both Art and Bob would like anyone in the South Mountain Division who is interested in participating in the Achievement Program to give them a call. They'll try to answer questions, provide guidance on getting NA credit for modeling activities, recognition for work done, and even arrange judging for interested individuals. All it takes is a phone call.

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*continued from page 1*

## Basic Electricity

equally well on AC or DC. A good source of power for these low power usage auxiliary items is wall transformers. A 9 VDC unit rated at 1.2 amps will easily power a hundred Tortoises and/or LED signal lights and cost under \$10. I suggest you put a 1amp fuse in its output circuit to prevent an overload.

Wire is an essential item for us. A typical large layout, in HO at least, probably has a real mile of wire for every scale mile of track. Rather than buying small spools of hobby shop wire for power circuits (track power), I suggest you purchase standard #16 gage house wire. It is available in solid strand or the more flexible multi-strand and in a large variety of colors. Use the flexible multi-strand if the wire will be flexed at all after installation. The solid wire holds form better and works in the connectors easier. A 500' spool of #16 gage wire costs under \$20. That's a lot less expensive than hobby shop wire. The #16 gauge wire is also more efficient for DC power circuits than smaller wire. Signals, building lights, and switch machines use very little power so small gauge wire is totally acceptable for these circuits. Telephone wire (#24-#26 gauge) comes in multi-wire 'cable' and is great for our needs. Even the small 8-wire cable has eight color-coded wires. If you can find it, the 26-paired cable is unbeatable on moderate to large layouts. It contains 52 color-coded #26 gauge wires. For individual signal LEDs, I used #30 gauge wire available from Walthers and Radio Shack (in several colors). It is small enough to look realistic on the signals and you can still work with it carefully.

I cannot stress enough. Color-code and/or number all your circuits and create wiring diagrams, even if they are crude ones. By the time you finish you are going to have a lot of wires running all over the underside of your layout and coding greatly helps you trace circuits and electrical problems. Example, I used blue and orange for all odd number block power circuits and black and red for the even ones, plus I number every one with wire numbers at each end and terminal. The color-coded telephone wire took care of my switch and signal circuits without numbering. I made wiring diagrams of all power and switch circuits. Signaling required only short runs and building lighting is simply one circuit per panel going out to several terminals where individual bulbs are connected. I didn't feel diagrams or coding were necessary for them. Run wiring in bundles parallel and next to layout framing and allow slack in all wires. These rules protect the wiring from damage and give you maximum space to work under your layout. Even if you plan to use DCC operation, I suggest you have your trackage divided into some blocks for signaling and troubleshooting when it becomes necessary -- and it will.

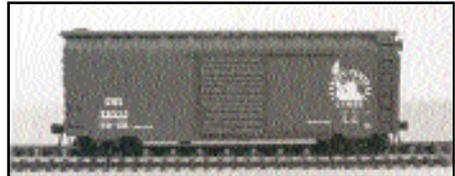
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#23515	_____	\$8.95	\$10.95	\$ _____
				TOTAL \$ _____
MARYLAND RESIDENTS ADD 5% SALES TAX				\$ _____
SHIPPING: _____ CARS @ \$2.50 PER CAR				\$ _____

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*Life membership cost is based on your age.*  
*Send your Birth Date to the NMRA for a quotation.*

**Region Dues:**  New  Renewal \_\_\_\_\_ \$ \_\_\_\_\_  
 1 year: \$8.00  2 years: \$16.00  
*Life membership cost is based on your age. Send your Birth Date to the MER for a quotation. Only NMRA Life Members qualify for MER Life Membership*

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 email \_\_\_\_\_  
 NMRA # \_\_\_\_\_ Expire Date \_\_\_\_\_  
 MER # \_\_\_\_\_ Expire Date \_\_\_\_\_  
 Scale \_\_\_\_\_ Birth date \_\_\_\_\_  
 Tel # \_\_\_\_\_

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 Donation \_\_\_\_\_ \$ \_\_\_\_\_  
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