

The Local

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Number 1

Make Your Own Miniature Plug Sets

Article and photo by Fred Miller, MMR

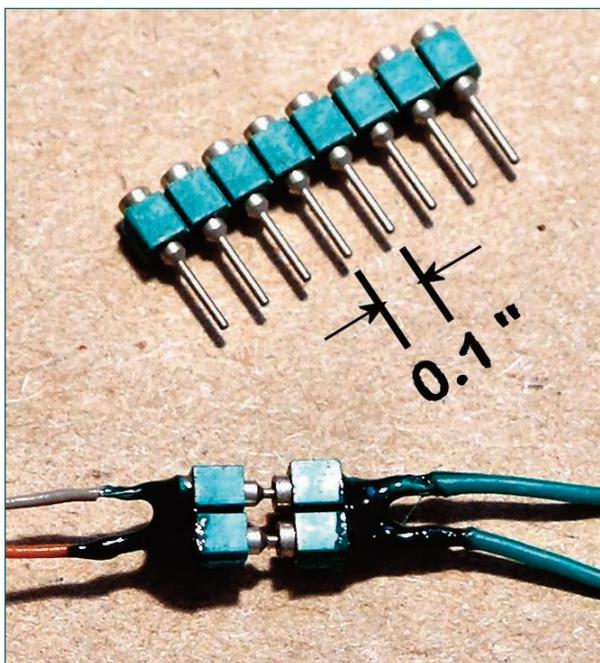
MINIATURE PLUG SETS are useful in several model railroading projects. Chief among those uses would be connections between an engine and tender on a steam locomotive, and in making various connections with DCC decoders within a locomotive.

Sources for miniature connectors include Micro-Mark (#83858 – set of 10 pairs) and Miniaturics (#50-001 series of 2, 3 or 4 contacts – sets of 2 pairs). Both of these products meet the needs. However, the Miniaturics line is a bit expensive and the Micro-Mark designs are a bit chunky because of their snap-lock feature.

For some time now I have been making my own plug sets at only pennies a piece. I use commercially available Machine Contact Single-in-line Female Sockets. These are intended for construction of sockets on electronic circuit boards. They can mate with themselves, i.e., the pin of one can be inserted into the socket end of an identical pin.

The socket pins come in a strip, which enables easy “break-away” to the desired size. A strip of 10 pins is available from Jameco Electronics for 27 cents (Jameco #102201) Jameco also sells a strip of 30

for 99 cents (#78642). Digi-key offers a large variety. An example is a strip of 40 for \$2.75 (Digikey #A460-ND). It is important to obtain the Machine Contact variety for the best reliability.



A simple soldering of your leads to either the pin side or into the hole on the opposite side will enable you to make your own plug sets at only pennies a piece.

As can be seen in the photo, it's just a simple matter of soldering your leads to either the pin side, or into the hole on the opposite side. A small soldering iron and a tiny spot of resin flux does the trick very easily. I like to coat the exposed wire with “Liquid Tape” to insulate the connections. I typically make either one conductor pin sets or two conductors, as shown in the photo. However, other configurations are just as easy.

The websites for the companies referenced in the article are:
Micro-Mark: www.micromark.com.
Miniaturics: www.miniaturics.com.
Jameco Electronics:
www.jameco.com.
Digi-key: www.digikey.com.

FRED MILLER, MMR is the MER's business manager. He lives in the Carolina Southern Division where he models HO and O Scale Trac-tion. 🚂

Keeping In Touch...

By Fred Miller, MMR
MER Business Manager

I trust our members and friends had a good *Model Railroad Month* followed by a wonderful holiday season. It is always a good time to share our hobby with family and fellow model railroaders. I don't know about you, but I got my trains running around the Christmas tree again this year. OK...so it was a big trolley.

Each New Year brings to mind statistics of what has happened during the past year. Our active membership grew this past year to a total of almost 2,300, a nice increment of a couple hundred. The growth is reflected in part by the excellent progress with our Rail Pass subsidy program. At this writing, we have subsidized 260 applications, 30 percent of those Rail Pass members have since converted to regular membership, with another 30 percent still within their 6-month membership.

The number of members enjoying the printed and mailed version of this newsletter has increased over the year to 52 percent of active membership. Another 22 percent keep posted with the Region's activities through the electronic version of our newsletter.

I took another look at the ages of our membership. Of the 1,780 active members who have registered their birth date with NMRA National and the Region, the average age remains at 63. No surprise there!

Another little piece of statistical fun: We have the modeling scales registered for 798 active members. The distribution changed a bit from last year with 77 percent in HO scale, 11 percent in N scale, 8 percent in O scale, and the remaining 4 percent divided up between G, S and Z scales. The 3 percent HO lost was spread as growth to the other three categories (The scales have been simplified to base scales and only primary modeling scales have been tabulated.)

