

Converting My Railroad to Digital Command Control

E. Winfield Gross

About three years ago I became interested in digital command control (DCC) and started reading all the various articles on using DCC systems. I attended many train shows in my area plus the National Model Railroad Association large train show held each year in conjunction with their annual convention.

While attending the shows I visited different DCC manufacturers, picked up all their literature, and talked to the people at the booths. When I returned home, I read all the literature and tried to understand the systems. This wasn't easy to do as some of the literature was hard to understand. But after reading it all – and falling asleep while doing so – I finally figured out some things about the different systems.

My railroad is fairly large and used the old two-cab system with lots of blocks – at least 55 of them – each controlled by a single-pole, double-throw, center-off toggle switch. I also had a main reversing toggle plus two reverse loops on each cab panel controlled by double-pole, double-throw, center-off toggle switches. These toggles were all placed on a four-foot-long panel having a line diagram of the tracks. There were also switch machine controls and switch position indicator lights, all of which made the main board very crowded and hard to read – especially for new people trying to operate the railroad.

When I visited the DCC booths at train shows, I would tell the people staffing them about my layout's present controls. I would get all sorts of comments regarding what I had to do to convert to DCC. Sometimes I would talk to a person at one end of the booth and get his opinions. Then I'd walk around the show for awhile and return to talk with a different person at the other end of the same booth and

receive a completely different opinion regarding how to convert to DCC.

The big item that they couldn't agree on was my layout's use of common rail wiring. Some said I could use DCC with no problem; others told me I would have to put gaps in both rails or tear out all the old wiring and rewire the whole layout. But I was determined not to get discouraged and to go to a DCC system.

About two years ago I joined a round-robin group where up to 15 people sometimes show up. Only three of them had layouts, and two were controlled by DCC – both Digitrax systems. I liked the Digitrax system, but I didn't care for the DT100 throttles. In my opinion they were hard to read and use. However, in 2001, Digitrax brought out the DT300 throttle. I used it on one of the layouts and found it easy to use.

In November 2001, I purchased a Digitrax DT300 throttle so I could use my own on the two Digitrax layouts. By the end of the month, I made the big decision to go with the Digitrax system. I visited my local hobby shop and told the owner of my decision. He wanted to sell me the Digitrax Empire Builder set because I was just getting started. The only problem with that was that I have at least 50 locomotives, and the Empire Builder can only run twenty-two. He sold me the Chief set instead that included a DCS100 command station, a DT300 throttle, a UP3 universal panel, and the ever important instruction and decoder manuals. This set can handle up to 120 engines. I also purchased the necessary LocoNet cables to place around the layout and a Digitrax power supply.

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MER LOCAL

Official Publication of the
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A Tax-Exempt Organization

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

Keeping In Touch...

by Rita Lynam

MER Business Manager

The winter in the Mid-East Region started early. Heavy ice in the southern part of the region and lots of snow in the northern part of the region make me wish we all still took trains to work instead of cars. The Strasburg Railroad recently had excursions for the children with Thomas the Tank Engine – the looks on the children's faces were priceless. The scene of the cold air with the white billowing steam and the white landscape made for a mental journey to an era of a slower pace and smiling children's faces.

Back to reality!! This column notes new life members and recently deceased members. Talk about reality?

Tank cars are for sale on the back page of the newsletter. Get your order in while we still have the stock. Roger Cason is working on the next car and will be giving us an update soon.

We received quite a few November-December Locals returned from the post office due to forwarding orders having expired. If you change your address, please be sure to notify me of your new address. I will contact NMRA and make sure you do not miss any issues of either the regional or national publications.

New Life Member

Richard Landt, Souderton, PA L-337

Recently Deceased Member

Howard Ditch, Burgess, Virginia. Born April 1924. Joined the MER and NMRA in December 1999. MER# 7631 and NMRA# 119316.

Major Frank Foight, Jr., Shepherdstown, West Virginia. Born July 1927 died on December 6, 2002. Joined MER and NMRA in 1988. MER# 2947 and NMRA# 077563.

Don't forget to let me know if your address changes. We want you to receive your LOCAL.

MID EASTERN REGION

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President's Column

Norm Garner

The MER emphasis for the upcoming year has got to be on recruiting new members. The NMRA reported a ten percent decrease in their membership last year and the MER was down four and a half percent. As of 10 December 2002 the MER membership was 1050, down 50 members, ten of which were due to death. The MER BOD is very much aware and concerned with the loss of members.

I appreciate all the efforts and support given by the division superintendents and their staff for keeping the loss of members as low as it is compared to the national level. We still have a lot of work to do this year, and I am confident that with your continued support we will increase the membership of the MER. The MER BOD knows that new members will find nothing but camaraderie and friendship when they join their fellow railroaders in the MER if we can just get them to one of the division meetings or a convention.

We have not confirmed a place or date yet for the MER convention for this year. Information will be posted in **The Local**.

I hope everyone has a safe and happy holiday.

Norm

Achievement Program Attaboys *By Roger Cason, MMR*

Since my last report in **The Local**, the people listed below have been awarded the following Achievement Program certificates:

Division 2 – Potomac

Edmund Price – Engineer – Electrical

Division 5 – James River

Jay Manning – Golden Spike

In a perfect world, all these names will appear in the **NMRA Bulletin**. This should not deter you from recognizing them locally. Normally you will be able to recognize an accomplishment long before the name appears in the **Bulletin**.

Thoughts on (Really) Large-Scale Model Railroading And Other Stuff

As the editor, it's my prerogative to ruminate on things, so here goes. When I first read Alan Frame's article on the Haluwasa Shoreline Railroad, I considered rejecting it for publication because **The Local**, the Mid-East Region, and the NMRA are all about *model* railroading. But then I realized that the Haluwasa Shoreline *is* a model railroad – just one that's larger than most. How many of you have a garden railroad (or would like to if your significant other would let you lay track in her flowerbeds)? That's outdoor model railroading. How many of you have visited a live steam club? That's model railroading, too. So why shouldn't I consider the Haluwasa Shoreline a model railroad? As you read Alan's article and look at his photos, consider what railroad founder, Charlie Ashmen has done on his 200-acre layout. The track is all hand laid. The rolling stock and motive power are scratchbuilt. And take a close look at his freelanced model of a passenger station. How many points do you think it would score in an NMRA model contest? Well over eighty-seven and a half, that's for sure.

