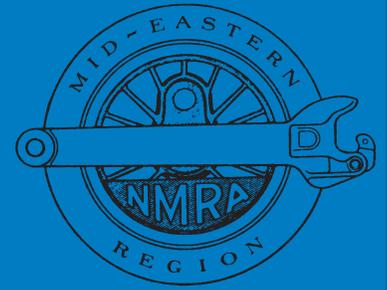


# The Local

A PUBLICATION OF THE MID-EASTERN REGION OF THE NMRA



Volume 65

SEPTEMBER — OCTOBER 2010

Number 5

## Some Simple Tips for More Reliable Operation

*By Brian W. Sheron  
Potomac Division/HO Scale*

RECENTLY JOINED an operating group. I “thought” my HO scale model railroad ran fairly well. However, if you really want to find out how well your layout runs, invite about 7-8 avid model railroaders over to operate it! You’d be surprised what you discover! As a result of this experience, I thought I would share a few simple tips on how to improve the reliability of your model railroad’s operation.

### COUPLERS:

**1.) Coupler Height** – One of the major reasons why cars uncouple, particularly on grades, is a mismatch in coupler height. Cars that have couplers that are not at the same height will usually remain coupled on level track. However, once a train starts up or down a grade, the couplers will move vertically relative to each other as the first car starts up or down a grade.

If the couplers were mismatched to begin with, this mismatch will increase and one coupler can slide vertically completely above or below the other, and uncouple. Check all your cars and engines against a standard coupler height gauge. If the coupler is too high, you need to add shims to the coupler pocket until the coupler is lowered to the correct height. Kadee sells packages of shims for this very purpose. If the coupler is too low, I have found that adding a thin washer (or washers) between the wheelset and the car body will raise the body just enough to align the couplers. In addition to a standard coupler height gauge, I also check coupler height on one car against the coupler height on other cars and engines too.

**2.) Coupler Springs** – Couplers like Kadees have springs in the knuckle. I find that these occasionally fall or get accidentally knocked out. Without the spring, there is nothing to hold the knuckle closed onto the other coupler’s knuckle. Sometimes the knuckle will fortuitously stay closed, even without a spring, only to open in that one inaccessible spot on your layout! Check your couplers periodically to make sure they all have the knuckle springs in place.

**3.) Glad-Hands** (simulated air hoses) – Most knuckle-type cou-

plers have a metal glad-hand, or simulated air hose, protruding from under the knuckle. In addition to simulating the air hose, it also serves to respond to an uncoupling magnet and open the coupler. However, these glad-hands can also be a cause of derailments at turnouts. This is because they sometimes hang down just below the top of the rail height. When the car crosses a turnout, the bottom of the glad-hand can catch on and then slide along the point rails, pulling the car with it and causing a derailment. I use a pair of needle nose pliers and carefully bend the glad-hands up a slight bit so I am sure they will not catch on my turnouts.

**4.) Coupler springback** – In addition to the knuckle springs, couplers also have various spring mechanisms to self-center the coupler in the coupler pocket. For example, Kadees have a separate brass spring mechanism insert that fits in the coupler pocket. McHenry couplers have the centering spring mechanism molded into the coupler itself. I have found that for whatever reason, sometimes these centering spring mechanisms stick, and the coupler stops moving laterally in the pocket. This can be a cause of derailments as well.

When you inspect your couplers, make sure the coupler springs back to the center when you push it laterally in the pocket.

### WHEELS AND TRUCKS:

On the cars and engines we buy today, the wheelsets are almost always accurately in gauge. However, the wheels usually attach to the axle by a press fit, and thus there remains the potential for a wheelset to go slightly out of gauge. If you experience a derailment at a certain location, the track is shown to be in gauge, and other cars don’t derail, you might want to check the gauge of the wheelset. When I run into problems like this, I usually just pop a new set of wheels in the trucks, and then run the car over the suspect area. Sometimes this will solve the problem. If it doesn’t, then further diagnosis is necessary.

In addition to wheels, I have also found that trucks can be the

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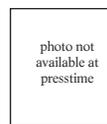
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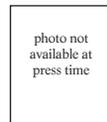
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The MER website is <http://mer.nmra.org/>

# Some Notes from the President

By Roger L. Cason, MMR  
MER President

## MODEL RAILROAD EXHIBIT IN SACRAMENTO

Over the past few years, several plans have been under discussion for NMRA participation in a scale model railroad exhibit at the California State Railroad Museum (CSRM) in Sacramento, CA. This Museum is a major tourist attraction, visited by many thousands of people each year. Some of the foregoing plans were – ah – er – somewhat grandiose. Others were more modest and doable.

As reported in the May issue of *Scale Rails*, a Memorandum of Understanding has been signed with the Museum. It calls for NMRA participation in a scale model railroad exhibit in the gallery (balcony) area of the CSRM. (The alternate would have been a separate, freestanding model railroad museum.)

Several years ago, I was privileged to participate in an NMRA meeting in Sacramento. Meeting participants were able to look over the locations involved in the various proposals for a scale model railroad exhibit. In my opinion, the now-adopted gallery plan clearly makes the most sense for the foreseeable future, and deserves the support of all NMRA members. . . . Some fund raising will probably be required. If and when that time comes, I urge you to consider giving your financial support to this very worthwhile project.

## MER ADMINISTRATIVE/MANAGEMENT CALENDAR

Much of the administrative effort needed to keep the MER running smoothly repeats itself every year or two. Several years ago, we tried to summarize all the significant tasks in one place to serve as a “to do” list for the responsible people. Bill Roman, MER Secretary, has just coordinated a review of this calendar. Contact Bill if

you would like to get an updated copy (via e-mail attachment), or would like to check on items in your own area of interest.