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 <http://mer.nmra.org/>

Some Notes from the President

By Roger L. Cason, MMR
President

A GREAT CONVENTION!!

I hope that everyone who attended the MER convention in Hagerstown had as much fun as I did. Successful conventions like this one result from the good work of two groups of members. One group is supplied by the region, and handles tasks that tend to be similar for all conventions (for example, registration and contests). The other group of members is local, and handles things like layout and local prototype tours. At Hagerstown, both groups did a great job, resulting in a fine event.

NEW DIRECTORS

In the MER election just held, one of our three directors (P.J. Mattson) was re-elected for a two-year term on the MER Board of Directors. Two other members were newly elected – Steve August and Don Jennings. Our sincere thanks to outgoing directors Herb Gishlick and Chuck Hladik who are stepping down after a lot of dedicated service.

NEXT ELECTION

Speaking of elections...the MER membership approved a Bylaws change on the requirements to run for MER President. Formerly, to run for President, a member had to have been elected to and served at least a full two-year term as an MER officer or director. The approved Bylaws change expands eligibility to also include serving two years as a Division Superintendent. (Full disclosure: I was the one who instigated this change, based on our recent MER experience.) This change will be effective in the next election, held in the fall of 2010. FYI, I do not plan to run for re-election as President in 2010.

NEW MEMBER MATERIAL

NMRA headquarters has brochures and materials that may be helpful to you in recruiting new members. Email Office Manager Jenny Hendricks (hq@hq.nmra.org), and ask for a “New Member Information Pack”.

CONTEST JUDGES

General Contest Chairman Martin Brechbiel will soon be developing a program for training and qualifying contest judges. Recent experience indicates that we need something a little more structured than our usual past practice of informal judge appointments. (A personal observation: Serving as a judge is an excellent way to raise your own awareness of what makes a good model, and therefore will probably help you become a better modeler.)

AHEM ... A REMINDER

Just a reminder: to serve as a Division or Regional officer or director, you must be an NMRA member. Recently, several cases surfaced where this was not true, leading to a lot of administrative “angst”.

MOVING!!

As this article is being written, my wife and I are completing a long-planned move from our Wilmington, DE, home of thirty-eight years to a retirement community in southeast Pennsylvania. Good news: Our new dwelling has a really large basement, which is very suitable for a layout (what a coincidence!!). 

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 2 – Potomac

David R. Arday – *Association Volunteer*
Robert G. Minnis – *Master Builder, Structures*
Mathew A. Thompson – *Chief Dispatcher*
Mathew A. Thompson – *Master Builder, Scenery*
Murray Micheal White – *Engineer, Electrical*

Division 12 – Carolina Southern

Steve August – *Gold Spike*
Steve August – *Engineer, Electrical*
Steve August – *Association Volunteer*
Jack Haynes – *Association Volunteer*

Division 13 – Carolina Piedmont

Robert Rousseau – *Chief Dispatcher*

Division 14 – Chesapeake

Karl Bond – *Model Railroad Author*

MER at large

Richard Dietrichson – *Master Builder, Cars*

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**. 

2010 NMRA REGIONAL CONVENTIONS: Soak up some modeling and clinics from different areas!!!

EDITOR'S NOTE: *This is an overview of upcoming regional conventions through 2010. This listing is as complete as I can get it by deadline time and I am not responsible for incomplete information or moved links. ~S.K.*

<u>DATES:</u>	<u>REGION:</u>	<u>CITY/STATE:</u>	<u>WEBSITE:</u>
April 28th-May 2nd	Pacific Coast Region (PCR)	Sparks, NV	www.pcrnmra.org/conv2009/
May 13th-16th	Mid-Central Region (MCR)	Charleston, WV	www.coaldivision.org/coalfield_express.html
May 14th-16th	Sunshine Region (SSR)	Tallahassee, FL	http://sunshineregion.org/Conventions/Tallahassee2009.pdf
May 21st-23rd	Southeastern Region (SER)	Bessemer, AL	www.ser-nmra.org/convention.htm
May 28th-30th	Thousand Lakes Region (TLR)	Winnipeg, MB, Canada	www.thousandlakesregion.org/pages/conventions.html
June 2nd-6th	Lone Star Region (LSR)	San Antonio, TX	www.lonestarregion.com/convention.shtml
June 10th-13th	Mid-Continent Region (MCoR)	Cedar Rapids, IA	http://eid.mcor-nmra.org/Convention.html
July 11th-18th	Mid-West Region (MWR)	Milwaukee, WI	"75th Anniversary" – http://www.nmra75.org/
September 9th-12th	Northeastern Region (NER)	Burlington, VT	www.greenmountainnmra.com/champlainflyer
September 15th-19th	Pacific Southwest Region (PSR)	San Diego, CA	www.psrconvention.org/2010/
September 16th-18th	Pacific Northwest Region (PNR)	Edmonds, WA	http://pnr.nmra.org/
October 14th-17th	Mid-Eastern Region (MER)	(in New Jersey Division) "Capitol Limited 2010" – Website and details coming soon!	
October 21st-24th	North Central Region (NCR)	Liconia, MI	http://div6-ncr-nmra.com/NCX2010_Main.aspx
October 21st-24th	British Region (BR)	Kegworth, England	http://www.nmra-br.org.uk/annual-convention