This hobby of ours is all about model railroading (how's that for a statement of the obvious), but it's also about helping, sharing, and giving to others. Each one of our authors has shared something with you, the reader. On page 1, Win Gross shares his experiences with converting to DCC. And as he made the conversion, he had the help of other hobbyists. Charlie Flichman is doing much the same thing as he embarks on writing articles explaining the different facets of the Achievement Program as encouragement to get more of you to participate. In a very small space, Evert Beekmann shares his solution to a problem we have all had. And Alan Frame tells us of a man who put his considerable mechanical talents to work for a higher purpose.

Model railroading isn't just something we pursue in the isolation of our basements or layout rooms. It's something we can, and should, share with others. If you haven't already read Eric Dervinis's *I Have A Better Idea* column yet, please do and consider how you can give back to a hobby that has given so much to all of us.

Alan

When I arrived home, the first thing I did was read the instruction manual. That really helps, and I learned a lot from it. As I read through it, I found the part made for me. The manual told about a layout like mine having common rail wiring with the other rail gapped for blocks. The manual told me to throw all the block toggles on the control board to one cab and disconnect the old power source to that cab. It then instructed me to hook up the Digitrax command station to the power supply and turn the switch on. Guess what? It worked! I then hooked up the two wires (that's what I was told you need for DCC – just two wires) from the command station to the common rail of the track. I connected the other wire to the common wire that ran to all the blocks. Guess what? That worked, too, and I had power to all tracks on the railroad. I was really proud of myself. I wanted to run an engine, but I had none equipped with decoders. So I tried one of my analog engines; it ran around the layout. Things were really looking up now!

The next day I borrowed a decoder-equipped engine from my friend, Jim Dalberg and tested it on my layout. Surprise! The engine ran around the whole layout. Boy, I was really feeling proud of myself by then. I made a list of all my engines, showing the manufacturer and the year they were built. I gave it to Val Pistilli, another friend, who made another list showing which decoder to use with each engine. I bought all the decoders I would need.

On the Friday after Christmas, Val came to my house and showed me how to install a few decoders. By late afternoon we had decoders installed in 13 engines. Over the next several weeks I installed more decoders, eventually doing about 45 of them. Val took some of the engines that were difficult to install decoders in and did them at his house.

While all this was taking place, I kept reading the instruction manual. Yes, it really pays to read those manuals. Between all my reading and the information I got from other people about DCC, I learned new things all the time. The manual suggested that a large layout like mine should be divided into power districts that are controlled from separate boosters. In that way, if a short circuit occurs, only the affected district shuts down instead of the whole layout.

In addition to the Digitrax Chief set, I purchased an Empire Builder set so I could use its DB150 command station as a booster. The set also gave me another DT300 throttle and another UP3 panel. I had purchased about 12 UP3 panels in all so I could run the LocoNet between them. I had to cut two gaps in the rails so the original command station and the new booster district would be separated from each other. That meant I had to isolate two block

toggles for the new district from the main district. Then, because of the size of the railroad, I figured I should put in a third district. I purchased a separate DB150 booster for the new district. I had to isolate 13 blocks from the main command station and hook them up to the new booster.

Over the next several months I purchased six more DT300 throttles, two DT300R radio-equipped throttles, and one UT1 utility throttle, giving me a total of nine throttles. I removed all the unneeded wires from the toggle switches on the main control panel and the branch line panels. I did this by attaching the various wires directly to the command station and the two boosters. By doing this I have eliminated all excess wiring from the panels. I still need the main control panel because it has the switch machine controls on it. Also, I need the branch panels as they have a line diagram of the tracks, which are labeled for each industry.

I am really glad I decided to change over to the DCC system. Before I changed, only about six people could operate my railroad. Now up to ten can easily run the layout. Digital command control has made a big difference in the operation of my railroad.

Again, all I had heard was that you needed only two wires to operate with DCC. In theory this could be true, but I still have plenty of wires under my layout. Digital command control did make two parts of the railroad easy to use – the reverse loops and the turntable. I installed MRC No. AD520 auto-reverse modules on the loops and the turntable. I can now run trains through the loops and engines on and off the turntable without having to constantly throw the old dreaded double-pole, double-throw reverse toggles each time. This is all done automatically now.

Finally, when operating a DCC layout with a large crowd of operators, you have to be on your toes and pay attention to running the trains at all times. If you don't, the threat of rear end collisions and cornfield meets is very real, especially on a layout with tunnels and other hidden trackage.

In closing, I want to thank the people who helped me get started in DCC and for answering my many questions. They are: Jim Dalberg, Val Pistilli, Bill Blackburn, Bruce Barrett, and Paul and Linda Maynard of Lin's Junction Hobby Shop in Lansdale, PA.

Achievement Program – Part One

By Charlie Flichman

Model Railroading is FUN! Are you having fun yet? If you are reading this, you already know that just belonging to the NMRA and the MER has increased your fun and knowledge of the hobby of model railroading. But to a large number of our members, there is a way to further your horizons and have more fun. That is to participate in the Achievement Program (AP). OK, I hear the "Oh, that again," and other numerous comments made in an article written by Jim Kellow in the March-April 2000 issue of *The Local*. But it doesn't take any more than what most of you are already doing! In the next few issues of *The Local*, I will attempt to spur some more of our members to participate in the AP.

You may ask, "Who is he to be writing these articles?" Well, I volunteered to do it, but I am also a participant in the AP. To date I have certificates in Civil, Electrical, Volunteer and Author. My paperwork is completed for Cars, and I need to finish one structure and the required area for Scenery to complete the requirements for MMR. I like to think of myself as an example of the people I am trying to reach. I joined both the NMRA and MER in 1965 and participated in many activities, even being on the 1978 MER convention committee and helped the folks who started the Mount Clare Division (Baltimore, MD). I moved to NC in 1984 and served on the 1987 MER convention committee. But, being an O and On3 modeler, I dropped out in 1988. Some NC friends got me to rejoin in 1994 and I am now a life member of both organizations. When I rejoined, I said to myself, "Let's participate more and see what I can do in the AP." So here I am.

