

The

Local

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North Carolina Rail Run 2007: A Tar Heel Success!

By Phil Monat

GOOD FORTUNE smiled on me again last month, as I was able to find the time (and the last open slot!) to attend this year's North Carolina Rail Run, an annual OPSIG event held in the Golden Triangle area of North Carolina. This is the second year of this meet, as they build a vibrant and active operating community in the middle of the state while pulling in folks from all over the eastern United States to enjoy some terrific layouts.

They actually got started after reading about the success of the first Three Rivers OPSIG meet in Fort Wayne three years ago. NC Rail Run Coordinator Michael Penne saw the review of that event in **The Dispatcher's Office** and started thinking of trying to start such an event down in their neck of the woods. We are all lucky they did, since there is a wonderful collection of layouts to sample and everyone could not have been more pleasant and welcoming. I encourage any of you who live in an area with some operating layouts of thinking about setting up an event. The OPSIG has resources to help you get started, and many folks to offer help, support and guidance. It's a great way to build operators and promote the hobby.

On to the layouts, though I apologize in advance for the not discussing the layouts of the folks I did not get to visit (something to look forward to the next time).

After letting the bike wander down I-95 and then pointing it a bit west after Richmond, my first stop was to Steve Benezera's Carolina Western. This is a large and ambitious 1200 square foot layout in HO scale, residing in its own out building behind Steve's house. Set between Asheville and Boone in the mid 1940's, the layout has a 325' point to point mainline run with two long branch lines, two classification yards and lots of switching. The mainline is CTC controlled (virtual machine with touch screens) with signals, while the branches are dark territory. Using almost all steam, Steve focuses on switching but has a wide variety of jobs to keep folks interested. Car cards and waybills move the traffic, NCE moves the trains, and FRS radios are used for communi-

cation right now though a phone system is planned. Wide comfortable aisles, no duck-unders, and a pleasant environment make this layout a pleasure to visit. Steve has been working on this layout only for a few years and has not gotten to scenery yet, but when he does it will be a real operating delight.

Later, I visited the PRR Eno Valley Division of Ed Dougherty. Published in **Model Railroader** in 2006, this 770 square foot HO scale layout is a dream to operate. The PRR is here in all its glory – 1,450 foot of mainline track, 165 turnouts and over 135 signal heads. Ed took an older John Armstrong design and expanded it a bit, but the layout was not originally designed for operations. A complex helix arrangement and considerable hidden track takes some getting used to. Still, Ed has made it into a jewel with stunning scenery, craftsman buildings and expert weathering and painting. Again using CTC in the virtual touch screen mode (more on that later in this article), crews can take trains pounding up Horseshoe Curve, switch the towering steel mill at Johnstown, or classify hundreds of cars at the large Altoona yard. Car cards and waybills again move the traffic, and a full telephone system negates the need for radios. Ed has first-rate electronics and engineering. I had zero problems with derailments or any other technical issue. NCE controlled on commercial track, the layout runs very smoothly and is a real treat to operate on.

Next on the hit parade was a visit to The Monon Route, owned by Jack Frame. Published in **Model Railroader** in 1999, this is a completely finished mature layout of stunning beauty. Built by Jack and his operating crew, it is located in an 825 square foot building and features a 450-foot main line. True to its Monon roots, there are thru freights and locals running between those beautiful pocket-sized red & grey passenger trains. With multiple yards, including active mole staging on both the north (Chicago) and south (Louisville) end, the layout easily keeps two dispatchers and an operating crew of 13 busy. The scenery is complete and

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Keeping In Touch...

By Fred Miller, MMR
MER Business Manager

I HOPE ALL our members and friends had a good *Model Railroad Month* last November followed by a wonderful holiday. Perhaps you even found some train goodies under the tree. It was a good time to share the season with fellow model railroaders. As I have said a number of times before, this old timer always associates that time of year with memories of trains around the Christmas trees and big train displays in department stores a half century ago. How time flies when you are having fun.

The New Year always brings to mind statistics of what has happened during the past year. Our active membership declined about 4 percent since this time last year. We now stand at 2170. However with everyone's help, the 70+ current Rail Pass members will convert to regular membership, bringing the totals back up. I'll report on your progress with this effort next issue.

The number of members enjoying the printed and mailed version of this newsletter has increased significantly over the year to 45 percent with another 12 percent keeping posted with the Region's activities through the electronic version of our newsletter.

And speaking of statistics, I took another look at the ages of our membership. Of the 1868 members who have registered their birth date with NMRA National and the Region, the age span of MER members ranges from 9 to 97. The average age is 62, up by one year since last year's report. No surprise there!

Another little piece of statistical fun: We have the modeling scales registered for 825 members. The distribution looks like 80 percent for HO scale, 10 percent for N scale, 7 percent for O scale, and the remaining 3 percent divided up between G, S and Z scales. (The scales have been simplified to base scales and only primary modeling scales have been tabulated.) These numbers have remained rock solid from last year.

As we enter this New Year, get out all those stalled modeling projects and start enjoying your hobby of model railroading. As always *Keep in Touch* with any questions or changes in your subscriptions or addresses. A current address on file saves the MER some money.

Best wishes for the New Year of model railroading. 

The Local

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The 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.

The MER website is www.mer-nmra.org

President's Column

By Clint Hyde, MER President.

IT'S NEVER TOO LATE to be an Ambassador for the hobby. Sunday after the Lynchburg convention, James River Division Superintendent Ken Montero and I were eating lunch and the head chef came by to say thanks. He told us how he and his kids enjoyed seeing the NTRAK layout and talking to someone who had candy (most likely Dick or Karen Bronson). We said thanks for the meals (including the above-average banquet). The chef asked about other events and we got his name and invited him to the Division meeting.

Overall, the James River Flyer in Lynchburg, Virginia turned out pretty well. A huge thanks goes to the Division for hosting it. The hotel was very responsive to any of our needs. The clinics were good, the bus tour sounded fabulous and the white elephant sale went great. There were some excellent models in the judging room—just not as many as I'd have liked.

In case you missed it: I have announced the next car challenge. It is a "ventilated car". There of several flavors I know of, but ultimately it's your choice. The 3 styles are: a cattle stock car, a poultry car, or a watermelon car. Whichever one you want to build has to be scratch-built (no resin or plastic kits) and have air flow-

through side panels, not just end panels. There are other cars, of course. Two that come to mind are the hog car and the oyster car. If you have another one and aren't sure, send me an e-mail about it. If you're interested, I have some more photos of examples I can also e-mail you.