Remembering Mike Hazzard

By Eric Dervinis

The Philadelphia Division lost one of its stalwart volunteers when Mike passed away on November 11, 2009. For more than 10 years Mike served as Clerk and Paymaster to the division. When I assumed the Clerk's duties, he continued as Paymaster. He capped off this long run of volunteering as Registrar for the very successful Brandywine Junction MER Convention in 1998. After that he spent more time building his railroad and participating in a local operations group. Those that knew Mike well found that he was the most consistent volunteer. He accomplished his tasks, on time and with accuracy. A modest person all around, he always let his results speak for themselves.

Mike is survived by his wife Jaclyn, daughter Sarah and his favorite dog. He was the good guy of good guys and he left us far too soon. Farewell good friend. 

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 initially allocated \$2,000 for this program. The Board recently allocated an additional \$1,000 to extend the program to the end of 2010, or when the funds are spent – 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 President (410 Bayberry Lane, Jenner's Pond, West Grove, PA, 19390, 610-345-0901, 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 Sponsor: _____ (Required)

(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

An OpSig Regional: NC rail – N scale edition

February 19, 2010 – February 21, 2010

You are invited to attend the first all N scale OpSIG weekend ever. There are five excellent operating railroads available for your enjoyment. You will operate a railroad on Friday night, all day Saturday, and Sunday morning. If you enjoy operation, or wish to learn it better, this is the weekend for you. Fill out the enclosed application and return it to the registrar at the address listed below. Please print all information neatly.

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip code _____

Daytime Phone _____ Evening Phone _____

E-mail _____ Cell Phone _____

Please check your preference for each day:

We will try to honor your preferences. However, the first priority is properly manning the layouts and getting carpools organized.

Please register by January 1st. This will allow time to put the packets together and get them out to all participants. They will be sent by e-mail, and will include layout assignments and directions. Layout addresses will only be provided to people registered for the event. Please, one registrant per form. We are spread out in NC, so there will be some driving involved. We can only handle 15 people, and operating slots are assigned in order of receipt of registrations. There may be a waiting list; if you need to cancel, please let me know.

ANY level of operations experience is welcome, from the novice to the most experienced! There is no need to be concerned if you are relatively new to operating. Most layouts have a wide range of job assignments of varying skill levels.

The layouts are all running their normal operating sessions. Depending on the layout, you may land a job as dispatcher, yard crew or road crew. In all cases, there will be plenty of regular crew to answer questions and help you along. No need to panic if you land something new. Sometimes everyone will change jobs after a break; other times not.

The layouts all use FRS radios and Digitrax DCC. If you have equipment of this type, please bring it along. Most of the layouts should have enough equipment, but it's useful to have spares. Please be sure to have fresh batteries for each session you attend.

The registration fee is \$15.00 for OP SIG members; \$25.00 for all others. Make checks payable to NMRA Mid East Region, the sponsor of the event. The fee includes lunch on Saturday; other meals are at your expense.

The convention hotel is The Hampton Inn, 1990 Hampton Inn Court, Winston-Salem, NC. 27103. The phone # is (336) 760-1660. There are no special arrangements with the hotel. Don't make any non-refundable hotel or travel reservations, as the layout operating schedule may change due to last minute additions or losses.

Questions should be sent to penniemichael@hotmail.com. The registration form should be sent to Michael Pennie, 4907 Golden Acres Road, Oak Ridge, NC 27310. Along with a check payable to the NMRA Mid East Region, the sponsor of the event. No e-mail registrations.



The Fall 2009 MER Convention Western Maryland Transfer Observations

By Eric Dervinis

THE SOUTH MOUNTAIN DIVISION MER hit the cycle for hosting the fall convention. This small division based in Hagerstown, Maryland hosted the Mid-Eastern Region convention in 1994, 1999, 2004 and 2009. Every convention was a winner, well planned and well executed. My thanks to the division for another masterpiece. Registration was around 180 and even included someone from Germany. The only ‘complaint’ was the constant rain from Thursday to Saturday ending in a beautiful Sunday afternoon.