A good starting point in the Achievement Program is that of the Golden Spike Award. Its requirements are:

- 1) Display six (6) units of rolling stock.
- 2) Construct a minimum of eight (8) square feet of layout.
- 3) Construct five (5) structures.
- 4) Install three (3) types of trackage properly (ballasted and on roadbed).
- 5) Wire the installed trackage for simultaneous two-train operation.
- 6) Provide one additional electrical feature such as powered turnouts, etc.

That's all that is required and you will have the Golden Spike Award! Take note of the number of people listed in *The Local* who are achieving this award. Go to the NMRA website at <http://www.nmra.org/achievement/gold.html> to get all of the details. If you don't have web access, contact Roger Cason (address on page 2) for the same information.

You are doing the modeling; get some recognition for it. Contact your local division AP chairperson to have him assess your modeling. If you aren't in a division, contact Roger Cason and he will provide someone to assess your modeling.

In future issues of *The Local* we will look at the various categories of the AP itself. I hope these articles will motivate more MER modelers to get into the program. It really is FUN!

David E. "Gene" Colburn – Pioneer in Model Railroading

By John M. Johnson

The late David E. "Gene" Colburn was one of four individuals named Pioneers in Model Railroading at the annual NMRA awards banquet in Fort Lauderdale. Gene was the MER President from 1962 to 1964, MER Treasurer from 1976 to 1978, and on many committees. He also served as NMRA Executive Vice-President from 1965-67 and again from 1969-71. From 1971-73, Gene was the President of the NMRA. In addition, Gene was one of the founders of the NJ Division.

Upcoming MER Conventions

2003 — Potomac Division. Sheraton Reston, Northern Virginia. Columbus Day weekend

2004 — South Mountain Division. Hagerstown, at the sameplace as last time.

Bruce Strickland (bstricklan@aol.com) is interested in knowing the name and contact point for all the modular MR groups in the Region's boundaries. If you've already sent this info to Clint Hyde, no need to repeat.

I Have A Better Idea; The NMRA Could _____

Thoughts on Volunteering
from Eric Dervinis, MER Trustee

Welcome to 2003 and best wishes to all for a wonderful New Year. The economy is slowly improving; the elections are over (no more political ads), and the hobby of model railroading has never been more vibrant. The NMRA Board of Trustees is working diligently to recast the entire organization. We learn from the constructive comments of members new and old. We study the ideas from non-members and assess the thoughts of manufacturers and retailers. We solicit your ideas and find them – both the positive and the negative – instructive.

As your Trustee I have heard many suggestions on how to improve the NMRA. They are all useful in one way or another *IF* we have someone to follow up on them. I also hear the complaints loud and clear, and yes, they are, for the most part, valid. But I do not hear from enough members willing to volunteer their time and talents to improve our organization. To quote from an old Pogo comic strip, "We have met the enemy and he is us." If you are passionate about improving the NMRA and are willing to actively participate in making that improvement, contact me at (610)-688-6113 or by email at mert@hq.nmra.org. Tell me about your idea, and I can point you in the right direction.

All of the current programs in our organization are managed and staffed by volunteers. Our headquarters personnel handle membership and order fulfillment, while the Kalmbach Memorial Library staff manages the research facility. The rest of the organization is YOU – the volunteers of the NMRA. Some may ask, "Where can I be of best use to the organization?" Here is just a small portion of our needs:

Software development – knowledge of Access and computer languages are a plus
Annual convention – auctions, registration, clinics, contests, company store
Technical – engineers, toolmakers, experienced model builders
Financial – knowledge of financial procedures, generally accepted accounting principles, investing

Some of us have specific skills and life experience that we can use to the betterment of the NMRA. We have room for hundreds of volunteers and can find something for each one of you, whether you have a little time to give or a lot. For those who have never volunteered, offer to handle a small task in your local division or model railroad club.

My thanks and gratitude go out to everyone who is currently a volunteer in the NMRA. To the rest of you, please con-

tact me at the phone number or email address above. Or contact directly the head of a department in which you are interested. They are listed on page four of the **NMRA Bulletin** and page two of **The Local**.

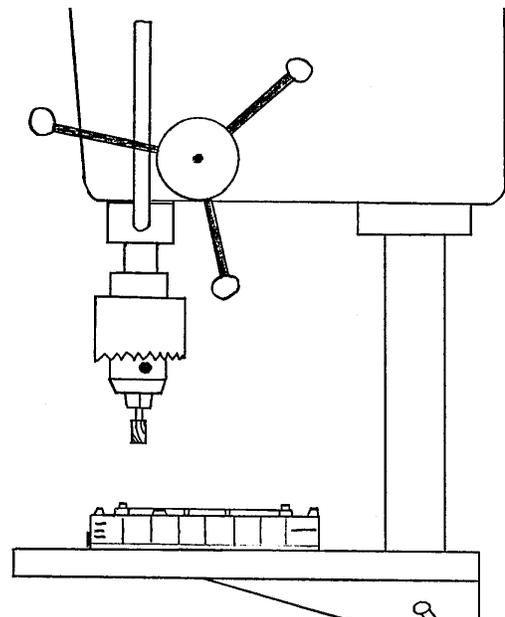
Volunteering is very rewarding. The feeling of accomplishment is wonderful. The new friends you make are a real plus. Let's all work to be part of the solution, so we can say, "I have met the NMRA and he is us."

Using a Drill Press as a Milling Machine

By Evert Beekmann

I had some gondolas that rode too high on the track. Also the couplers were too high by about .020 inches. After some thought and in order to do a neat and accurate job, I placed the car upside down on my drill press. Then, with a sharp Dremel No. 115 cutter in the chuck, I lowered the spindle until the cutter just barely touched the bolster. I locked the spindle there.

I then slid the gondola to one side and placed a sheet of .010" styrene under it. I turned on the drill press and slowly passed the bolsters under the cutter. Then I repeated the process with a .020" sheet. This produced truly square surfaces at the correct height – much better than whittling by hand with an Xacto knife. When doing this operation yourself, be sure to take light .010" cuts, and hold the car firmly to keep the cutter from grabbing. The gondola laid flat on its top, but I have likewise machined other cars with proper blocking and thin padding to firmly hold them and not mar their details.



CALLBOARD — *Coming Events*

Notices must be typed and have complete addresses. Use the style shown below and be as brief as possible. Be sure to include a contact telephone number. Send items for CALLBOARD to Alan Mende, 526 Pine Hill Road, Hummelstown, PA 17036-8020 E-Mail to afmende@amp.com.