## MER TRANSITION

Because of publishing deadlines and required lead-time, this column is being written in late July - i.e. before our MER election results are known. Both of the people running for President are experienced and competent, and I would urge you to give the new President your full support. The new President will take over at the Sunday morning membership meeting at our MER fall convention.

## AND IN CONCLUSION . . . . .

This will be my last President’s column in **The Local**, since I am not running for reelection. Reflecting on the past two years . . . . .

For me personally, the time has been marked by some high points, some low points, and some milestones. Milestones include: turning eighty, and moving to a retirement community in Pennsylvania. Low points include: struggling with e-mail malfunctions, having triple bypass surgery, and getting a Pennsylvania driver’s license. Over-riding all this were the high points – working with so many fine people who contribute significant “time and talent” to the MER and/or their local division. There are probably 75-100 of them – clearly, too many to list by name in this column. For perspective, there are about 2,000 NMRA members in the MER. In effect, the 75-100 people mentioned above “work” so the rest of us can “play”. When you encounter one of them, think about giving them a word of thanks. 

## Tips for More Reliable Operation continued from page 1

problem. If a truck does not have enough “play” to ride over slight irregularities in trackwork, they can cause a derailment. Freight car trucks that are “sprung” (have real springs between the frame and bolster) have more flexibility than freight car trucks that come in car kits today, in which the “springs” are molded into the plastic sideframe. When a specific car derails at a specific location, I have sometimes found that replacing the entire truck (or trucks) will solve the problem.

Trucks usually attach to the car frame by a screw. If the screw is too tight, the truck won’t rotate freely, or even if it rotates freely, it will not have any “play” in it. It should be loose enough so the truck has a little bit of “play”. However if it is too loose, the car will wobble or even tilt to one side when being towed in a train. Finding the right adjustment for this screw is a bit of an “art” that most of us eventually master through trial and error.

## TRACK:

Track is another source of potential problems. Obviously, the main key to reliable operation is having well-laid trackwork from the start. Nevertheless, despite these efforts, things can go wrong.

Changes in temperature and humidity will cause wood to expand and contract. If your track is attached to roadbed, and the roadbed is attached (e.g., glued) to the wood, then movement of the wood subroadbed has the potential to move the tracks.

Many how-to books suggest painting the roadbed and subroadbed in order to seal it and minimize the moisture it can absorb, thus minimizing movement. Nevertheless, this movement can cause slight changes in track gauge. If your trains start to derail in a certain spot in which they never derailed previously, check the track gauge. Another solution is to install a humidifier and/or dehumidifier in your layout room.

**1.) Curves** – If you use flex track, joining sections on a curve can produce problems. The sections should be soldered together at the rail joiners first, while they are in a straight configuration, and then laid on the curve. This should help assure a smooth transition at the joint. The joint however, can still be a source of problems. If the joint is slightly out of gauge, it can cause a derailment

continued on page 4

# Keeping In Touch...

By Fred Miller, MMR  
MER Business Manager

If you have received your August issue of the **NMRA Magazine**, which used to be called **Scale Rails**, you are well aware of the NMRA's efforts to bring new life and appearance to our 75-year-old association. The emails, blogs and discussion groups are buzzing with reactions to the new NMRA logo – the stylized “wheel on rail” graphic. Not surprising many old timers have difficulty with the change. This old timer, however, thinks the new logo and overall upgrade is great and timely in bringing the NMRA into this century. (Wow! I can hear the grumbling from here...).

The current issue of the **NMRA Magazine** tells a little bit about the upgrade, but you can read a lot more on the NMRA website. By the way, have you visited the National website ([www.nmra.org](http://www.nmra.org)) recently? The presentation and graphics con-

## Tips for More Reliable Operation continued from page 3

on certain cars, particularly if the wheelset on the car is slightly out of gauge as well. I have had situations where a certain car would derail at a rail joint on a curve. However, when I changed out the wheelset, the car stopped derailing. I suggest that if you have a problem spot like this, check it carefully with a track gauge. Watch the car go over the spot very slowly and see if you can tell what the culprit is. As an example, on one spot on my layout, I found that slightly pushing the outer rail in “by a hair” cured a derailment problem. I simply drill a small hole and insert a rail spike to hold the rail in place.

**2.) Turnouts** – There are several reasons a car or engine might derail at a turnout. One is to “pick the points”. If the points of the turnout don't close tightly against the adjacent rail, the wheel flange can ride between the point and adjacent rail, or ride up on the point rail. Either way, a derailment is likely. Make sure your points close tightly against the outer rails, and check them with a track gauge. Another cause of derailments is that the curved point rail may straighten a bit over time. This can put it out of gauge with respect to the fixed rail and can cause derailments. Check it with a track gauge but be careful. The point rail is not spiked down, and can move with the track gauge, appearing to be “in gauge”, but springs out of gauge once the track gauge is removed. I have found that carefully pushing outward on the curved point rail to recover the original curvature will usually cure the problem.

Finally, if you ballast your turnouts, be sure to clean them out after the ballast glue dries. Small pieces of ballast caught between the main and guard rail can cause derailments, as can bits of ballast stuck on the inside of the any parts of the rail. After I ballast, I run a small screwdriver blade lightly along the inside web of the rails and knock loose any pieces of ballast that may have gotten stuck there.

tinue to get better and better. A couple of graphs are nicely presented depicting the membership status of the NMRA. It looks like the total membership took a big hit in April of this year but it has rebounded back to near normal June membership figures.