Home base was the Plaza Hotel, an independent property that was most accommodating. The meeting rooms were set up and reset quickly. Changes (i.e. more tables) were quickly executed. The guest rooms were nice and included a free breakfast. Their restaurant served good food and was very busy all weekend long thanks to the discount coupons they provided. Many enjoyed the crab cakes, a local delicacy. The hotel lobby had live birds and a fish tank – an ‘old fashioned’ touch.

The registration table was in the middle of the lobby. The registrar P.J. Mattson is noted for his speed and ability to make changes on the fly. I had my packet before getting to the table. The convention chair Jane Clarke had an adjacent table staying on top of every ‘issue’ that needed addressing.

The set-up was a contest room, door prize room, auction / white elephant room combined with a modular railroad and three clinic rooms. Earl Hackett obtained over 50 door prizes, and the ticket system ensures that everyone wins something they can use. The Modular Railroad was courtesy of the James River Division, MER.

The operations oriented had six layouts to pick from and one could operate four times in two days all coordinated by Harvey Heyser. That was the major SIG involvement, although the convention was heavy on the Western Maryland RR, the local favorite.

Two tours were offered. Friday, a group traveled by bus to a quarry with a visit to the bottom and timed so the group could see the daily ‘blast’. Next was the Western Maryland HS RR Museum, lunch on your own and a tour of a local cement plant. Saturday 45 attendees caravanned north in the rain to the East Broad Top RR. Surprise, it was snowing in the mountains and they arrived in Rockhill Furnace to find three inches of snow on the ground and more on the way. They rode the Rockhill trolley line to Shade Gap first and the EBT next. Finally, the EBT expert Lee Rainey guided a tour of the historic shops. The Friends of the EBT have made great progress restoring the buildings and the equipment. The tours were arranged by Don Florwick and Pete Clarke.

Layouts were open all four days. From 25 model railroads, you could choose every scale, two museum railroads and zero to fully scened. The layout book was a real treat. Each layout was described in detail with pictures and a custom drawn map with explicit directions from the hotel. Each map was a work of art. GPS is a great tool, but it can be fooled. With these maps, it was near impossible to get lost. Kudos to Bob Johnson and Richard Lind for the layout tours.

Three clinic rooms were perfectly suited to our needs. The clinics chair Ray Price was checking on the details and introduced each clinician. The MER has its own version of MWTM, with instructors Clint Hyde and Martin Brechbiel teaching laser kit construction.

Saturday night, the clinic rooms were broken down at 5 PM to convert for the banquet. At 6 PM the hotel opened the doors, the tables were set and the cash bar was open. The social hour ended just after seven when the banquet buffet opened up. At eight, MER President Roger Cason was introduced. He thanked all of the volunteers, while the local Superintendent Pete Clarke emceed the program. The MER AP Chair Charlie Flichman handed out Merit Awards and AP certificates. The MER General Contest Chair Martin Brechbiel used a PowerPoint presentation to present the winners. After the awards, Linn Moedinger CMO of the Strasburg RR discussed rebuilding steam engines, his own

model railroad and the pictures his father took in the 1940’s. After a ten minute break, the MER auction began. This is a signature event of the MER with our very own Bob Charles as auctioneer. It is funny, fast and always brings in money to the region from members that donate items.

Sunday morning, two clinics were presented as an alternative to the annual business meeting. The meeting was over in less than an hour, a record for the MER. Layouts were open from 1-5 to visit on the way home.



Photograph provided by Alan Mende,
member of the Susquehanna Division

What made the “Western Maryland Transfer” so great:

1. Superb planning by the local division.
2. A thorough convention program book.
3. The ‘best’ Layout Tour Guide ever produced – the maps were terrific.
4. An excellent facility, the Plaza Hotel, well managed and sized for our needs.
5. A great selection of tours, clinics, op sessions and non-rail activities.
6. The traditional MER Saturday night: social hour, dinner, awards, speaker, auction.
7. Bright yellow signs at the layouts and extra signs at crucial corners.
8. Extra fun – door prizes, white elephant tables and the On30 Modular Railroad.
9. Flexible management team making changes to enhance the convention experience.
10. Keeping everything in perspective, laughing at the minor glitches.

While the South Mountain Division had no control over the weather, they put on a ‘clinic’ on how to run a regional convention. Extra thanks to every volunteer involved.