January 18, February 15, and March 15, 2003, Noon to 4 PM. Northern Virginia Model Railroaders, Inc. open house. Located in historic Washington & Old Dominion Railroad station, 231 Dominion Road (at the intersection with Ayr Hill Road), Vienna, VA. More information can be obtained by going to our web site at <http://www.nvmr.org>, by e-mail at nvmrinc@hotmail.com or by calling (703) 938-5157 on the day of the open house. The club meets on Tuesday evenings.

January 17-18, 2003. New Jersey Division Meet at Haddon Township High School. Layouts: Fri. 7:00 PM to 10:00 PM, Sat. 1:00 PM to 4:00 PM. Clinics: Sat. 9:00 AM to 12:00 Noon, including NMRA 2002 Convention Review and Model RR Chemistry 101. Contest: Lineside Structures. Contact: Carl Haslett, (856) 546-9230.

February 15, 2003, 9:30 AM-Noon, (layout tour after lunch). James River Division, NMRA and Hanover County Parks and Recreation, Division meet. Ashland Branch, Pamunkey Regional Library, 201 South Railroad Avenue, Ashland (Richmond area): Virginia. Free. Contact: Bill McMillan, (804) 379-7904, wamcm@erols.com, or website at: <http://www.jamesriverdiv.homestead.com/>

March 15, 2003. New Jersey Division Meet, Trenton, NJ. Contact: Carl Haslett, (856) 546-9230

Saturday, March 15, 2003, 10 AM to 5 PM and Sunday, March 16, 2003, 1 PM to 5 PM. 5th Annual Model Train Show & Railroading Merit Badge Workshop sponsored by Boy Scout Troop 964, Dale City, VA. Admission: Adults \$4.00, Students \$2.00, under 6 free. Location: Saunders Middle School, 13557 Spriggs Rd, Manassas, VA 20112. We've awarded over 300 Railroading Merit Badges in the 4 years we've hosted the show. Operation Lifesaver, refreshments & door prizes. Railroading Merit Badge information and registration: (703) 680-9758, or email Troop964Trains@aol.com. For train show information: (703) 730-1296. Email: Troop964Trains@aol.com. Web Site: <http://www.troop964.org>.

Friday, March 21, 1 PM to Saturday, March 22, 2003, 11 PM. Prototype Modeler's Seminar – East, Holiday Inn, Monroeville (Pittsburgh), PA (Exit 6, PA Turnpike). Registration \$40. Hotel \$69/night. For more information, contact Dick Flock, 337 Elm Drive, Greensburg, PA 15601. (724)-850-8882. E-mail: rflock@worldnett.att.net.

DIXIE JUNCTION 2003

MER Fall 2003 Convention

October 10-13, Columbus Day weekend (yes, same weekend as Timonium--we may have a bus trip).

Venue: Sheraton Reston, Fairfax County, Virginia. It's just off the Toll Road on the Reston Parkway. \$89/night double occupancy.

The plan: hands-on activities from end to end, including clinics and running trains. White elephant table for the cheapie items you want to unload, an auction for the good stuff. Clinics, fabulous home layout tours, a proto tour or two, maps to railfanning locations... Spouses can go to the Reston Town Center for shopping, or a movie, or someplace different to eat, with a shuttle bus provided by the hotel. (Trip to Leesburg?)

Dining: expect a banquet. Details not yet worked out. Adjacent building has a "Chili's". At Reston Town Center, (free shuttle bus ride) there are fancy places, and inexpensive good places.

The venue space is excellent, LOTS of room.

Expect to see info on the MER & Potomac Division web-sites before the next LOCAL issue, including registration info.

MER Divisions Annual Reports

Each year the Region publishes an annual report on the State of the Divisions. This report is for 2002.

NEW JERSEY DIVISION (1)

Officers and Directors:

Superintendent:

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Asst. Superintendent:

Ken O'Brien Lackawanna500@comcast.net

Secretary:

Carl Haslett carl.haslett@L-3Com.com

Treasurer:

Bob Liberman rdliberman@comcast.net

Director - Layouts:

Carl Corsi Caminac1@aol.com

Director – Clinics John Swift (732) 349-7592

Director – Contests

Bill Emmons bbemmons@peoplepc.com

Division Web site address.

<http://home.earthlink.net/~mikemcnh/njdmer.html>

Membership: At end of August: 110.

Membership recruiting activities

We continually mail our newsletters to other NMRA members as well as non-NMRA members in our geographical area asking them to come out to a Meet to see what we are all about.

Financial:

Division Dues:

\$10 per year includes newsletter and fee for all 5 Meets
\$3 per year covers the newsletter only; At-Meet fee of \$3 charged per Meet.

Current Savings Account Balance: \$ 874.36

Current Checking Account Balance: \$1053.69

Division Events:

September Division Meet in Deptford, featuring clinics on South Jersey Railroads and an NMRA National Convention recap with slides, layout tours, Photo contest and swap tables.

November Division Meet in Bordentown, featuring prototype tour of an operating grain elevator, followed by layout tours.

January Division Meet in Haddon Township, featuring Operations-themed clinics, Friday Night and Saturday layout tours, NTrak modular layout, Motive Power contest and swap tables.

March Division Meet in Delanco, featuring Railroading in British Columbia, Prototype Tower Operations and eBay For Fun and Profit clinics, layout tours, Structure contest and swap tables.

May Division Meet in Vineland, featuring New England Railroads and MR "stuff" storage ideas clinics, layout tours, Weathered Rolling Stock contest and swap tables, Annual Business Meeting of the Division.

Each Meet attendance averages 75 members

June Outdoor Garden Layout Tour, featuring large scale railroads and their gardens throughout South Jersey. Open to members and their friends and families, usually over 100 people.

Charitable and Educational Activities:

Resumed regular video-taping of our clinic presentations as a source of educational materials available to all members and prospective members.

Achievement Program activity:

The Golden Spike award was given to Peter N. Butler. A complete all-time list of AP participants from our Division is on our website.