Here are some examples you can look at for the watermelon-car style:

http://www.bachmann.co.uk/prod1.php4?prod_selected=americano&prod=16

or

<http://www.steamfreightcars.com/modeling/models/welch/acl18604main.html>

There is a final incentive for everyone: if you build one of each kind, AND get a Merit Award on all three, AND have the highest point total, I will pay for your convention registration for 2008.

If no one builds all three and gets the Merit Awards, then it's my choice on a single car. The watermelon car is the least interesting, in my opinion. Good Luck! 

Railroad Operations and the North Carolina Rail Run 2007

By Dick Genthner, MMR

IN CASE YOU HAVE NOT HEARD, there is a large segment of the model railroader hobby that finds operating trains to be the most enjoyable and meaningful activity within the hobby. In fact there are modelers who enjoy simulated railroad operations so much they spend two or three evenings a week operating various layouts with similar enthusiasts. Good proof of this is the OPSIG group, which is the short name for the Operations Special Interest Group, an affiliate group of the NMRA. They publish their own quarterly journal of articles on all aspects of rail operations and how it enhances the enjoyment of model railroading. The OPSIG is dedicated "to contribute, wherever and whenever possible, to the promotion, growth, and understanding of the hobby of model railroading." Sounds pretty good doesn't it?

I personally belong to two operating groups, one that operates my railroad and a second that operates a much larger model railroad. I can say that these two evenings are the highlight of each month as far as model railroading goes. There other groups around the region that have similar operating sessions, and at each MER convention there are operating sessions scheduled for those attending. There is one group that holds a very concentrated schedule of operations over the Labor Day weekend. This group,

organized by Michael Penne, conducted a series of operations over the 2007 Labor Day weekend that was called "North Carolina Rail Run" and involved seven railroads and dozens of people in the Raleigh-Greensboro area. A great report that was featured in **The Dispatcher's Office** is also printed in this issue of **The Local**.

The MER plays a small role in these sessions by "sponsoring" the function much like they sponsor an annual regional convention. All the planning and operations are carried out by the local group. The MER's only role is to provide NMRA insurance coverage for those participating and to provide notice of the activity in **The Local**. (Note that to obtain the insurance coverage requires that all of the hosts must be current NMRA members and that any funds involved flow through the MER Treasurer.)

If you or your local model railroad operating groups would like to hold such "Rail Runs", the MER can help. Contact the MER President Clint Hyde for more information. I'm certain that as more modelers discover the pleasures of operations there ought to be many more Rail Runs in the future.

DICK GENTHNER lives in the New Jersey Division where he models HO Scale. 

well done, with lots of detail and some very interesting and complex switching trackage in several of the towns. Jack uses Wangrow Sstem 1 DCC, and radio headsets for road crews and a full phone system for yards and terminals. Car cards are in use, but with the interesting and helpful trick of having a small color photograph of the car at the top of the waybill – if you can't see the number or reporting marks you can still be certain it's the correct car. I've seen this before on N scale layouts, where it can be quite hard to read those it'sy bitsy numbers, but I was surprised how fast I started using the photograph to find cars in the yard. The layout is an operational delight, with Jack and his crew working hard to add modern operation aspects, such as unit trains with multiple block set offs, a large CTC machine and full working signals. A must see if ever there was one, especially if you like the Monon!

My next visit was to the Brandywine Valley Railroad of Dil Huey. A freelance layout loosely patterned on the old Wilmington and Northern (from Wilmington, Delaware north to Reading and a connection to Baltimore), Dil uses three levels in a 42'x30' 'fat L' plan to model approximately 1400 feet of track in a point to point design. A five level helix is used to connect the levels, with an active mole staging system set up at the base. The layout is lovely in it's appearance with complete scenery helped by a fully finished environment (walls, fascia, light, ceiling and floor). But what set this layout apart from any other I have ever seen is the control system, which is simply incredible. You have seen previous mention in the other layouts of 'virtual CTC machines' and touch screens – Dil is the source of all of that skill, knowledge and support to all of his friends. Instead of building an actual machine (as Jack Frame has done), Dil (and Steve Benezera and Ed Dougherty) have several large touch screens, which display an actual US&S machine view of their layout. Simply touching the appropriate switches and buttons puts things in motion. If you modify the layout, changing the code is all that is needed to alter the display to conform to your new track alignments.

But Dil takes this a step further, since his layout is entirely DC block controlled. Using a computer network, Dil has connected all turnouts, signals, occupancy detectors, and throttles to a central computer. Not only is the dispatcher's CTC machine virtual, but also every town and local yard has it's own touch screen. Every screen has multiple display options. You can call up a real time graphic display of the timetable line diagram and see where trains are, or you can call up a track layout of your district showing position of all turnouts and locomotives. You can also call up detailed power information about your locomotive (do you have enough fuel, are you out of sand, is the engine due for service?), and you can select multiple displays on of track in either direction, simply by scrolling across the track plan on your screen. In addition, you can use the display in its track plan mode to throw switches while you use the keyboard to run the locomotive.

The layout is controlled by 124 microcontrollers networked to a central computer, which assigns 15 DC power supplies ('cabs') to the appropriate blocks automatically, depending on switch position, signal indication, locomotive location, and dispatcher com-

mands. In addition to running locomotives thru the touch screens and keypads, there are also 16 hand held micro control stations (HARTs) for walk around control. The road trains use these, while the local yards and switcher most often use the stationary screens. All of this can be technically bewildering and many of us, as first time guests, were a little afraid of getting lost in the technology and not getting into the fun of running trains on such a beautiful layout.

That simply wasn't the case, however. After a few minutes, I found the throttle system intuitive and very accurate – you could call up run 1 to kiss couplers, 2 to start a string moving, 3 or 4 to get a cut rolling along. Using the arrow key you could slowly increase or decrease power, and the display on the screen always told you which direction you were going to move. In addition, the touch screens all have matrix ladders built in, so just a simple touch on the track you wanted to go to would align everything correctly. You could also look at the screen to tell when a train was coming your way, which was very handy since most of us were having so much fun we didn't hear the phone calls from the dispatcher!