ERIC DERVINIS lives in the Philadelphia division where he models HO scale. 🚂

Western Maryland Transfer Convention Contest Report



By *Martin Brechbiel, MER General Contest Chairman*
and *Greg Meeks, Model Contest Chairman*
Photographs by *Martin Brechbiel*

WOW! LOTS OF MODELS were entered at the Western Maryland Transfer Convention and we just managed to get all of them into the room! Our host, the South Mountain Division really did great job helping us set everything up—thanks to the Clarkes, and the entire convention staff for a fun convention and for making the contest experience almost painless by providing us a cozy and dry room on an otherwise wet weekend!

A special Thanks also to those who spent what seemed to be a very long day judging the Model Contest: Bob Charles, Charlie Flichman, Rich Newmiller, Dick Genthner and the rest of the crew. We especially want to thank John Johnson for his continuing dedication and support of the contest room operations—ordering the plaques and affixing them to the bases. There's quite bit of work that goes on behind the scenes that does not get recognized!

We had an excellent turnout for the Model Contest. There were 45 models entered in the judged contest. We also had 27 photos entered in the Photography Contest and 2 entries in Arts & Crafts! From that number of models, 11 received Achievement Program Merit Awards.

There was at least one model in every category except traction and off-line structures. This was a great level of participation that really stressed the capacity of both the room and the judges alike!

SPECIAL AWARDS:

The MER has always prided itself on the Special Awards given out in addition to those awards for the judged model contest.

Clyde Gerald Kit-Bash Award: the best kit bashed model in the model contest.

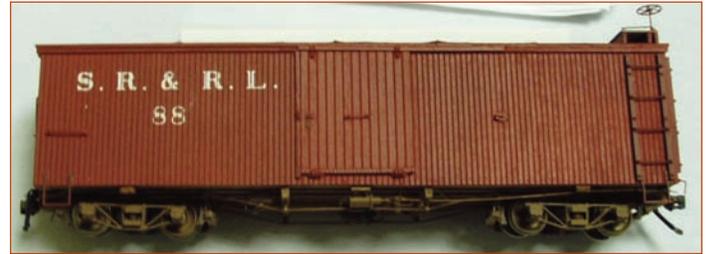
James Mattern – Cornwall Railroad Engine #122



Cornwall Railroad Engine #122

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

*Jim Dalberg – Sandy River & Rangely Lakes RR
On2 Boxcar #88*



Sandy River and Rangely Lakes RR On2 Boxcar #88

The Philadelphia New Modeler Award: given to the first-time entrant in the model contest with the highest point score. (A cash prize as well as a plaque from the Philadelphia Division!)

James Mattern – Cornwall Railroad Engine #122

The Pride of Dixie Award: given this year for a ventilated boxcar

John Johnson – ACL Ventilated Boxcar



ACL Ventilated Boxcar

The Marv Kershner Award: sponsored by the South Mountain Division and given for outstanding creativity in modeling. This by the way was the final awarding of this specific award!

Ken Hamilton – 1/2" Scale Lumber Carrier



1/2" Scale Lumber Carrier

Favorite Train: chosen by popular vote.

- 3rd – Edwin Keith – Western Maryland/Chug Water Western milk train
- 2nd – Bill Roman – Western Maryland Wreck Train
- 1st – Martin Brechbiel – CG&W Mixed Freight

The President’s Award: given for the car with the most interesting open load:

Brian Sheron – Gondola with a load of wheels



Gondola with a load of wheels

Best-in-Show: given to the entry with the highest points score in the model contest.

Ken Hamilton – 1/2” Scale Lumber Carrier

THE CONTEST WINNERS:

MODEL CONTEST: Model Contest Chair, Martin Brechbiel, wishes to thank and congratulate all those modelers who entered the judged model contest.

Steam

- 1st – Alan Mende – CNJ E2s 0-8-0 # 302*
- 2nd – Horace Oliver – Class C-truck On3 Climax
- 3rd – Jim Dalberg – DL&W 1200 Class 2-8-2 #1250



1st place – CNJ E2s 0-8-0 #302



2nd place – Class C-truck On3 Climax



3rd place – DL&W 1200 Class 2-8-2 #1250

Diesel

- 1st – James Mattern – Cornwall Railroad Engine #122*
- 2nd – P.J. Mattson – On30 Critter #13
- 3rd – Chuck Hladik – Rutland RS-3



2nd place – On30 Critter #13



3rd place – Rutland RS-3

Freight Cars

- 1st – Jim Dalberg – Sandy River & Rangely Lakes RR On2 Boxcar #88*
- 2nd – Bill Roman – WM well hole flat car #6011*
- 3rd – Bob Weinhiemer – C&O box car #488111*