NMRA and MER Convention Activity:

Started plans to host an MER Convention in September of 2001. Members Jim Cope and P.J. Mattson quickly put together a program to fill the vacant Fall 2002 convention slot. The Cherry Hill Depot committee was formed, a hotel was selected and a terrific slate of activities were organized, including a prototype tour, a combined rail and non-rail trip to the Jersey Shore, over a dozen clinics, over 25 open layouts, operations callboard, a raffle, an auction and a banquet with guest speaker.

Future Directions:

Division Meets throughout our geographical area in November (Tuckahoe), January (Haddon Township), March (Trenton), May (Toms River).

Invitation extended to our neighbors, the Philadelphia Division, for a Joint Meet in January 2003 at our Haddon Twp. Location with HO and N modules.

POTOMAC DIVISION (2)

Officers:

Superintendent:

Garret Nicholson garretnicholson@hotmail.com

Sr. Asst Superintendent:

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Asst Superintendent John Drye jdrye@spa-inc.net

Clerk Clint Hyde chyde@cox.net

Paymaster Mark Andersen mandersen@erols.com

Membership Approximately 275

Web site address:

<http://members.cox.net/chyde/PotomacDivision/Potomac.html>

Financial: Annual dues \$4.00
Bank balance \$2891.50

Division Events: monthly tours of members layouts with an attendance of 20—40 persons. The Division hosts an annual mini-convention in March which has model contests, clinics, module setups, white elephant table and a guest speaker. This event has an attendance of 80—100 persons. In 2002 we will have a MIDI-convention in October.

Charitable and Educational Activities: None at this time

Achievement Program: Will forward details.

Future Direction: Due to the membership crossover, we are planning to work on joint ventures with Northern Virginia NTRAK.

PHILADELPHIA DIVISION (3)

Officers:

Superintendent:

Jim Dalberg

Dick Landt

Membership: about 160

Financial: dues \$5
bank \$1700

Charitable and Educational Activities:

Achievement Program activity:

NMRA and MER Convention Activity:

Future:

Joint meets with Susquehanna and New Jersey.

TIDEWATER DIVISION (4)

Officers and Directors:

Superintendent:

Donald S. Taber dstaber@bellatlantic.net

Assistant Superintendent:

James Keiper bsblpop@msn.com

Timekeeper:

Celeste F. Robbins calamity@cox.net

Paymaster:

John Hammond hammondje@earthlink.net

Directors:

Richard Uglum

MMC.Richard.Uglum@ftsclant.navy.mil

Leonard Boucher lenboucher@aol.com

James McLemore mclemore@picusnet.com

Web Site Address:

<http://home.infi.net/~tdwtrdiv/>

Membership:

30 Sep 01 = 48 regular members

107 subscriber members

11 family members

1 honorary member

30 Sep 02 = 72 regular members

4 family members

1 honorary member

Membership recruitment is conducted at the various public operating sessions of the Division Module Group and through the Division web site.

Financial: Dues \$5.00
Bank Statement \$11,273.98
2001 – 2002 difference: (\$1585.47)

Division Events:

Meets: Division meets were held on the following months: Nov, Jan, Mar, May, and Aug. Average attendance was 20 members. The Annual Business Meeting was held during the January meeting. During this meeting Dan Taber was reelected to the Board and as Superintendent. Jim Keiper and Len Boucher were elected to the board for the first time. Jim was selected as the Assistant Superintendent and John Hammond and Celeste Robbins were retained in their positions as Paymaster and Timekeeper.

Annual Show: The Annual Show was held the weekend of the 15th and 16th of September. The show was successful and the Division was commended for providing a needed diversion from the events of the preceding week.

Module Operations: Major module operations began with the combined operations of the Tidewater Division and the Potomac Division at the Annual Train Show in September. This was followed by the annual 3 day Christmas Show at Our Lady of Perpetual Help Nursing Home. Originally conceived as a show for the residents and staff of the home it has been open to the public and proves to be very successful. A one day Christmas Show was held for the City of Virginia Beach at Bayside Recreation Center. In March the group participated in a Train Days show at the Great Bridge Library, City of Chesapeake, VA. This was followed by a show in April at Chesapeake's Chitum Elementary School. The last major show was a one day event for the Chesapeake Ruritan Club. As stated under convention activities the module group also participated in the MER Spring Convention in Richmond, VA. The group has also put on 4 shows at Pembroke Mall in Virginia Beach.

Charitable and Educational Activities: The division purchased \$1,100 worth of HO train sets and donated them to the USMCR Toys for Tots campaign. This will become an annual event. Various members of the division have helped the Boy Scouts meet the requirements for Model Railroad Merit Badge. Two presentations on model railroading were presented in Virginia Beach and Chesapeake elementary schools.

Achievement Program:

AP Certificates:

Model Railroad Engineer – Civil:

Norman Garner
Bill Fay

Model Railroad Engineer – Electrical:

Norman Garner
Jim McLemore
Bill Fay

Master Builder – Structures:

Jim McLemore
John Cryderman

Association Volunteer

Norman Garner

Association Official

James Curth

Golden Spike Award

NMRA and MER Convention Activity: The Tidewater Division Module Group joined with the Potomac Division to create an approximate 20' by 50' DCC controlled operating display in HO scale for the MER Spring Convention in Richmond VA. Three members of the Division attended and helped operate the railroad.

Future Directions: Tidewater Division is attempting to develop a relationship with the various Boy Scouts of America Councils in the Hampton Roads area to assist with the Model Railroad Merit Badge. Currently 4 members of the Division are certified as counselors with one or more of the BSA Councils. The goal is to establish a regularly

scheduled program of clinics that scouts and leaders can rely on for merit badge qualification. The first step in this effort was to hold clinics at the Division's Annual Train Show the 14th and 15th of September 2002. Approximately 30 Boy Scouts qualified for the Model Railroad Merit Badge over the 2 days.

JAMES RIVER DIVISION (5)

Officers: (as of 1 July 2002)

Superintendent	Bill McMillan	wamcm@erols.com
Asst Super	Frank Schwenk	schwenk@erols.com
Clerk	Mark Chase	jmchase@vcu.org
Paymaster	Jay Manning	chessie@mindspring.com

DIRECTORS:

Tony DiMasi	rantrak@home.com
Bill McMillan	wamcm@erols.com
Don Wells	dwellscho@earthlink.net
Robbie Alvis	(804) 329-4060
Bill McGilvary	willmack@bellatlantic.net

Division web page -

<http://www.JamesRiverDiv.homestead.com/>

Membership:

Membership was 69 on both 30 June 2001 and on 30 June 2002.