Certainly this approach is not for everyone and it's technical complexity is daunting, to say the least. But I was very surprised to see how close it came to actually feeling like you were running a real railroad. The touch screens give you a tremendous amount of information, including information about your locomotive that no model manufacture has yet to even think about. Dil is working on a virtual locomotive – just image as you drift your engine down the lead and tie on to twenty cars. You try to pull out, but the engine starts to slip, so you must add sand. Throttling up slowly to run 8 with the sanders running, you start to drag the cut up the lead only to shut off the throttle and have the train coast for a dozen car lengths before it starts to drift backward. This is possible with Dil's system, and I look forward to seeing it implemented soon. Dil's layout is beautiful and a tremendous joy to operate on. If that isn't enough, his kindness and generosity with his time and talent have helped many other layout owners in the area enjoy their own layouts more. If that is not outstanding hospitality, I don't know what is.

My last stop was to Michael Pennie's Penn Central – Lehigh & Delaware Division. This is an N scale layout loosely based on the LV and CNJ in the Lehigh Valley area. Located in an 1100 square foot basement, this large and ambitious single level layout has all of its track and wiring complete. It is a point-to-point design with staging at either end (Buffalo on the north and Philadelphia on the south). Digitrax runs the trains with a dispatcher-issuing track warrants via FRS radios (signals and CTC are planned). Mike uses a waybill system that is car based. Each car has a small colored sticker on top that directs the car's routing. While this can be visually problematic to the look of the layout, it really simplifies the process of running trains and classifying cars. You don't have to look for the car numbers (always a challenge with N scale), and you never really have to worry about fumbling around for paperwork or losing the car card for a car – it's just on top! The Model Railroad Club in Union, New Jersey also uses this system, which works well since they move over 1,000 cars a session. I found after running the layout for a few hours, that one got used to it



very quickly and forgot about it's potential scenery spoiling effect. But one NEVER forgot about how easy it made the yards to run! Scenery is about 75 percent done, including one of the largest and most beautiful steel mill complexes I have yet seen. Mike has also hand laid most of the switches, which vary between #8 to #20 on the main. The equipment runs great and the layout operates extremely smoothly. The operating scheme is also first rate. Mike has two branch lines planned – when they come online this exciting and beautiful layout will be a true operating dream.

Other layouts that I sadly did not get to visit include Marcus Newbeubacher's Charleston, Roanoke & Eastern Railway, a coal hauling N scale layout running from Lewisburg to Roanoke. The layout uses three staging yards to simulate off line traffic, has a large classification yard in Lewisburg, and is single track with passing sidings for most of the mainline run. The layout is fully landscaped and uses the CATS dispatcher software, running a full CTC mainline operation with branches operating as dark territory. Guests were assigned jobs for the AM trick, and then changed assignments for the PM trick so they could enjoy more of the railroad. Digitrax controlled, FRS radios and car cards keep things moving smoothly.

This layout also interchanges with yet another N scale layout in the area, Bruce Faulkner's CSX Shenandoah Division. This layout is a 17' x 43' double deck design with a 280' main line run. It is located in two finished rooms of Bruce's new home. Bruce designed the layout to run long trains on a busy single track main line, using pushers on the steep grades. Set in the CSXT era of late 1980 to early 90s, the colorful locomotives really complement the fall color of the scenery. Bruce, like Marcus, also runs the JMRI based dispatcher software package CATS. This is a new layout, and although the yards aren't completed yet, there was plenty of action on the main with shifters begging for time from the dispatcher during the session. The switching operations were controlled by hand written switch lists, which worked well. Digitrax is again in use here, and block detection and CTC signals are well along. The scenery is just getting started and it's set in the fall, to better complement all of that color on the engines.

The last layout was Rick Knight's Knight Brothers Railroad. This HO scale layout is located in a 24' x 24' former garage and features 1200 feet of track on three levels. Staging on the east end is Linwood or Knoxville, and traveling west they work the busy Spencer Yard along with several other towns before ending in Asheville. It is a proto freelance design set in the modern era. Rick does not use a helix, instead linking the levels with some steep grades. Still, with all metal wheels, super elevated curves and Kadee couplers he has no problems and the entire track is visible. He uses Digitrax, FRS radios and car cards, and enjoys running coal drags and wood chip trains along with the rest of the general freight. A dinner train or rail fan trip makes the occasional passenger train appearance.

I would like to thank fellow OPSIG member Quintin Foster, who did in fact run on the three layouts above that I did not get to see. It was a great weekend in the Tar Heel State, and Michael Penne did a superb job of organizing and running the event. Nametags, schedules, maps and all of the paperwork were there and very well done. On top of that, the kindness and hospitality displayed by these folks continues to amaze me – what a great

hobby we have! Watch **The Dispatcher's Office** for the next posting of the North Carolina Rail Run – I highly recommend you sample the wonderful layouts and the great OPSIG hosts in the Golden Triangle area.

EDITOR'S NOTE: *This article is reprinted with the author's permission and first appeared in the July 2007 issue of **The Dispatcher's Office**, the official journal of the Operations Special Interest Group.* 

CAROLINA COASTERS THIRTEENTH ANNUAL TRAIN SHOW

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NAME THAT TRAIN! PASSENGER TRAIN TRIVIA

By Dan Cioffi

EDITOR'S NOTE: *Dan Cioffi is an active member of the Sunshine Region and current superintendent and Webmaster (both Regional and Divisional). He has compiled a list of trivia questions and answers on passenger trains. Test your knowledge and try and answer them all!*

QUESTIONS:

1. This train ran from New York City to Miami, FL. It was operated by the Seaboard Line and shared service with the Pennsylvania on their NE Corridor Tracks and also used the tracks of the Richmond, Fredericksburg and Potomac Railroad. It first went into service on Feb. 2, 1939 under a similar name.
2. This train was operated by the Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe Railway as Nos. 1 & 2 from 1954 to 1971. Its route traversed the entire Santa Fe line from San Francisco, California south to Los Angeles, then east to Chicago, Illinois.
3. This overnight train was operated by the Chicago, Burlington and Quincy Railroad and was Burlington Route train #3 eastbound and train #30 westbound. Its daytime sister train with a similar name operated over the same route.
4. Where did the name come from for the train in question # 3?
5. The Illinois Central Railroad operated this train with a diesel streamliner that was built in 1936 by Pullman-Standard and powered by General Motors' Electro-Motive Division.
6. Long before the days of orange and purple delivery trucks, this train of the same name started in the early 1930's as a service of the Pennsylvania Railroad and New York, New Haven and Hartford Railroad between Washington, DC and Boston.
7. This Santa Fe train was probably the shortest line under the Santa Fe name. The Santa Fe didn't operate it but did pay for part of the expenses of operating it. It probably served thousands of passengers a week. They parted ways with the operator in 1974.
8. At a quick glance, one might think this was a diesel led streamliner train operated by the Milwaukee Road, but a look at the calendar would have reminded you that you are in the era of steam. They ran 3 different trains that used this name.
9. This train started service in December 1971 and ended service in April 1981. 22 months later, the same service was continued by Amtrak.
10. In 1830, this steam-powered train carried 141 people six miles. It might have been the first passenger service in the US powered by steam.

ANSWERS:

1. The Silver Meteor. It first ran as Silver Service and was replaced by the Silver Star, running to Florida as one train, then splitting into two trains continuing service to either Miami or Tampa/St. Petersburg.
2. The San Francisco Chief. This train was one of the very last to be equipped with streamliners. Though named for the City of San Francisco, the train never went there, instead terminating in different places on the Oakland side of the bay.
3. The Ak-Sar-Ben Zephyr was the name of this train operated by the Chicago, Burlington & Quincy Railroad. All of their named trains contained the word Zephyr with "The Route of the Zephyrs" as their slogan.
4. The Ak-Sar-Ben Zephyr name was created by spelling Nebraska (Neb-ras-ka) backwards.
5. The Green Diamond was operated by the IC. It was the last streamliner built with the power car articulated with the train; future streamliners would feature a matched but separable locomotive. This train used a fixed, 5 car consist that was its ultimate undoing since the length of the train could not be changed to accommodate changes in passenger loads.
6. The Federal Express operated by the Pennsylvania Railroad connected the NJ to New York section of the line via several short line

roads over the years. The train was suspended in January 1916 until the Hells Gate Bridge was completed and opened on April 1, 1917, with the train now running on what is today's Northeast Corridor. In 1953, a notorious wreck occurred as the train was entering Union Station in Washington, DC. A brake valve was closed in Baltimore and the train was unable to stop in time pushing GG1 # 4876 and the first 2 passenger cars into the baggage room of the station. Demonstrating the durability of the GG1, it was cut into 3 pieces, moved to the Altoona shops and reassembled. It was one of the last GG1's.

7. The Disneyland and Sante Fe Railroad at Disneyland was sponsored by the Sante Fe Railroad until 1974. The train was an integral part of Walt Disney's idea for the park. A train fan since he was a child, legend has it that when he first thought of the design of Disneyland, he drew a circle and went to his "imagers" and said, "The circle is the train ride, now fill it in."

8. The Twin Cities Hiawatha, the North Woods Hiawatha and the Midwest Hiawatha trains each had a steam locomotive that would look very similar to the F units of the future. In fact, the Milwaukee called them Class A and Class F7 engines. It is said that these trains regularly exceeded 100 mph and it is believed that some of them reached 120 mph. There isn't any formal evidence of this as the speed was illegal.

9. The Auto-Train, the Amtrak's Auto Train connects Sanford, Florida (east of Orlando) to Lorton, VA. It allows passengers to bring the car on the train and have it ready for them when they reach their destination. It is Amtrak's highest revenue train and it is its most profitable one. It has the singular distinction of being the longest passenger train in operation with 40 or more cars in the trains consist.

10. The Best Friend of Charleston operated by The South Carolina Canal and Railroad Company in Charleston, SC. The engine was destroyed by an explosion in its first year in operation. A replica was constructed in 1928 from the original plans and the Southern Railway operated excursions with the engine and donated it to the City of Charleston in 1993. 

HEY MEMBERS, are you too busy modeling, operating, scratch building and even kit bashing railroads to print and then whittle away precious minutes filling out the Achievement Program forms??? Simplify your life by downloading the AP forms from the NMRA website (<http://www.nmra.org/achievement/apforms.html>). The forms are available in several different formats including MS Word documents. You can add your own information by editing the forms on your PC. 

With deepest sympathy we mourn the passing of one of our members.

Our thoughts and prayers go out to Ray Bilodeau's wife and family. Most of you know Ray was our Contest Chair and was fighting several illnesses. Ray's wish was to be cremated and have his ashes spread over the Colorado narrow gauge country. Cards can be sent to his wife:

Rita Lynam
9 Roosevelt Avenue
Wilmington, DE 19804-3044

NEEDED: Someone to run the MER Convention Auction Team (CAT) beginning in 2008

RESPONSIBILITIES include making sure that auction items get recorded properly in the auction software, making sure the auction-team volunteers are available, that there is an auctioneer available (normally the inimitable Bob Charles), and that sales info is recorded properly during the auction and that checkout is handled completely and correctly.

NEEDED: Someone to be in charge of MER Convention door-prize/raffle items, beginning in 2008. Responsibilities include contacting potential donors (existing list available) and requesting donation items, making sure that there are raffle tickets present at the convention, and little boxes to put the tickets in, bringing the items to the convention, setup, and final distribution of the items near the end of the convention.

NEEDED: Someone to be in charge of the *Made in the MER* Trade Show, beginning in 2008. Responsibilities include finding potential participants, talking to them, convincing them to participate, getting them to give a clinic at the convention, organizing their space at the convention, making sure that part goes ok. If you are interested in doing this, you can assist this year, as we smooth out the process.

CONTACT MER President, Clint Hyde (all contact information is listed on page 2) if interested! 

The James River Flyer Convention Contest Report



JAMES RIVER FLYER

By Richard Landt
MER Model Contest Chairman
Photographs by Derek Wimberly

THE JAMES RIVER DIVISION who hosted the 2007 MER convention did an excellent job by providing the room and resources to make the Model, Photo and Arts & Crafts Contests a successful part of the convention. Thanks to Ken Montero, Bob Alvis and the entire convention staff for their thorough preparations. We especially appreciated the Division members who volunteered their time to assist with the entry registration process.