2nd place – WM well hole flat car #6011



3rd place – C&O box car #488111

Non-Revenue Cars

- 1st – Ken Hamilton – 1/2” Scale Lumber Carrier*
- 2nd – Chuck Davis – Lehigh Valley Scale Test Car #96670*



2nd place – Lehigh Valley Scale Test Car #96670

continued on page 10

3rd – Dick Bradley – Maryland & Pennsylvania Ash Car #639



Maryland & Pennsylvania Ash Car #639



3rd – Newfield Junction Freight House

Caboose or Cabin Car

1st – Robert Minnis – Transfer Caboose On30*



Transfer Caboose On30

Displays On-Line

1st – Hal Olsen – Stock Pen



Stock Pen

Passenger Cars

1st – Chuck Davis – Lehigh Valley Smoker 1504



Lehigh Valley Smoker 1054

Displays Off-Line

1st – Ken Hamilton – Storefront Diorama*

2nd – Brian Sheron – Halsite Marina

3rd – Jerry Mersch – Trainwreck Café



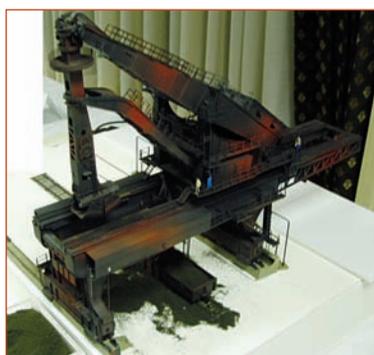
1st place – Storefront Diorama

Structures On-Line

1st – Bill Day – Hullet*

2nd – David Skinner – Mill at Colfax*

3rd – Joseph Lofland – Newfield Junction Freight House*



1st place – Hullet



2nd place – Halsite Marina



2nd – Mill at Colfax



3rd place – Trainwreck Café

Modules

1st – James River On30 Modules

*Denotes AP Merit Award—scoring a minimum of 87.5 points.

PHOTO CONTEST: Martin Brechbiel also served as the Photo Contest Chairman, and was pleased to see so many quality entries.

Model

1st – John Winner, Jr. – O scale streetcars on Baltimore Streetcar Museum
2nd – Dale Latham – Old #2
3rd – David Skinner – Working Colfax Mill

Prototype: Steam

1st – Roger Cason- Frostburg Turntable #1
2nd – Bob Weinheimer – Southern 4501
3rd – Roger Cason – Arriving in Frostburg

Prototype: Non-Steam

1st – Dale Latham- Amtrak at Rutherglen (Virginia)
2nd – Robert Carroll - Crossing the Main Metro-North
3rd – Bob Weinheimer - Broken Drawbar

ARTS & CRAFTS CONTEST: We were all delighted to see entries for the Arts & Crafts contest!

Rail

1st – Mark Chase- On30 “Soapstone Shortline”
2nd – Mark Chase - “Alleghany Ascent”

If you have any question about NMRA or MER contest rules and regulations, NMRA judging of models, contest questions of any kind, complaints, suggestions, or whatever you might want to talk about, please contact me at martinwb@verizon.net. 

Contest Judging

By Charlie Flichman
MER AP Manager

AT THE RECENT MER Convention in Hagerstown, MD, there seemed to be more dissatisfaction about the contest scores than in the past several years. I have given a clinic for the past three years (including Hagerstown) on how the judges use the National AP Guidelines in contest judging. It has been attended by six to twelve people and usually a good discussion is had during the clinic. One of the items I stress during the clinic is consistency in judging the contest models in each of the categories.

The way the judging is done in the MER is that there is a two, three or (in good times) four person team that judges all of the models in the room in one of the five judging categories (Construction, Detail, Conformity, Finish & Lettering and Scratch Building). Each member of the team, after reading the modeler's description for that category and examining the model, is asked to come up with a number using the appropriate judging matrix for that category. [Note: the judges ONLY have to read what is written for the category they are judging. Therefore make sure that ANYTHING that could affect the score of that category, is included in that category's write-up]. If all of the numbers are within two to three points to one another, a final number is agreed upon, usually the highest number of the grouping. If there are vast differences in the numbers, then a discussion is held to resolve as to why some one's evaluation is much lower or higher than the rest of the group. Each model is judged on its own merits and is not compared with any other model in the contest.

Also, the judges are supposed to return to the contest room after the banquet to answer any questions that the model owners have concerning how their model's score was obtained. Until

this year, I have always been in the room after the banquet and no one has approached me concerning any contest score.

When the models were being picked up after the judging in Hagerstown, I was asked to change some of the scores by people who were disappointed with their scores. I cannot do that as the scores were determined by five different teams and have been recorded by Martin Brechbiel, MER Contest Chair and Greg Meeks, Contest Manager. These models can be re-entered in a later contest for reevaluation or can be merit judged again outside of the contest room.