Another chart presented on the NMRA website should be of interest to all of us in MER. It shows our region is the largest in membership (2,151) followed by our NER neighbors up north (1,846).

And speaking of membership, don't forget to extend our membership even more with the MER subsidized RailPass membership. Remember the MER Board voted to extend that program so the money is available. I haven't received too many applications in the last month or so. Of the total subsidized to date for this program (340) about 30 percent have converted to regular membership. 49 percent let their membership expire with the rest still in RailPass status. By the way, our new Chesapeake Division 14 leads the way in RailPass recruitment and in high “retention” rates.

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. 

## RUN YOUR TRAINS:

The best way to assure reliable operation, especially when the operating crew is scheduled to show up and look forward to an operating session not marred with derailments, is to run your trains. I took all of my rolling stock and began building trains. I would hook 4-5 cars to an engine and then run them around the layout. I would run them not only on the mainline, but through siding turnouts, passing siding turnouts, etc. I would also not only run the trains forward through the turnouts, but in reverse through the turnouts as well. If I got any derailments, I assessed if it was the car or the track. If more than one car derailed at a certain location, the track was suspect. If only a specific car derailed at a certain location, then the car was suspect. I would make appropriate repairs and or adjustments, and then rerun it through the turnout or section of track. If this specific car continued to derail, I might try changing out the wheelsets or trucks one more time. If this did not cure the problem, I removed the car from active service and put it in my “something to do on a rainy day” pile.

As I continued to run trains around my layout in the fashion described above, I found and corrected problems, either with the cars, the track, or both. After doing this for a while, I noted that the number of problems started to quickly diminish. Fewer and fewer track and car problems appeared and my layout now runs relatively smoothly. 

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### ATTENTION ALL MER MEMBERS:

Do you have a wanted/trade/for sale item(s)? Looking for car-pool options to an event or options for sharing a room? The Local publishes a FREE classified section for all MER members. Send your classified ad to the Editor at [stevespressrr@yahoo.com](mailto:stevespressrr@yahoo.com), or see all the editor's contact information on page 2.

The ad must include full name and contact information and will be limited to one issue. Word count is also limited to seventy-five (75) words. Please include your NMRA number for verification purposes (number will not be published).

### FOR SALE...

Map of all railroads in the USA as of July 1927. Prepared by the U.S. Army Engineers. Used by the PRR to show how lines were abandoned from approximately 1980-82. Size 53 1/2" x 73 1/2". Water damaged bottom 8". \$95.00 firm plus shipping. Contact Bill Powell. 306 Broad St. Williamstown, NJ 08094-112 or phone (856) 728-1327 till 9 PM.

## MARK YOUR CALENDARS FOR NEXT YEAR'S MER CONVENTION!

Dates (tentative): October 27 – 30, 2011

Location: Raleigh, NC area

### CORRECTIONS:

In the Jul/Aug 2010 issue there were two errors in the convention material. First, the banquet price was listed incorrectly on the registration page. It was written at \$30 when the actual price is and always was \$40. Second, the member who is presenting the clinic on "Modeling Marine Operations" name is Ron Parsi. We apologize for any inconvenience or confusion. 

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By Lance Mindheim

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# 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 1 – New Jersey

Joseph Calderone – *Model Railroad Engineer, Electrical*

Christopher Conaway – *Gold Spike*

Thomas C. Griffiths – *Model Railroad Engineer, Electrical*

John Rahenkamp – *Master Builder, Structures*

### Division 2 – Potomac

Don Engel – *Model Railroad Engineer, Electrical*

Scott Henry – *Model Railroad Engineer, Electrical*

Pete LaGuardia – *Model Railroad Engineer, Electrical*

Robert McKeever, II – *Model Railroad Engineer, Electrical*

Robert Minnis – *Master Builder, Cars*

### Division 3 – Philadelphia

Joseph T. Lofland – *Master Builder, Structures*

### Division 10 – South Mountain

Walt Muren – *Model Railroad Author*

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

Congratulations to the MER's newest MMR: Joseph Lofland of Cranberry Twp., PA. Joseph is MER's 40th MMR since the start of the AP. The presentation of this certificate and plaque will be made at the upcoming convention in Princeton, NJ. Joseph has earned certificates in: Master Builder – Cars, Structures and Scenery; Model Railroad Engineer – Civil and Electrical; Chief Dispatcher, and Model Railroad Author. Please offer your congratulations to Joseph the next time you see him. 

## NOTICE TO ALL MER MEMBERS: ANNUAL MEETING

The 2010 annual meeting of MER members will be held on Sunday morning, October 3rd in conjunction with the MER Fall Convention in Princeton, NJ.

Exact time and room will be announced later

William Roman  
MER Secretary

# The Latest From Princeton Junction 2010

By Bob Clegg  
2010 Convention Chair

**D**O YOU HAVE SLIDES OR DIGITAL IMAGES of your layout or your favorite prototype that you would like to share with us? If so, bring them along! In the hospitality suite we plan to have projectors, both slide and digital, available beginning Thursday night and continuing periodically throughout the weekend.

Here is some additional help for those who want to plan their layout tours ahead of time. With all the pictures and descriptions, the file for the layout tour has become very large. Just transferring the file to the convention website is problematic. For that reason, if you want to see the most up to date information, go to the NJ Division's website and click on the yellow 'Layout Tour' button located on the left side of the page about 2/3 of the way down. We will continue to update the convention pages but not as frequently as the division website.