Financial:

Annual dues are \$3.00.

N/A due to incomplete reporting re Spring MER convention.

Division Events:

During the course of the year the James River Division held its customary three one-day meets (Richmond - 09/29/01, Charlottesville - 03/09/02 and Farmville - 06/29/02). The average attendance at these meets was 25 members and guests. These meets included clinics, contests and member white elephant sales plus any necessary business in the morning and two or more layout open houses after lunch. The June meet included the annual business meeting and elections. In addition to the above meets, an Operations Day was held in April on two layouts in the Richmond area. Members were invited to sign-up in advance to run trains in accordance with the operating scheme of each of the layouts. Eight members spent one-half day on each of the layouts. The object of these sessions is to introduce members to operating a railroad instead of just running trains. All participants have enthusiastically endorsed these sessions.

Achievement Program:

During the year covered, a Golden Spike certificate was awarded to Frank Schwenk for his module judged at the MER Convention in June.

MER Convention activity:

The major effort by the division and its membership during the reporting period was the sponsorship by the James River Division of the MER spring convention in Richmond.

Future Directions:

In the course of the next year the officers and directors of the James River Division plan to:

Review current JRD by-laws and revise as necessary to bring them into compliance with NMRA/MER by-laws.

Publish four issues of the Crossties newsletter instead of the present three.

Hold four rather than three, one-day meets to include some geographical areas of the division that have not been served in the recent past. The very large geographical size of the James River Division militates against coverage of all members at each meet.

Hold an Operations Day again next year with layouts in two geographical areas of the division in an effort to include more members in this popular event.

Investigate the possibility of holding joint meets with contiguous divisions (Tidewater and Potomac).

Investigate the modification of the content of some meets to include, if possible, some form of prototype railroading,

Become more proactive in our publicity and recruitment effort. Appointment of a Publicity Chairman and publication of a brochure are first steps in this direction.

SOUTH MOUNTAIN DIVISION (10)

Officers:

- Superintendent
Don Florwick florwick@innernet.net
- Asst. Superintendent
Ray Price Jr rayswesternmarylandrr@erols.com
- Clerk/Paymaster
Larry Snook JASNOOK@aol.com
- Advisory Board
Bob Johnson rcyrilj@aol.com
Harvey Heyser III Phone: 304-876-6637
Bob Van Zant Phone: 304-229-5976

Division Web Site:

<http://www.fred.net/richardb/smd.html>

Active Members: 50 2001 Membership: 87

Membership Activities: We had 87 members last year (2001), 39 were full NMRA/MER members and 48 were subscribers. As of this past summer, we had 50 members total. We lost approximately 55% of our total 2001 membership, but gained a 20% increase in NMRA members.

Dues: Dues continue to be \$2/year

Division Events: Activities consisted of a monthly meeting hosted at Private homes during the months September through April. In May, the Division and guests were treated to a tour of the CSX Cumberland Shops. SMD Members hosted most meetings and all meetings featured a layout. Clinics were given at 75% of the meetings.

Achievement Program: No certificates have been awarded this past year.

Convention Activity: The Division is planning to host and run the 2004 MER Fall Convention, The South Mountain Express.

SUSQUEHANNA DIVISION (11)

Officers

- Superintendent
Brian Brandt brianbrandt3@comcast.net
- Asst. Superintendent
Jim Atkinson atkinson17022@juno.com
- AP Chair Jim Atkinson
- Chief Clerk Paul F. Tice 717-843-9572
- Paymaster Paul F. Tice 717-843-9572
- Director Scott Turner scotteturner@comcast.net
- Director Alan Frame 717-767-4998
- Director Bruce Allison bgapond@supernet.com

Web Address: <http://moosevalley.org/nmra/index.htm>

Membership:

We currently have 68 members. We lost 10 (ten) last year and added 2 (two) in the fiscal year.

Financial:

Our dues are \$3.00 (three dollars) per year, with some life members of NMRA/MER paid up to ten years.

Beginning,	7-1-01	\$1,297.
Ending Balance	7-31-02	\$1618.59

Membership Activities:

October 2001, Dutch Station 2001, MER Fall Convention held at Eden Resort, Lancaster Pa.

Feb 9, Meet at homes of Jim Clay and Ray Fisher. They showed their layouts in progress, with Jim's in HO scale, and Ray's in N scale. Attended by approx 15 members.

April 27. Meet at home of Mel Agne. Meet was a mini operating session, and a clinic on managing and operating a model railroad as prototypically as possible. The meet was attended by 12 members.

CAROLINA SOUTHERN DIVISION (12)

Officers

Superintendent	Larry Lau
Asst Superintendent	Jack Parker
Clerk/Paymaster	Martin Oakes
Board	Dave Chance Ed Locklin Michele Chance

Division Web-site:

Membership: We have 11 paid members and one honorary member.

Treasury: Bank balance is \$278.08

Division Events:

We held four meetings and have one scheduled for Nov.

January:	Annual Meeting
March:	Meeting of a Slide show of Southeastern Railroads.
August:	Meeting with a slide show of the National Convention and a clinic on Control Panel Building.
September	Meeting and annual picnic. Clinics on tree building with a tour of a prototype forest, clinic on AP submissions, and operating session on the P&N.

Future:

Planned for next year, 2003: continue meetings on a bi-monthly basis at members home with a program of clinics and operations. A number of members feel they have the qualifications for AP certificates. A definitive program will be developed to address those needs and employ the Regions Officers and AP Chairman for judging.

CAROLINA PIEDMONT DIVISION (13)

Officers and Directors

Superintendent

Richard A. Genthner	argent1@att.net	
Asst Superintendent		
Richard Buchan	trolley400@man.com	
Clerk	Andrew Stitt	ppqdstitt@earthlink.net
Paymaster	John Rudisill	rudisill.john@epa.gov
Trustee	John Wallis	jwallis@nc.rr.com
Trustee	Edmund Doughty	edougherty@mindspring.com
Trustee	Thomas Cook	tcexpressnc@aol.com

Division Web Site Address

<http://www.trainweb.org/cpd13>

Membership

As of September 1, 2001 — 48

As of September 1, 2002 — 41

Change over the year — (7)

Financial

Annual Dues — \$12 per calendar year

Amount in bank — September 1, 2001 \$ 2,069.01

Amount in bank — August 31, 2002 \$ 2,852.82

Division events

Monthly meetings in the Apex, NC train station on the fourth Tuesday of each month starting at 7 p.m. Each meeting includes an educational clinic and a popular vote contest.