Starting next year, I will present a short clinic at the start of the judging to refresh the memories of all those who will be doing the judging that day. This will also hopefully ensure that everyone is looking at their judging category matrix in the same manner. I hope that in the future doing this short clinic before judging starts, will help to prevent the disappointments that we had in Hagerstown. 

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- Weathering Engines & Rolling Stock
- The ABC's of Scenery Installation
- Painting a Backdrop for Your Layout
- Operations – All Types
- Rail Fanning – Where & How
- Scratch Building Sound for Your Engines
- How to Install a Turnout in Existing Ballasted Track
- AP Made Easy & Merit Award Judging
(Bring your models for judging)

Assignment to sessions will be made as registrations are received. Since space in each session is limited, register early to get the sessions you want to attend. The session schedule is shown on the program announcement.

To register, mail a completed copy of this registration form to:

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03/09

A Weekend with the MER: Time Table & Train Order Operations

By John Darlington

PHIL PETERS AND I ATTENDED the MER Convention held in Hagerstown on Thursday, October 15th through Sunday, October 18th. This was the first time that the MER Convention, was held in Hagerstown for over 15 years. In fact, the previous Hagerstown affair featured a modular layout by none other than BANTRAK. The Western Maryland Transfer was and like most such conventions, in that it featured modeling clinics, model judging, rail fanning, prototypical operations and the proverbial banquet.

Phil and I are old hands at “conventions” so we opted to take part in a two-day prototypical operations activity and go lite on the normal clinic/lectures and take advantage of experiencing Time Table & Train Order operations on a private model railroad. Never having operated in a TT&TO structure, I was a little apprehensive to say the least. Hearing stories about experienced operators berating or humiliating “rookies” for mistakes during operating sessions naturally elevated my pulse rate a fair amount. It did help somewhat when I learned that Phil was my teammate. After all, Phil regularly operates on a local HO layout up in Pennsylvania. However, my relief was short lived when Phil admitted that he had had little experience operating under TT&TO rules himself.

The TT&TO class started with a 3 hour orientation session Thursday evening designed to familiarize everyone with the forms and rules used in TT&TO. The first thing that was handed out was a bound copy of the **Condensed Code of Operation Rules** (Edition 1951) which numbered 134 pages in length. In addition we were given copies of **Train Orders** (Form 19) and **Clearance Cards** (Form A) which are a key part of all TT&TO operations. At first this was quite intimidating, but as our instructor, Steve King, proceeded with his explanations, the forms and the rules started to meld together and make sense. At the conclusion of the class I felt that I had a fairly good working knowledge of general TT&TO operations and I eagerly looked forward to out all day operation session on Friday.

I cannot say enough good things about our host Steve King. First of all he is an N-Scaler which speaks for itself. Secondly, having a bunch of strangers operate his trains on his great N-scale layout, while maintaining a pleasant and helpful demeanor, speaks volumes of Steve’s graciousness and self-control.

Steve’s layout, which is located in Germantown, while not fully scened, is operationally complete. It is a single track, double tier scheme with numerous towns, sidings, yards and run around tracks, which makes these types of operations fun and quite challenging. We broke down into two man crews (10 in all), and Steve handed out each crews’ orders. Steve had a formal timetable drawn up with numerous first class and second class trains scheduled. Each crew, in turn, went to the appropriate place in the layout to take control of their train. We operated on a “fast clock” (numerous clocks situated around the room) so that everyone started and were guided. If you were operating a scheduled train you had to follow your timetable and be where you should be on the layout at or near the scheduled time. Since you were “sched-

uled” you had the right of way depending on the direction of travel (some went north and some went south) On Steve’s layout, South-bound Trains had priority. On the other hand, Phil and I kept getting “extra” trains, which meant that we had the lowest track priority. This means that we had to be off of the main when scheduled trains were coming through, jumping in and out of sidings, while progressing to our destination. While this was the hardest job in TT&TO operations, it was the most fun, too!

We operated from 10 AM to 2:30 PM with a brief break for lunch. Heck, even engineers and conductors have to eat! At the end of the day, there were no train collisions or other accidents (we did have a derailment in one of the helixes), so in that respect, the day was uneventful, I am sure to the great relief of Steve King. It was a great day and it was by far the most fun that I have had in model railroading.

After the excitement of Friday, we had a bit of a let down on Saturday, Phil and I were scheduled to be part of an all day excursion to East Broad Top in Pennsylvania. Unfortunately, owing to the terrible weather that weekend (6” of snow in College Station) we decided not to go and spent the time attending modeling clinics all day. Some of the clinics were pretty good, too, especially ones on weathering and constructing layouts in small spaces.