While you're there, you may also want to check out our newsletter, **Clinkers**. The September "convention" edition will be posted on or about September 1. The NJ Division website address is [www.NJDivNMRA.org](http://www.NJDivNMRA.org).

If you have not visited those pages or the NJ Division website recently, check it out. We have updated the layout section in both places to include the approximate driving time and distance and the general direction from the hotel so you can plan how you want to arrange your tour.

Yet to come is a large list of layouts that will be open for your journey back home on Sunday afternoon.

Registration for the convention is about on schedule according to registrar, PJ Mattson. Forty-two of the seventy-six slots for the Operations Call Board are already filled, so now is the time to register especially if you want to participate as an operator. Don't be disappointed!

We now have the full complement of clinics scheduled, too. There will be thirty-six regular clinics including the "make and take" and in addition, we have scheduled a double period of "Work in Progress" clinics to be held Saturday afternoon from 2:30 to 5:00. This session will feature eight to ten clinicians working on projects in a common area. You are welcome to join the discussions or wander off to another presenter at any time.

Some clinicians will present short clinics several times and others will be working on a single project for the duration. Come join us and see how it works. You're welcome to "steal" the concept and take it back to your division for a future meet.

Don't forget to sign up for one or both of our prototype tours. The vintage grain elevator on Friday morning and the New Hope and Ivyland "Fall Foliage Spectacular" which includes a 2 1/2 hour ride in a first class vintage dining car with a light lunch included.

Another reminder, Mr. Mitch Dakelman will be our guest speaker at the banquet. Many of you may be familiar with his

informative and entertaining presentations. Mitch has frequently provided the main program at NHRS and other railroad enthusiast meetings in the NJ/NY/PA region. Our program is scheduled to include a narrated slide show of the railroads of northern NJ in the 60s followed by one of his vast collections of rail related featurettes.

Tours, Clinics, Operating Sessions, White Elephants, the auction, banquet, and most importantly, fellowship, and fun will all be found at the **Princeton Junction 2010** MER convention September 30th to October 3rd. Come join us! 

## \*Mix-it Puzzles

By Dr. Charles Wood  
Carolina Piedmont Division/HO Scale

These are puzzles of scrambled words. The letters on each line can be rearranged to form a word that relates to models or to prototype railroads. Answers below.

### Puzzle #17:

- a. G T O A L E V
- b. E E P S D
- c. E A D I N C C T
- d. H N P G U I M
- e. A A D D D E E E H

### Answer to puzzle #17:

- e. Deadhead
- d. Humming
- c. Accident
- b. Speed
- a. Voltage

### Puzzle #18:

- a. T A G H L E H I D
- b. C I S K T
- c. R O N J A U L
- d. S L R O E D
- e. D I E R E V T

### Answer to puzzle #18:

- a. Headlight
- b. Stock
- c. Journal
- d. Solder
- e. Riveted

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07/11

# Take a Ride on the Walkersville Southern Railroad!

By Brian W. Sheron

**M**ARK YOUR CALENDARS for Sunday, October 17th! The Potomac Division has invited all NMRA members and families to join them for an afternoon outing and train ride on the Walkersville Southern Railroad on a chartered train for NMRA members and their guests. The outing will begin at 3 PM with a tour of the engine barn and yard. At 4 PM we will climb aboard vintage passenger cars and take a leisurely 1 hour and 15 minute train ride. For more information go to the Potomac Division home page [http://home.comcast.net/~potomac\\_nmra/](http://home.comcast.net/~potomac_nmra/) and click on the excursion announcement.

What is the Walkersville Southern Railroad, and where is Walkersville anyway, you might ask?

The Walkersville Southern is a small scenic railway that is located in Walkersville, Maryland, a small town a few miles north of Frederick, Maryland. The railroad is operated by a hardy bunch of volunteers, all with a love of trains. It currently has about 4 miles of trackage that runs south from Walkersville to just before where Route 26 branches off from Route 15.

The train which will take us for the ride is composed of small diesel switcher, an open flat car with benches and a roof, two former Long Island Rail Road P-54 passenger cars that were built in 1925-1927, a former Long Island Rail Road P-72 passenger car that was built in the 1950's, possibly a WWII troop carrier car, and (of course) a caboos.

The outing will start with a guided tour of the train yard at 3 PM. You will see their other diesel that is being restored in the engine barn, several more P-54 passenger cars in various stages of restoration, and hopefully be able to climb aboard and walk through a 1940's vintage heavyweight parlor car that is in its orig-

inal condition. Also in the yard is a restored vintage box car along with a vintage caboos.

We hope to have a former conductor on the Long Island Rail Road join us, who has some colorful tales to tell about the infamous P-54 "Ping Pong" cars we will be riding in.

At 4 PM we will depart Walkersville and travel at a leisurely pace south, crossing over the Monocacy River and passing civil war era telegraph poles still standing along the right-of-way. At the end of the line, the train will stop and then reverse and take us back to Walkersville with an estimated arrival time of about 5:15 PM.

We are inviting not only Potomac Division members, but also members from the Chesapeake and South Mountain Divisions specifically, and to all NMRA members in general that may be in the area at the time. This trip is therefore a great way to meet fellow model railroaders from other Divisions.

Tickets are \$10 for adults, \$9 for seniors (55 and older), \$5 for children (3-12) and free for children under 3. To reserve your seats now, please send your check made out to the Potomac Division, and indicate the number and type (e.g., senior, adult, child) of tickets you want, to the Potomac paymaster, Tom Brodrick, along with a stamped, self-addressed envelope and we will mail you your tickets. Please register by October 1st. Tom's address is:

Tom Brodrick, 24028 Preakness Drive,  
Damascus, MD 20872-2167

If you have further questions, please feel free to contact me at [BWSheron@mac.com](mailto:BWSheron@mac.com) or (301) 349-5754 [evenings and weekends]. 