As always, there are many individuals who contribute to the task of running the contests. We sorely missed Ray Bilodeau, our MER Contests Chairman, who was not able to attend the convention because of health issues. Ray was instrumental in doing all of the “up front” work with the convention staff, which included providing the contest information posted on the convention web site. I also want to thank Roger Ossman, Photo Contest Chairman for coordinating the photo judging and tallying the popular vote Photo contest. Thanks also to Bob Minnis for setting up the photo display rack and assisting with room preparation.

Our judges for the model contest included MMRs: Bob Charles, Noll Horan, and Kurt Kramke, Dennis Vaccaro, Chuck Hladik, Dick Landt, Martin Brechbiel and Charlie Flichman. John Bell and Fred Willis also participated as observers and Apprentice Judges. We also appreciate John Johnson’s ordering and delivering the plaques and Derek Wimberly for photographing the contest models. Finally, I also want to thank Rita Lynam for her patience and humor in answering questions and relaying information to Ray.

Most of all, I want to thank all who participated in the contests by bringing their models, photos and crafts. While we would always like to see a greater number of model entries (24 this year), the models that were entered were very good. MER AP Chairman Charlie Flichman, presented Achievement Merit Awards to eleven models.

The model contest room always seems to attract visitors between and during the clinics. As modelers we like to see what other modelers have made, look at how they did it and maybe get some ideas for work on our own layouts. So I encourage each of you to share your modeling efforts at the 2008 convention in Reston, VA. Now for the awards.....

SPECIAL AWARDS

The Clyde Gerald Kit-Bash Award: recognizes the best kit bashed model in the model contest. This MER award was presented to John Johnson for his HO Scale C&O Boxcar.

The Blue Lantern Award: is sponsored by the Narrow Gauge Car Shop and given to the model that best represents branchline or private line equipment or facility with no more than 40 percent



Winner of “The Best in Show” and “Clyde Gerald Kit-Bash” awards – John Johnson

commercial parts. John Griffith was awarded the blue lantern for his HO_{N3} Scale East Broad Top #27 caboose.



Winner of “The Blue Lantern” award – John Griffith and his HO_{N3} Scale East Broad Top #2 caboose.

The Philadelphia New Modeler Award: is given to the first-time entrant in the model contest with the highest point score. This year’s winner was John Bell for his HO Scale CB&Q GS1&2 Rebuilt Gondola.



Winner of “The Philadelphia New Modeler” award – John Bell and his CB&Q GS 1 & 2 Rebuilt Gondola.

The President's Award: was chosen by MER President Clint Hyde and given to the best model that is an example of an articulated car—"variations on a theme" by John Armstrong. The winner of this prestigious award was Martin Brechbiel for his O Scale Lugubrium Articulated Tank Car.



Winner of "The President's" Award – Martin Brechbiel and his O Scale Lugubrium Articulated Tank Car.

The Marv Kershner Award: is sponsored and selected by the South Mountain Division. This award recognizes outstanding creativity in modeling. Bill Day received this award for his animated N Scale Blast Furnace 7.



Winner of "The Best in Show-Popular Vote" and "The Marv Kershner" awards – Bill Day and his N Scale Blast Furnace #7.

The Pride of Dixie Award: was awarded for the church model earning the highest score in the model contest. This award is sponsored by the James River Division and was won by Chuck Hladik, with his model of Bellows Falls Baptist Church.



Winner of "The Pride of Dixie" award – Chuck Hladik and his model of Bellows Falls Baptist Church.

The MER Narrow Gauge Award: is given to the narrow gauge model achieving the highest score in the judged model contest. This award is privately sponsored by MER modelers: Charlie Flichman, Norm Garner, Noll Horan and Ray Bilodeau. The third annual narrow gauge award winner was John Griffith for his HO_{N3} Scale Class A Climax 18-ton steam locomotive.



Winner "The MER Narrow Gauge" award – John Griffith and his HO_{N3} Scale Class A Climax 18-ton steam locomotive

The Best in Show Award: is awarded to the entry with the highest points score in the model contest. John Johnson received this award for his HO Scale C&O Boxcar.

The Best in Show – Popular Vote Award: is awarded to the model contest entry receiving the most votes. Bill Day won this award with his On-Line Structure, Blast Furnace 7.

Favorite Train: Chosen by popular vote. John Johnson – PRR Coal Drag

MODEL CONTEST WINNERS

STEAM

1st Place – John Griffith – HO_{N3} Scale Class A Climax – 18 ton*

DIESEL

1st Place – John Johnson – HO Scale PRR NW2

FREIGHT CAR

Best in show – John Johnson – HO Scale C&O Boxcar*

1st Place – John Bell – HO Scale CB&Q GS1&2 Rebuilt Gondola*

2nd Place – Martin Brechbiel – O Scale Lugubrium Articulated Car

3rd Place – George Downer – HO Scale Ye Olde Huff-N-Puff Gondola

MAINTENANCE OF WAY

1st Place – John Johnson – HO Scale Western Union Supply Car

CABOOSE / CABIN CAR

1st Place – John Griffith – HO_{N3} Scale East Broad Top #27*

TRACTION

1st Place – Martin Brechbiel – O Scale CG&W#10 Snow Plow*

continued on page 10



**1st place-Traction – O Scale CG&W#10
Snow Plow by Martin Brechbiel**

PASSENGER CAR

1st Place – John Griffith – HOn3 Scale East Broad Top Combine #14*

2nd Place – John Bell – HO Scale PRR BM70n



2nd place-Passenger Car – HO Scale PRR BM70n by John Bell.