Month

Clinic Topic

Contest

Sept 2001	Railroad Police	MOW equip
October	AP model judging	Open loads
November	Modeling Tools	Box Cars
December	Annual Xmas Party	Santa Cars
Jan 2002	Planning layouts	My First Train
February	Installing Decoders	Home Railroads
March	Hand-laid TrackFave	Rail Photos
April	No meeting due to mini-meet	
May	Plastic Buildings "Anything but a station"	
June	Five RRs of Durham	Traction models
July	Detailing Diesels	Steam Locomotives
August	Foam Scenery	Diesel Locomotives

In September, the Division participated in the Southern Junction train show. This was an opportunity to promote the hobby, the Division and the NMRA. We displayed our portable switching layout and sold donated magazine and equipment. The sponsor of the show made a donation to the Division at the conclusion of the show.

In November, the Division held a home layout tour of four model railroads in the Cary and Apex area. These included two HO, one O scale and a G scale garden layout.

In November, the Division participated in the Neuse River Valley train show. This was an opportunity to promote the hobby, the Division and the NMRA. We also sold donated

magazines and equipment to raise money for our "Holiday Trains for Kids" project.

In December, the Division participated in the Apex Historical Society home tour with an exhibit at the Apex train station on model railroading, tree making and we publicized the Division and NMRA activities.

In April, the Division participated in the Raleigh GATS show to promote the hobby, the Division and the NMRA. We also sold donated model railroad magazines and equipment.

In April, the Division had planned an all-day Saturday mini-meet with clinics and portable layouts. On the Monday before the meet, our space was pre-empted and the meet had to be canceled at the last minute. A replacement mini-meet is scheduled in October 2002.

In July the Division displayed its portable switching layout at the South Hills Mall train show, sold copies of model railroad magazines and publicized the Division and the NMRA activities.

Charitable and Educational Activities:

Over the past year the Division conducted educational clinics as listed above.

In response to the 9/11 disaster, we made a charitable donation of \$200 to the New York City Fireman's Relief Fund in memory of all those who were lost. (This gift was matched by one of our members.) We use most of the money that we raise throughout the year to fund our "Holiday Trains for Kids" project. In December we bought and distributed to needy youngsters seven HO scale trains sets worth approximately \$400.

Achievement Program Activity:

During the past year Joe Getz and Jeff Ward were awarded Golden Spike Awards, and Richard Genthner was awarded four AP certificates (Association Volunteer, Civil Engineer, Scenery and Author). In addition, a clinic was held at the October meeting on the subject of AP model judging.

Convention Activity

The Division has made no plans to sponsor either a Regional or National convention due to the small size of the Division and limited interest.

Future Directions

The Superintendent and one Trustee will be replaced at the annual meeting in January 2003.

The Veep's Corner

by Clint Hyde, MER VP

MER Elections:

In 2004, we will be electing Officers again. Two of the current office-holders are term-limited out of office, per the by-laws (President, Secretary). The region needs members to step forward and run for office—in particular I want to see at least two candidates for all four positions (including mine). You know the saying, "Ask not what your Region can do for you, but what you can do for the Region".

In addition, Alex Pope is resigning his position as Nominations Chair. His replacement will be John Johnson (JJ).

Elections in 2003 are for the three Director positions. Nominations must be received by April 15. Watch out for more details next issue.

Up close and personal:

It is my intention to visit each of the Divisions in 2003, if my schedule can work out that way—preferably at your larger activities. Please help me out here and keep me informed of them. I'd appreciate the offer of a bed/shower for times where I need to stay overnight. I'd like the opportunity to talk to the members as a group, if that's possible; if not, I'll talk to folks individually.

Notice to the members: in a 1996 photo in the LOCAL, I saw a couple of members with an official MER banner (you know the kind, two feet high by mumble-feet wide), at the Timonium show, where they had a table for advertising/recruiting. Do we still have this banner? Who has it? Please contact me if you know about this—I'd like to have it get used during recruiting episodes.

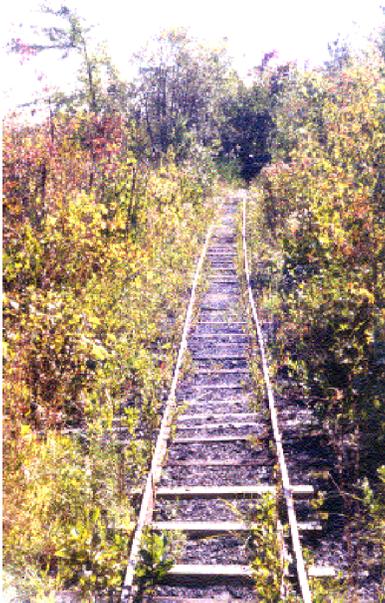
Other work:

In order that I not short-change this new VP job, I need to have someone new take over the publishing job on *The LOCAL*. It's good for AP Volunteer Points, and you know about MER things a lot sooner than most folks. I will be happy to support the transition, explain exactly what software I've been using and what substitutes could be used, etc. Contact me, Bob Minnis, or the Editor at our addresses on page 2.

As always, you are welcome to call me or email me about anything at all to do with MER; email is preferred, I'm a computin' kinda guy.

I picked up a flyer on a 2-foot gauge railroad located in Hammonton, NJ. I planned to visit the line on one of my trips to Abington, PA to see my parents. The date on the flyer was 1998. I kept putting the off the visit until the Cherry Hill Depot 2002 convention – a mere half-hour drive away from Hammonton. Upon contacting the owner of the railroad, he told me they don't have tours of the line. But when I mentioned that I was coming from York, PA to attend a model railroad convention in Cherry Hill, he told me to give him a call the day before I wanted to visit.

Before the convention banquet started, I called him and arranged a time to visit. I had no trouble finding the railroad. Upon driving into the rail facility area, a gentleman approached me and introduced himself as Charlie Ashmen. He asked if I would like a ride around to view the line. The transportation was a 1946 Willys Jeep with a power takeoff for a 2-inch fire line, air compressor, electric generator, and an 18-inch saw blade to cut firewood.