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## Railroading Merit Badge Class Session

By Don Jennings

**O**N SEPTEMBER 25, 2010, several MER members are helping local Boy Scouts earn their Railroading Merit Badges. This presentation will be part of The OLD 97 Rail Days, which is an annual event at the Danville Science Center in Danville, Virginia.

The MER members (in alphabetical order) and the subject they are instructing are:

Gil Brauch – Operation Lifesaver  
Tom Harris – Signals  
Kurt Kramke – Introduction  
Mike Lugar – Careers in Railroading  
David Phelps – Railfanning  
Calvin Reynolds – Modern Railroads  
John Single – Resources  
James Talian – Introduction

All of these NMRA members will also be demonstrating an HO Scale switching layout and helping the Scouts in attendance with the building of the HO Scale Richmond, Fredericksburg, & Potomac RR Box Car kit that the MER donated to the Boy Scouts for this particular section of the program.

Many Scouts from the local area have already applied for this year's RR MB class. The Scout's merit badge session will be held in a classroom at the main building and attendance is full for this year. If any Scouts are interested in a future class, please contact Don Jennings, the RR MB Registrar and Counselor at [railroadsmb@aol.com](mailto:railroadsmb@aol.com).

If any NMRA Mid East Regional Divisions are having or planning a Railroading Merit Badge Class in your area and would like information about the HO Scale car kits, please contact Don Jennings at [railroadsmb@aol.com](mailto:railroadsmb@aol.com). 

# Dispatching by Telegraph...(Dad Did It)...

## A series article - Part 2

Article and photographs by Mike White  
Potomac Division/HO scale

**I**N PART 1 OF THIS ARTICLE (printed in the Jul/Aug 2010 issue), you were given an overview of the telegraph dispatching system being used on layouts in the Southern Maryland Operating Group. In this and subsequent parts, each of the major topics identified there will be examined in detail.

### OPERATOR/TRAIN IDENTIFICATION

As mentioned earlier, train orders are addressed to the *conductor and engineer of...*, that is, the persons operating the train, not the train itself. This was the key point that made the concept of telegraph dispatching on a model railroad a realistic possibility. In prototype train orders what follows the “of” is the train number, either from the timetable or the number assigned to an “Extra”. Numbers in Morse code, while not difficult to learn, are long at five dot-dash combinations each. What made this method doable was substituting a single-letter identification to the *conductor or engineer* in lieu of a train number. The rule here is that the “Operator ID” – the letter assigned – cannot under any circumstances duplicate within your group of operators. In the next topic, when single-letter Action Codes are discussed, you will see that it is advisable not to assign a letter used as a single-letter Action Code for an Operator ID either.

The last “don’t” is don’t use the letter “D” for an Operator ID. You should reserve that for the Dispatcher ID.

Start assigning Operator IDs using the first letter of your operators’ last names. With a small group, or a good alphabetical mix of names, this may be all you have to do. Beyond that, if needed, just choose some logical pattern of selecting IDs that is easy to for you and the operators to remember.

Once the Operator IDs have been determined, document your selections. This is important for later use. Figure 1, which you have seen before, is the list of Operator IDs for my group. This was done using an Excel spreadsheet. Not only is this a permanent record of your selections, but it is used as a “cheat sheet” for operator training and for continuing use by student Dispatchers.

In the very beginning, when your group starts learning the small amount of Morse code required to start running trains, they are going to have some difficulty understanding the sounds that

they are hearing and translating them into letters. This is normal and will disappear in time. Until it does, we make extensive use of “cheat sheets” to provide a visual aid to assist in this transition period. If new members are added to the group or you have visiting guest operators they are going to need these also. You will see this illustrated when we get to the section on “Operator Training and Visual Aids”. So make up your Operator ID list and make a couple of copies – you’re going to need them later.

### MESSAGE FORMATS

The second concept that made model railroad telegraphy feasible was the idea of using a single letter to represent the most-common communication procedures and train orders.

Beyond Operator IDs is a need for communication standards for messages between the operator and the dispatcher. This is accomplished by using a standard format and standard procedures for assembling the message.

Figure 2 shows the basic structure of the telegraph message. With the exception of the initial alert tone, each line of the message follows this pattern. Each line of this message consists of an Operator ID followed by an Action. That’s only two letters per line! The third column is an explanation for training and “cheat sheet” purposes and is not part of the message.

The most common use of telegraph messages will be the request for, and the granting of, authority to move a train from where it is currently located to the next station along the line. What follows is a line-by-line description and explanation of how a “run” message is constructed. Follow along on Figure 3.

The alert, or “Call”, is an extra long tone initiated by the operator to request communication with the dispatcher.

The dispatcher responds with his ID followed by the letter “A” meaning “I acknowledge your contact”. Operator-Dispatcher communications are now established.

The operator then keys his Operator ID followed by the letter “G” meaning, “I am ready to ‘Go’ to the next station” (The letter “V” for Visitor is being used in this example as the Operator ID)

The dispatcher responds by keying the *Operator’s ID* followed by the letter “R” meaning “you are authorized to ‘Run’ to the next

Operator	ID	Code
Ron Schmidt	S	... ..
Dick Higgins	H	... ..
Bill Roman	O	--- ---
Dale Latham	L	. - . .
Mike White	W	. - - -
Roark P. Shallow	P	. - - .
Tom Buckingham	B	- . . .
Charlie Kilbourne	K	- . - -
Vince Cipriani	C	- . . .
Visitor	V	. . . -
Dispatcher	D	- . .