3rd Place – Charles Hladik – HO Scale Rutland Milk Car

STRUCTURE ON-LINE

1st Place – Martin Brechbiel – O Scale Clugston’s Store*

2nd Place – Bill Day – N Scale Blast Furnace 7*

3rd Place – Martin Brechbiel – O Scale Johnson’s Small Engine Repair & Welding*

STRUCTURE OFF-LINE

1st Place – Martin Brechbiel – O Scale Lemaster’s Post Office*

2nd Place – John Johnson – HO Scale House at Spruce Creek, PA*

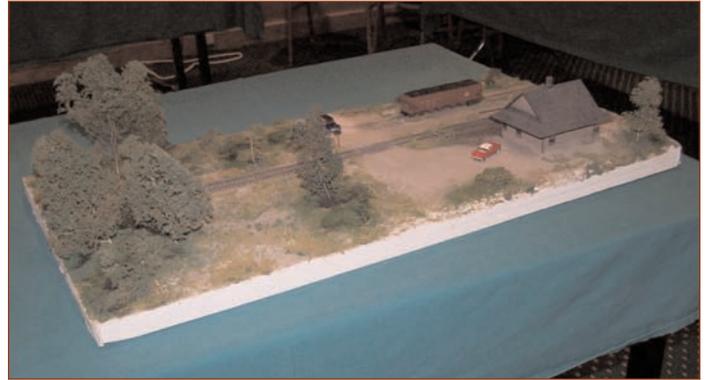
3rd Place – George Downer – HO Scale Welding Shop



**3rd place-
Structure Off-Line
– George Downer
and his HO Scale
Welding Shop.**

DISPLAY ON-LINE

1st Place – John Johnson – HO Scale PRR Station Scene



1st place-Display On-Line Pennsylvania Railroad Station scene by John Johnson.

* Denotes AP Merit Award

PHOTO CONTEST

Roger Ossman, our Photo Contest Chairman, is pleased to announce the winners of the photo contest. The Photo contest included a Best-in-Show Award selected by a panel of judges. Contest winners in the Model, Prototype-Steam and Prototype-Other categories were determined by popular vote. There were no entries for Artistic Photos.

BEST-IN-SHOW

Roger Cason – Durango & Silverton #473 on Bridge

MODEL

1st Place – John Johnson – Near Driftwood

2nd Place – John Johnson – Westbound M1a

3rd Place – Roger Cason – Yardmaster

PROTOTYPE: STEAM

1st Place – Roger Cason – Durango & Silverton #473 on Bridge

2nd Place – Roger Cason – A Little Sunlight on a Winter Day

3rd Place – Roger Cason – Wilmington Western

PROTOTYPE: OTHER

1st Place – Roger Cason – Amtrak at Fairhope

2nd Place – Bob Minnis – Promontary Point

3rd Place – Bob Minnis – Deadline Caboose

ARTS & CRAFTS CONTEST

RAIL

1st Place – John Johnson – Drawing of PRR 11sa

If you have any questions about NMRA or MER contest rules and regulations, NMRA judging of models, apprentice judging, contest questions of any kind, suggestions or whatever you might want to talk about, please contact Ray Bilodeau at raymondbilodeau@aol.com or contact Dick Landt at rlandt@verizon.net. 

Items of Interest from the James River Flyer Convention

By Roger L. Cason, MMR
MER Secretary

TWO MEETINGS were held in conjunction with the recent MER convention in Lynchburg, VA. First, a Board of Directors meeting and second the Annual Meeting of MER members.

Next MER Convention

The next MER convention will be 10/16/08 – 10/19/08 at the Sheraton Hotel in Reston, VA. This is an excellent location, and an excellent hotel – one that we have used before. Mark your calendars now!!

Division Territory

Following the process specified in the MER Bylaws, the Board voted to expand the territory of the Carolina Piedmont Division to include the following counties in North Carolina: Chatham, Hoke, Moore, Robeson, Vance, Warren, and Person.

Similarly, the board voted to expand the territory of the Potomac Division to include Howard County, Maryland (the Baltimore area).

In practice, this means that any NMRA member residing in those counties is automatically a member of the relevant Division.

Paying for RailPass

As you may remember, the NMRA instituted the RailPass membership several years ago. For \$9.95, a new prospective member may join the NMRA for six months, receive all the relevant publications, and participate in most national, regional, and divisional activities. Going one step farther, the MER has paid the cost for interested prospective members in the MER – in effect, a subsidy

to encourage people to take a close look at NMRA. To date, sixty nine (69) people have taken advantage of the MER offer.

In January 2008, the MER board will decide whether to continue the foregoing payment plan. If you have any questions or comments, pass them along to any MER officer or director.

Our Good Financial Situation

Thanks to good financial management and tight cost control for many years, the MER is in the enviable position of being in excellent financial health. We may be in a position to invest in some “good works” – for example, member recruitment, reduced convention cost, helping the divisions, special support for selected national programs, community service, etc. If you have any suggestions of preferences, pass them along to any MER officer or director.

The Next MER Election

In 2008, MER members will elect the four regional officers. President Hyde and Vice President Horan are not eligible to run for re-election because of term limits. Secretary Cason has indicated that he will not run for re-election. Treasurer Buckingham does plan to run for re-election. If you are interested in serving, or if you would like to suggest someone for one of these offices, please contact Nominations Committee Chairman:

John Johnson, MMR
22398 Scojo Drive
Franklin, VA 23851.
Or phone: (757) 562-5917. 

Carolina Southern Division: Railroad Modeling University Activity Report

The “second semester” of the Railroad Modeling University, sponsored by the Carolina Southern Division will be held on Saturday, January 19th at the First Baptist Church, located at 301 South Davidson Street in Downtown Charlotte, North Carolina.

Early registration can be made by visiting www.bytedesign.com/CSDiv/RMU%20Registration.htm, then complete



and mail the PDF form. Early registration forms are due by January 11th. All other registration begins at 8:30 AM.

Clinics and activities begin at 9 AM and run until 1 PM. The total cost is \$5. Following the University the Division will hold an annual membership meeting at a local restaurant (to be announced). 

Building your Own Track Bumpers or Stops

Article and photographs by James Allen

ONE DAY WHILE WORKING on a section of scenery, I found that I had about a half of a small bowl of sculpture mold material left over. If you have not worked with sculpture mold before the material comes in 3 grits or consistencies: fine, med and course. It is very easy to work with, and does not dry so fast that you have to hurry.

As I looked at the extra material it struck me that it could be mounded up at the end of a track to keep the freight cars from sliding off of the end.