Camp and railroad founder Charlie Ashmen

We traveled over the 200-acre property known as Camp Haluwasa, a non-denominational Christian year-round camp. The railroad is approximately two and a half miles long with an additional half-mile of yard, passing sidings, and maintenance track. The road we traveled was just as wide as the Jeep. No way could cars

Who needs dwarf plants when your gauge is 24 inches?

travel all over the site. The function of the railroad is to transport campers and their luggage to various camping areas on the property. At the end of the week, the railroad transports the campers back to the station. The line is also used to give educational rides to guest groups who stay at the camp. For first time younger campers, the railroad increases the fun of camping.

A Model Railroad In 2-Foot Gauge The Haluwasa Shoreline Railroad

By Alan Frame

The motive power consists of four, scaled-down diesel-looking locomotives. Three have gasoline engines; one has a



Diesel-powered #480

Lambardini diesel engine. The doodlebug has a gas-electric drive. Twelve to eighteen campers ride in each of the six open gondola cars with bench seats. Luggage is carried on two flat cars with shallow sides. No train is complete without a caboose; the line has two of them. The line also has various pieces of maintenance-of-way equipment. My favorite was a bicycle built



Our intrepid author rides the bicycle built for two

for two. Mr. Ashmen welded two bicycle frames to a platform. He attached four flanged wheels to axles and mounted the axles to the platform. The rear sprockets of the bikes have an extra gear to drive gears attached to the axle.



Armstrong turntable with side-dump hopper in the background

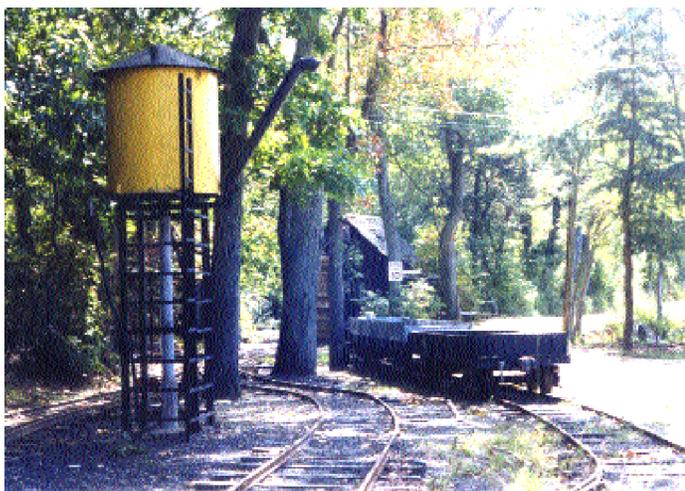
Railroad construction started in 1960. The rail is mostly 14 pound. Much of it came from old amusement parks, bogs, and even factories. Ties are treated 4x4s. The water tanks are used for locomotive fuel. The station was constructed this year. Its interior will be finished for next year's camping season and will look like what a full-sized railroad station would have.

The railroad has a turntable at the entrance to the locomotive and car sheds. There is also a wye where a complete train can be turned. As with any large railroad, a complete maintenance shop is needed. It has lathes, bending brakes, presses, and the usual assortment of parts.

The Haluwasa Shoreline Railroad Station



You can visit the railroad on-line at <http://www.haluwasa.org/rail-road.htm>. Camp Haluwasa is located at 377 S. Ehrke Rd., Hammonton, NJ 08037. Volunteers maintain the railroad, so if you can help, please call them at (609)-561-3081.



Fueling facilities with two low-sided flatcars used for hauling baggage

Haluwasa Shoreline Railroad Roster

Motive Power

Number	Axles	Power
Normal Assignments		
180	2-axle	Gasoline
Maintenance-of-Way		
290	4-axle	Gas-Electric
Passenger Service		
320	2-axle	Gasoline
MOW/Freight/back-up Passenger Service		
460	4-axle	Gasoline
Passenger Service		
480	4-axle	Diesel
Passenger/Freight Service		

Other Equipment

- 6 passenger cars
- 2 flat/baggage cars
- 2 cabooses
- 1 gondola/baggage car
- Various maintenance-of-way equipment

MID-EASTERN REGION, NMRA, INC.
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MER Special Tank Car Order Form



Car	QUANTITY	MEMBER PRICE *	NON-MEMBER PRICE	TOTAL
#2960	_____	\$9.95	\$14.95	\$ _____
#3020	_____	\$9.95	\$14.95	\$ _____
TOTAL \$				_____

These Anchor Petroleum tank cars are Athearn bodies custom painted by Con-Cor – tan tank, black letters.

SHIPPING: _____ CARS @ \$2.50 FOR FIRST CAR, \$1.50 FOR EACH ADDITIONAL \$ _____

* MY MER # IS _____ TOTAL AMOUNT ENCLOSED \$ _____

MAKE CHECKS PAYABLE TO MID EASTERN REGION.

Ship to: NAME _____
 ADDRESS _____
 CITY _____ STATE ____ ZIP _____

MAIL TO:
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 Business Manager
 9 Roosevelt Ave.
 Wilmington, DE 19804-3044

The Mid-Eastern Region Inc., NMRA
 An IRS Tax Exempt Organization
 Business Manager
 9 Roosevelt Ave.
 Wilmington, DE 19804-3044

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION/DUES RENEWAL NOTICE
 YOU MUST BE A MEMBER OF THE NATIONAL MODEL RAILROAD ASSOCIATION
 TO BE A MEMBER OF THE MID-EASTERN REGION

Name _____
 Address _____
 City _____ State ____ Zip (+4) _____
 email _____
 NMRA # _____ Expire Date _____
 MER # _____ Expire Date _____
 Scale _____ Birth date _____
 Tel # _____

Remittance Enclosed for:
 NMRA Dues: New Renewal _____
 1 year: \$45.00 2 years: \$90.00 \$ _____
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

MER Lapel Pin/Tie Tack @ \$6 each _____ \$ _____
 MER Cloth Patch @ \$3 each _____ \$ _____
 Donation _____ \$ _____
 TOTAL ENCLOSED _____ \$ _____

Make checks payable to the Mid-Eastern Region