**Figure 1: A copy of the Operator/Train Identification list for the group. Each Operator ID is based on the first letter of their last name, unless there are duplications.**

station”. This is the actual Train Order. The reason the dispatcher uses the operator’s ID instead of his own is that the telegraph is an open circuit with several possible operators listening in. Using the operator’s ID positively addresses the message to the specific operator requesting the order.

Message		
ID	Action	Desc
Call		Long Tone

**Figure 2: This chart shows the basic structure of the telegraph message.**

represents a combination of an “order complete” and “end of transmission” in a single character.

It’s that simple! Two IDs, 3 letters, and a period. That’s all it takes to issue a telegraph Train Order to run a train from Point A to Point B.

What about the case where the railroad is not clear between Point A and Point B and an operator asks for clearance to “run”. The procedure is exactly the same, and the complete message differs from the “run” message by only a single letter.

In Figure 4, you will see that all of the operator-dispatcher transmissions up to the Train Order line are the same. The Train Order this time, however, is the letter “U” meaning “marked up”. This is our local terminology for “I have received your request, can’t comply right now, but will get back to you when the track is clear”. The operator repeats the order and the dispatcher signals “order complete” and “EOT”.

VISITOR	Message	
ID	Action	Desc
Call		Long Tone
		ACK
		Ready to GO
		Run
		Repeat the Order
		Order Complete EOT

**Figure 3: Using the chart and article text follow along the most common uses of telegraph messages which will be the request for, and the granting of, authority to move a train from where it is currently located to the next station along the line.**

The Operator then keys his Operator ID followed by the letter “R”. This is the standard practice of “reading back” or repeating the order to the sender to confirm that it was received correctly.

The dispatcher responds by keying his own ID followed by a Morse “period”. This

operator repeats the order and the dispatcher signals “order complete” and “EOT”. This “marked up” order now creates a condition where the dispatcher has to “call” the operator when he is able to issue the “run” order. This is the reverse of the usual operator-initiated contact with the dispatcher. As you might suspect, this order’s format is different from what has gone before, but only slightly.

Look at Figure 5. The dispatcher keys

the number “0” (zero) to everyone listening on the circuit (remember, it’s an open circuit) followed by the Operator ID he is attempting to contact. This is the reverse of the ID-Action format that we’ve been following up until now. The “0” (five dashes) is distinctive and is used only by the dispatcher calling operators on the layout. Everyone hearing this is alerted and is now expecting to hear an Operator ID, which will identify who is being called.

The empty line and the header line following in Figure 5 between the dispatcher’s call and the operator’s acknowledgement are only for “cheat sheet” and training aid purposes and have no meaning in the actual message

The message now shifts back to the standard format when the operator being called (who should be expecting the call) responds with his Operator ID followed by the letter “A” meaning “acknowledge”.

Following this are the same three lines of the standard “Run” message illustrated in Figure 3 and described above.

And there you have it. Two IDs, 4 letters, 1 number, and a period, and you have everything you need to do basic telegraph dispatching on a model railroad. Anybody can do this!

Part 3 of the series will describe the construction of the key circuit. The key circuit involves the wiring of the key bus and the installation of the operator keys on the layout. 

VISITOR	Message	
ID	Action	Desc
Call		Long Tone
		ACK
		Ready to GO
		Marked Up
		Repeat the Order
		Order Complete EOT

**Figure 4: This chart shows how the code is changed by one letter when the railroad is not clear between Point A and Point B. Note that all of the operator-dispatcher transmissions are the same as Figure 3 up to the Train Order line.**

Dispatch Call - Operator	Message	
Broadcast Alert Signal	Operator ID	Desc
		Engr Alert
ID	Action	Desc
		ACK
		Run
		Repeat the Order
		Order Complete EOT

**Figure 5: Charts the Dispatcher contacting an Operator ID when he is able to issue the “run” order.**

# Letter from the Editor

By Steve Kindig

**H**ELLO, EVERYONE! I hope everyone has had an enjoyable (however hot) summer. I hope you take a few minutes and read my column.

As time and technology progresses, so does **The Local**. I hope you have enjoyed the new look and faces of the contact page. In this issue, you will also note on page 16 that I have included the publication schedule and advertising rates. If you have any comments or suggestions on other things you would like to see, please contact me at [stevespressrr@yahoo.com](mailto:stevespressrr@yahoo.com).

I have not had to beg hard lately for publication items because I have had a backlog, but I want you all to know that my folder is *shrinking* and I will be needing more articles, stories, activity reports and photos very soon. Don't hesitate to send them now, so I don't come after you!!!

On a few personal notes: I will not be able to attend the Princeton convention. By the time dates were finalized I was not able to move my vacation time because the slots for time off that weekend were full. Also next year will be up in the air, as distance and a growing family are both factors. I plan on being your editor for a while, so expect to hear more from me in the future if I don't get enough articles. Thank you. 📧

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## Pretty Women and Railfanning

*Article and photographs by Jack Dziadul.  
Carolina Piedmont/HO Scale*

**I** LIKE TO TELL my wife that I bring my camera on all of my business and leisure travel just in case I come across some great railroad related photo opportunities. On a recent excursion on the way to operate on Jim Allen's 'Southern Exchange' I did a double take and turned the truck around when I saw these beautiful...gondolas.