Step one: I created an "L" shape with two boards, one on

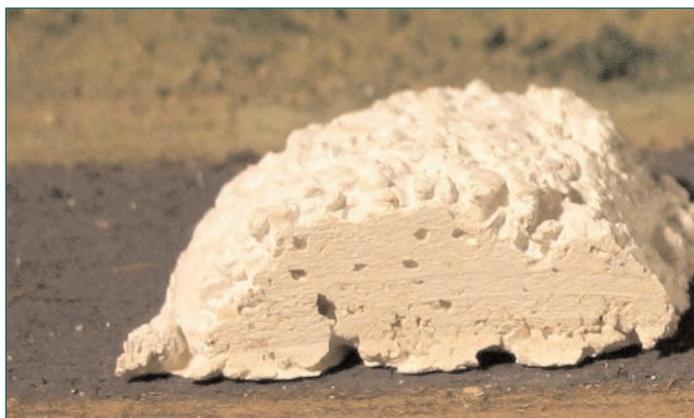


Photo 1: The beginning stage of the track bumper.

top of the other. First, I took an old 2 x 4 about 20 inches long and laid it down flat. Next, I placed another 2 x 4 of around the same size on its side running along the other board. Then take out enough of the material to create your pile (depending on what scale you are modeling). I found that using a little spackling knife is best. Work the material up against the top board to create the flat end. You have about 30 or so minutes to work with this material so you do not have to hurry. If the material is extra bulky, simply spray a little water to your pile and smooth it



Photo 2: Railroad ties cut and glued together with a coupler height hole complete the track bumper.

out. I normally let these dry over night. See photo 1.

Step two: Cut railroad ties to your desired length; again this depends on your scale. These will go up against the flat side. You can take two approaches here. The first being to simply put a solid stack of ties up against the flat side. Approach two would be to leave a cutout in the wall for the couple to slide into.

Personally I like to use approach two. Take your new concrete mound and put it up against the end of some track, then mark the coupler opening on the flat surface of the pile. Next measure out some shorter ties for the opening. For HO scale I cut six long ties, and 6 short ties. Then I glued 3 of the long ties one on top of one another. Then I glued 3 of the short ties to the left side, and the other 3 short ties on the right side. This gives me my opening in the middle. Finish by gluing the remaining 3 long ties on top of the short ties.

Step three: Hold the completed wall of railroad ties up against the flat end of your pile to mark where the coupler comes

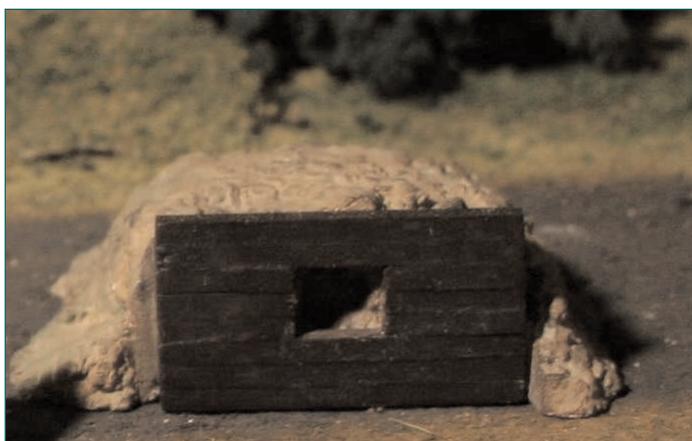


Photo 3: The painted and completed track bumper.

through. This should match your earlier mark. Next take a small knife or file and dig out a small area for the end of the coupler. What you are trying to accomplish here is, to have the freight car bump against the wall without damaging the coupler. See photo 2.

Step four: Paint your concrete pile and railroad tie wall. I used Polly scale concrete paint for the concrete pile and I mixed Polly scale brown with Polly scale black for the railroad tie wall. Once dry you can glue the wall into place. See photo 3.

EDITOR'S NOTE: This how-to is printed with the author's permission and first appeared on his website: www.southernexchange.net.

JIM ALLEN lives in the Carolina Southern Division where he models HO scale. 

New Membership Recruitment Program

As an aid to membership recruitment, NMRA recently instituted a six month "Railpass" trial membership program which costs the applicant \$9.95. Building on this idea, the MER is instituting a program whereby it will pay the \$9.95 Railpass fee for interested applicants in the MER. In other words, we are making available FREE six month Railpass trial memberships to encourage recruitment of regular members.

What's covered?

Same as Railpass—receive six issues of **Scale Rails**, three issues of **The Local**, eligibility to attend conventions and meets, eligibility to participate in contests.

What's not covered?

Same as Railpass—applicants cannot vote or hold office, and will not receive the New Member Pak from national (it's rather expensive).

Who can be recruited?

Anyone living within the MER who has not been a member of NMRA during the past thirty months.

How will the recruitment process work?

(1) The prospective member fills out the MER trial membership application form which was sent to all division superintendents (not the standard NMRA Railpass form) (2) The "recruiter"

should also sign the form, and then forward it to: Fred Miller, MER Business Manager, 8960 Challis Hill Lane, Charlotte, NC 28226-2686. (3) Fred will record the information he needs in his data base, and will forward the application to the MER Treasurer. (4) The Treasurer will add the necessary check and forward the application and check to the national headquarters in Chattanooga.

What happens after the member's six month trial period?

The Railpass trial member will receive a standard dues notice from national headquarters. We hope a substantial number of Railpass trial members will sign up to become regular members.

Are there limits on the program?

The MER has allocated \$2,000 for this program. The program will stop at the end of year 2007, or when we have spent \$2,000 – whichever comes first. When and if we approach either limit, Division Superintendents and members of the MER Board of Directors will be notified. At that time, the program will be evaluated by the MER Board of Directors. If successful, we will try to continue it.

For questions?

Contact Fred Miller, MER Business Manager (mailing address is above, 704-752-5138, tractionfan@aol.com), or Roger L. Cason, MER Secretary (1125 Grinnell Road, Wilmington, DE, 19803-5125, 302-478-2550, rogercason@juno.com). 

National Model Railroad Association (NMRA) Mid-Eastern Region Application for Free "Railpass" Trial Membership

YES, please sign me up for a free six month Railpass trial membership in the NMRA—which includes membership in the Mid-Eastern Region, and in my local Division. During this six month period, I understand that I may attend conventions and meets, and participate in contests. I will receive **Scale Rails**, the monthly national magazine, and **The Local**, the bi-monthly regional newsletter. I will not be eligible to vote, hold office, or receive a New Member Pak.

I also understand that the \$9.95 cost of this six month Railpass trial membership is being paid by the Mid-Eastern Region. (Regardless of who pays, six month \$9.95 memberships are available only once to each person.)