Neither Phil nor I were much enthralled with going to the banquet (rubber chicken and boring speeches) so we opted to spend the evening in the hotel bar and the restaurant. I think we made the right choice.

The convention ended with the usual MER Business Meeting. They had blocked off a two-hour segment, but the meeting only lasted 45 minutes (are you listening BANTRAK?) and we Phil and I headed back home before noon.

All in all, I really enjoyed this convention. It was relaxing as well as interesting and I cannot wait to have another opportunity to operate under TT&TO rules.

JOHN DARLINGTON is a member of the Chesapeake division where he models N scale. 

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Coming Events

January 2nd and 3rd. Greenburg's Train and Toy Show at the Dulles Expo and Conference center located at 4368 Chantilly Shopping Center in Chantilly, VA. Hours: 10 AM till 4 PM both days. Cost: \$7 for Adults; kids 12 and under are free (admission is good for both days). For more information and directions visit www.greenbergshows.com.

January 2nd and 3rd, 30th and 31st. February 27th and 28th. Cheltenham Model Railroad Club Open House. 8000 Old York Road (at railroad bridge), adjacent to Elkins Park Square, Elkins Park, PA 19027. Hours: Noon till 4 PM. Admission free, but donations gratefully accepted. For more information; call: (215) 635-9747 or visit club website www.cheltenhammrr.org.

January 9th. Wade's Train Town monthly open house. Operated by Carolina Southern Division members at the Brookford Town Center located at 1700 South Center St in Hickory, NC. Hours: 10 AM till 4 PM.

January 9th and 10th. Greenburg's Train and Toy Show at the York Expo Center located at 334 Carlisle Avenue in York, PA. Hours: 10 AM till 4 PM both days. Cost: \$7 for Adults; kids 12 and under are free (admission is good for both days). For more information and directions visit www.greenbergshows.com.

January 15th and 16th. Joint meeting between the New Jersey and Philadelphia Divisions. Held at Haddon Twp. High School located at 406 Memorial Ave in Westmont, NJ. Layout tours open Friday night from 7 PM till 10 PM. Clinics held Saturday from 9 AM till Noon. Layout tours continue Saturday afternoon from 1 PM till 4 PM. For more information contact: Bob Clegg at (856) 696-0463 or e-mail bobcatcs@comcast.net; Greg Shindledecker at (610) 383-7767 or e-mail greg@shindledecker.com.

January 16th and 17th. Greenburg's Train and Toy Show at the Garden State Expo Center located at 50 Atrium Drive in Somerset, NJ. Hours: 10 AM till 4 PM both days. Cost: \$7 for Adults; kids 12 and under are free (admission is good for both days). For more information and directions visit www.greenbergshows.com.

January 23rd and 24th. World's Greatest Hobby on Tour train show. Held at the Dulles Expo and Conference center located at 4368 Chantilly Shopping Center in Chantilly, VA. Hours: Saturday - 10 AM till 6 PM; Sunday - 10 AM till 5 PM. Cost: Adults - \$10; ages 16 and under are free. For more information visit www.wghshow.com.

January 30th. 4th Annual Railroad Modeling University sponsored by the Carolina Southern Division. For more information see inside or visit www.bytedesign.com/CSDiv/RMU/RMU%20Main.htm.

February 6th and 7th. Great Scale Model Train Show at the Maryland State Fairgrounds located at 2200 York Rd in Timonium, MD. Hours: 9 AM till 4 PM on Saturday; 10 AM till 4 PM on Sunday. Cost: \$9 for adults; kids 15 and under are free (admission is good for both days). For more information and directions visit www.gsmts.com.

February 13th. Wade's Train Town monthly open house. Operated by Carolina Southern Division members at the Brookford Town Center located at 1700 South Center St in Hickory, NC. 10 AM till 4 PM.

February 19th – 21st. N-Scale OpSig NC Rail 2010; sponsored by MER. See inside for more information or contact penniemichael@hotmail.com.

February 20th and 21st. Greenburg's Train and Toy Show at the Valley Forge Convention Center located at 1160 First Avenue in King of Prussia, PA. Hours: 10 AM till 4 PM both days. Cost: \$7 for Adults; kids 12 and under are free (admission is good for both days). For more information and directions visit: www.greenbergshows.com.

February 27th and 28th. Greenburg's Train and Toy Show at the Virginia Beach Convention Center located at 1000 19th St in Virginia Beach, VA. Hours: 10 AM till 4 PM both days. Cost: \$7 for Adults; kids 12 and under are free (admission is good for both days). For more information and directions visit www.greenbergshows.com.

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