This would make for a great contest photo-match or a whimsical scene on my layout. I asked if the groom was a railroader. I was surprised that the answer was no. One of the bridesmaids

explained that the photo session was just a cost savings issue. They decided to take pictures in interesting locales instead of paying a fee to rent more formal gardens or homes for background.

It is important to note that I introduced myself to the ladies and explained that I frequently write railroad related photo articles. I requested and received permission to take the photographs and to include them in my hobby related writing. I also presented my business card so that they have my name and contact information. 📧



**The star of the show, the bride**

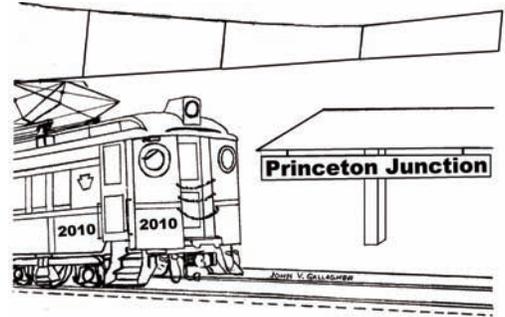


**The bridesmaids**

# Mid-Eastern Region, NMRA Fall Convention Princeton Junction

September 30 – October 3, 2010

## REGISTRATION FORM



Please enter (print legibly) all names as you wish them to appear on your registration badges: They will not be changed at the convention.

Primary Registrant's Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Significant Other (living at same address): \_\_\_\_\_

Children (under age 16 – List all): \_\_\_\_\_

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

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_ NMRA # \_\_\_\_\_

DESCRIPTION		COST	#	PAYING
Early Registration (before September 1, 2010)		\$40		
(then the rates will go up)				
Non-NMRA member (applied to Rail Pass Membership)		\$10		
Significant other		\$15		
Children (under 16)		\$10		
Banquet	401	\$40		
<b>Extra Fare Clinics:</b>				
Building in Wood Clinic (HO) (Hyde and Brechbiel)	601	\$15		
Building in Wood Clinic (O) (Fri. Eve.)	602	\$15		
Timetable and Train Order (TT/TO) Clinic & Operations (King) (Thurs. Eve.), combine with "lab" below	611	\$15		
<b>Tours:</b>				
Grain Elevator (Fri.)	201	\$15		
New Hope and Ivyland RR (Lunch included) (Sat.)	202	\$75		
<b>Call Boards:</b>				
CL&W (Rahenkamp) (Thurs. Eve.)	801	\$ 5		
Harsco (Bickmore) (Fri. Morn.)	811	\$ 5		
NT (Homoki) (Fri. Aft.)	821	\$ 5		
NJW (Prokop) (Fri. Aft.)	822	\$ 5		
A&W (Genthner) (Fri. Aft.)	823	\$ 5		
CL&W (Rahenkamp) (Fri. Eve.)	831	\$ 5		
D&H (Calderone) (Sat. Morn.)	841	\$ 5		
Rocky Hill Club (Sat. Morn.)	851	\$ 5		
A&W (Genthner) (Sat. Aft.)	852	\$ 5		
SCJ&L (Howard) (Sun. Aft.)	805	\$ 5		
<b>TOTAL ADVANCE REGISTRATION PAID</b>				
Additional events will be added when their cost is known.				

Payment must accompany registration.

Make checks payable to:  
**MER Fall Convention 2010**

Send all registrations to:  
**MER Fall Convention  
P.O. Box 447  
Swedesboro, NJ 08085**

For questions and / or additional information e-mail  
**MER-Registrar@comcast.net**

### CONVENTION HOTEL:

Double Tree Hotel  
U.S. Highway 1  
Princeton, NJ 08540

The convention rate is \$92.00 per room (plus taxes) equaling \$107.64 per night. All hotel registrations must be made directly with the hotel at 609-452-2400. These rates are in effect until 9 September 2010. When registering, specify the Mid- Eastern Region, NMRA to get these special rates

# 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, 333 W. Trade St, Unit #2504, Charlotte, NC 28202-1961. (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, 704-332-1753, [tractionfan@aol.com](mailto: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](mailto: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)

=====

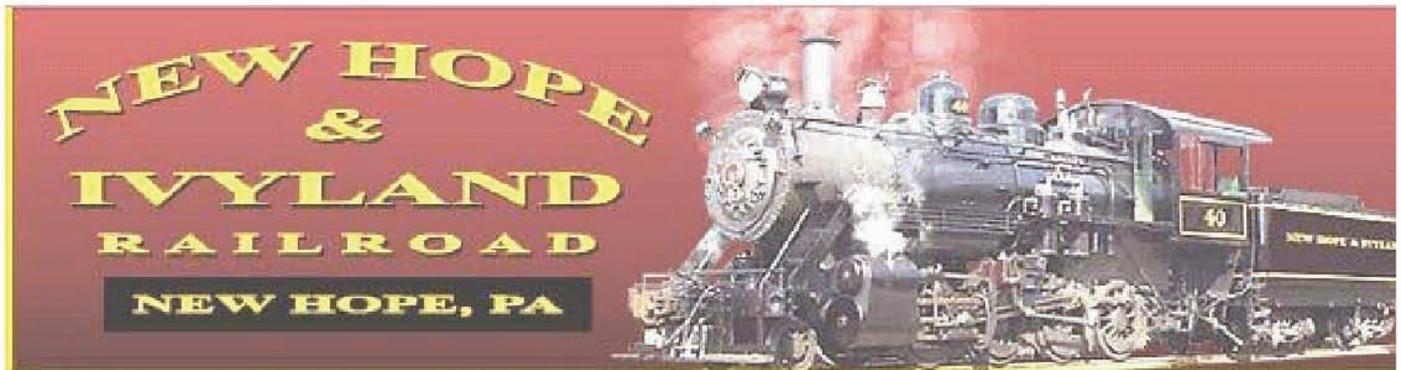
Date of form: 1/31/07

When this form is completed,  
mail it to:

**Fred Miller, MMR  
MER Business Manager  
333 W. Trade St, Unit #2504  
Charlotte, NC 28202-1961**

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

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Shipping \$2.50 for first car, + \$1.50 for each additional car				\$_____

\* Please list your MER or NMRA Membership # \_\_\_\_\_

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Bill Wills  
MER Merchandise Sales Agent  
303 Winterhaven Drive  
Wilmington, DE 19803

# CALLBOARD

## Coming Events

**September 11th.** 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.

**September 12th.** Potomac Division layout tour in Olney, MD. 1 PM until 4 PM. For more information contact Brian Sheron at [bwsheron@mac.com](mailto:bwsheron@mac.com) or (301) 349-5754.

**September 18th and 19th.** Tidewater Division's Annual Train Show. Held at Virginia Beach Convention Center Hall D, 1000 19th St. in Virginia Beach, VA. 10 AM – 4 PM both days. Cost: \$8 for adults; free for children under 12. \$1 from every paid admission goes to Toys for Tots. For more information contact Steve Prescott at [nawneycreek@msn.com](mailto:nawneycreek@msn.com) or (757) 426-2811.

**September 25th.** Railroading Merit Badge Class Session at Old 97 Rail Days located at the Danville Science Center, 677 Craghead St in Danville, VA. If any Scouts are interested in a future class, please contact Don Jennings at [railroadsmb@aol.com](mailto:railroadsmb@aol.com) or (919) 468-0910.

**September 25th.** Joint meeting between the Philadelphia and Susquehanna divisions. Clinics start at 9:30 AM and will be held at the Cedar Crest Bible Fellowship Church, 1151 South Cedar Crest Blvd. in Allentown, PA. Four open houses will occur at various start times from 12 – 6 PM. For more information contact Jeff Warner at [jwarner@susquehannnmra.org](mailto:jwarner@susquehannnmra.org) or (717) 932-9929.

**September 30th – October 3rd.** MER convention in Princeton NJ.

**October 1st and 2nd.** Susquehanna Division along with OPSig is hosting Lehigh-Susquehanna Operations Weekend 2 (LSOPS 2). Prior registration required. For future operations in the Susquehanna Division contact Jeff Warner at [jwarner@susquehannnmra.org](mailto:jwarner@susquehannnmra.org) or (717) 932-9929.

**October 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. 10 AM till 4 PM.

**October 15th – 17th.** Carolina Southern RailOPS weekend. Prior registration required. For future operation weekends in the Carolina Southern Division contact Steve August at [steven@august.org](mailto:steven@august.org) or (704) 909-7987.

**October 17th.** Ride and tour the Walkersville Southern Railroad with other members of the NMRA. Register by October 1st. See inside for complete information.

**October 30th.** Live steam open house at Art Dum's layout in Shermansdale, PA. Must RSVP for this event by October 28th by calling Wayne Godshall at (717) 582-4405. Time, directions and the address are available from Wayne.

**October 30th.** Carolina Southern Division's First Annual Train Show. Held at Hickory Grove United Methodist Church, 6401 Hickory Grove Rd in Charlotte, NC. 10 AM – 4 PM. Cost: \$5 – adults; children under 12 free. Scouts in uniform also free. For more info contact Rick Knight at 704-996-6486 or [rghkiii@roadrunner.com](mailto:rghkiii@roadrunner.com).

Tell members about your upcoming event!! Send your free event listings to the editor (contact information is listed on page 2.) Be sure to include all the specifics for the event: including the date/time, place, cost, a contact person, and a means of getting in touch with him/her (address, phone, e-mail, etc.), and if available a web site for updates or to get more information. Please see the publication deadlines on page 16 to make sure your event is published on time. 

## Notice of Proposed Boundary Change

*By William Roman  
MER Secretary*

The MER Board has received a proposal from the South Mountain Division (SMD) to add the West Virginia counties of Hampshire, Mineral, and Morgan to its boundaries. These counties are already within the MER boundaries, are not part of any other MER Division, are contiguous to the existing territory of SMD, no other Division has expressed interest in having these counties assigned to their territory, and certain of the NMRA members residing within these counties are already attending SMD activities.

In accordance with MER bylaws, this notice is being published to solicit any comments pertaining to this proposal. If anyone has comments, please provide them by October 15, 2010 to Roger Cason at (610)-345-0901 or [rogercason@juno.com](mailto:rogercason@juno.com). If no objections are raised to this proposed action, the MER Board will vote on it as soon as practicable. If there are objections, the Board will work to resolve them to the satisfaction of those concerned. 

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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. The editor 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. Upon receiving any submission the editor will also confirm receipt and at a later date indicate the anticipated edition the submission will appear in **The Local**. If you do not receive a postcard or e-mail within two weeks please resend your submission or contact the editor by phone.

<u>Publication Schedule:</u>	<u>Articles/Callboard items due to Editor by:</u>
Jan/Feb	December 1st of previous year
Mar/Apr	Feb 1st
May/June	Apr 1st
Jul/Aug	Jun 1st
Sept/Oct	Aug 1st
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If you are interested in advertising with the Mid-Eastern Region of the National Model Railroad Association please contact the MER Advertising Manager or the Editor, as listed on page 2. The current advertising rates for **The Local** are as follows and must include camera ready art:

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