At the end of the six months, I may join NMRA, paying the regular active member dues.

During the past thirty months, I have **not** been a member of NMRA.

=====

Name: _____

Street Address: _____

City/State/Zip: _____

Phone: (_____) _____

Email: _____

Scale(s): _____ Date of Birth: _____

Signature of Applicant: _____

Signature of "Recruiter": _____
(A Regional or Divisional officer or board member)

=====

When this form is completed,
mail it to:

Fred Miller MMR
MER Business Manager
8960 Challis Hill Lane
Charlotte, NC 28226-2686

Do **not** mail it directly to MMRA
headquarters in Chattanooga, TN.

Date of form: 1/31/07

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These 40' Western Maryland N-Scale box cars are Micro-Train bodies custom painted by The Freight Yard. They are box car red with prominent white "speed lettering".



These 40' RF&P PS-1 HO-Scale box cars are Accurail bodies, custom painted by Accurail. They are blue with aluminum-colored doors, and feature prominent white lettering.



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#29290	_____	\$19.95	\$23.95	\$_____
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Shipping \$2.50 for first car, + \$1.50 for each additional car				\$_____

RF&P HO-SCALE CARS	QUANTITY	MEMBER PRICE*	NON-MEMBER PRICE	TOTAL
#2836	_____	\$11.95	\$14.95	\$_____
#2874	_____	\$11.95	\$14.95	\$_____
Shipping: \$2.00 for each car (not for each order)				\$_____

* Please list your MER or NMRA Membership # _____

MER CLOTH PATCH**	QUANTITY _____	\$3.00 including S&H	\$_____
MER LAPEL PIN/TIE TACK**	QUANTITY _____	\$6.00 including S&H	\$_____

MER HO-SCALE STRUCTURE KIT**	QUANTITY	MEMBER PRICE*	TOTAL
Milk Station	_____	\$25.00 postpaid	\$_____
Small Freight Station	_____	\$25.00 postpaid	\$_____

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CALLBOARD Coming Events

January 5th and 6th, Noon till 4 PM. Cheltenham Model Railroad Club Open House. 8000 Old York Road (at railroad bridge), adjacent to Elkins Park Square, Elkins Park, PA 19027. Admission free, but donations gratefully accepted. For more information, call (215) 635-9747, or visit <http://www.cheltenhammrr.org>.

January 12th and 13th, Noon till 4 PM. Cheltenham Model Railroad Club Open House. See above listing for more information. Snow dates are January 19th and 20th.

January 12th and 13th, 10 AM till 4 PM both days. Great Train Expo at the Dixie Classic Fairgrounds in Winston-Salem, N.C. Cost: \$7. Kids 12 and under are free. For complete information visit www.trainexpoinc.com.

January 12th, 10 AM till 4 PM. Wade's Train Town Open House, operated by Carolina Southern Division members, at the Brookford Town Center in Brookford, NC.

January 18th and 19th. Joint meeting by the New Jersey and Philadelphia Divisions. Layout tours on Friday, 7 PM till 10 PM. Clinics on Saturday, 9 AM till Noon, at Haddon Township High School located at 406 Memorial Ave in Westmont NJ. Layout tours continue on Saturday, 1 PM till 4 PM. Contact Mike McNamara for more information. (856) 824-0879 or e-mail mikemcnh@comcast.net.

January 19th, 9 AM till 1 PM. Carolina Southern Division – “Second Semester” Railroad Modeling University at the First Baptist Church, at 300 S. Davidson St in Charlotte, NC. Cost: \$5. Registration starts at 8:30 AM. The University will be followed by the Annual Division Meeting at a local restaurant (to be announced). See inside for more details and contact information.

January 28th, 1 PM till 4 PM. Potomac Division layout tour in Damascus, MD. Contact layout coordinator: Tom Brodrick at (301) 253-0558 or e-mail t.brodbrod@comcast.net.

February 2nd and 3rd. The Great Scale Model Train Show in Timonium at the Maryland State Fairgrounds. Saturday, 9 AM till 4 PM; Sunday, 10 AM till 4 PM. Cost: \$7. Kids 12 and under are free. For complete information visit www.gsmts.com.

February 9th, 10 AM till 4 PM. Wade's Train Town Open House, operated by Carolina Southern Division members, at the Brookford Town Center in Brookford, N.C.

February 16th and 17th. World's Greatest Hobby Show at Hampton Roads Convention Center in Hampton, VA. Saturday, 10 AM till 6 PM; Sunday, 10 AM till 5 PM. Cost: \$10 (good for both days). Kids 16 and under are free. For complete information visit www.wghshow.com.

February 23rd and 24th. Carolina Coaster 13th Annual Train show in New Bern, NC. See inside for complete details and contact information.

Achievement Program Update

By Charlie Flichman, MER AP Manager

Since the last report in **The Local**, the following Achievement Program certificates were earned and awarded:

Division 4 – Tidewater

Bill Fay – *Association Volunteer*

James Keiper – *Association Volunteer*

Division 5 – James River

Charles G. Hladik – *Structures*

Charles G. Hladik – *Association Official*

Division 12 – Carolina Southern

James S. Allen – *Structures*

MER At Large

Fred Lagno – *Author*

In a perfect world, this information will appear soon in **Scale Rails**. This should not deter you from giving recognition locally. Normally you will be able to recognize AP accomplishments long before the names appear in **Scale Rails**.

Here is a running total of how many Gold Spikes and AP Merit awards have been earned in the last year. Since December 1, 2006 MER members have earned 19 Gold Spikes, 21 AP Merit Awards and 1 MMR. 

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CALLING ALL READERS:

We need to show our support for the NMRA and specifically the MER by producing the best and most informative newsletter possible, to do that I need your help. Our newsletter is called **The Local**, because local people benefit from reading it every time. Please write and submit any articles (with or without photos) to the editor via e-mail: stevesexpressrr@yahoo.com or via the snail mail address listed on page 2. Don't pass up this great opportunity to help out and earn AP points at the same time!! 

**NEEDED:
Model Contest Manager
for the MER**

Convention attendance,
computer wizardry, keen eye and
modeling skills a must.

Humor, scale blindness, patience,
fairness and impartiality will
take you to the top!

Please contact Clint Hyde,
chide@cox.net
and
Ray Bilodeau,
raymondbilodeau@aol.com. 