



# The Potomac Flyer



## March 2000 Mini-convention

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Well, it came and went, and was enjoyed by all who attended. We had a repeat of Jon Percy's two clinics on painting figures and making signs, both were well attended again. Bill Mosteller talked about his decal-making business, how he got into it and what it takes to operate it. Expert craftsman-kit builder Mat Thompson talked about his 20+ years experience with building this kind of kit, backed with a bunch of examples he brought along to illustrate points. Garret Nicholson, the Division's Superintendent, reprised his clinic about styrene construction, another make-it-and-take-it effort in which you build a kit he has put together, cutting and gluing sheet and strip styrene. (We need to expand this into something where you build it and paint it as well.) Ed Price and Mark Andersen talked about Athearn engines, and Ed volunteered (along with Bill Roman) to take on the job of AP Coordinator, filling Ken Berthoud's shoes. Deane Mellander, MMR, talked about the AP

Program for us, since he's one of the folks who's completed it.

It took place at the Marvin Memorial Methodist Church in Silver Spring, just outside the beltway. This year we had a great big room in the middle of the bottom floor, and some adjacent space for clinics, instead of being spread across three floors like last year, and the price was still appropriately low, well within our budget. Ken Jones provided lunch again, and again didn't lose money. The Maryland Central Model Railroad Club has a permanent layout in a room down the hall, which was open during the day.

The swap meet aspect was a bust, and since last fall's standalone swap meet was not well attended, we won't try to do that again—future mini-conventions will include a white elephant table for those so inclined—a few folks were able to unload things, but we expect that most were interested in the clinics rather than sitting behind a table all day.

### Manassas Railway Festival

June 3, 2000 Old Town Manassas 10 AM to 4 PM

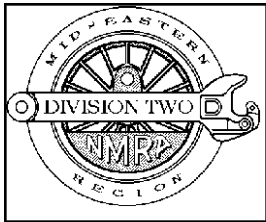
Featuring full-size exhibit rail cars, modular model railroads in G, O, HO & N scales, a VRE-sponsored excursion, the Kid's Kaboose, food fun and raffles.

Contact person is Sharon Jones, 703-361-6599

There is also a Railroad Photography Competition. Pictures have to be submitted between 6.30 and 8.30 PM June 2 (i.e., the previous night). 1st, 2nd and 3rd place awards are Gift Certificates from Ritz Camera.

Contact person is Chuck Mauro, 703-787-9879

*Reminder: We need zip+four from everyone soon. Check your mailing label—I may have it.*



## The Potomac Division

Division 2 ("Potomac"), Mid-Eastern Region,  
National Model Railroad Association, Inc.

The Potomac Division includes: the District of Columbia; Calvert, Charles, Montgomery, Prince George's, and St. Mary's Counties in Maryland; Arlington, Fairfax, Fauquier, Loudoun, Prince William, and Rappahannock Counties in Virginia, as well as all area independent cities.

### The Division Crew

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### The Potomac Flyer

Potomac Division's quarterly newsletter © 2000

*Editor* **Clint Hyde**  
13443 Brookfield Drive  
Chantilly, VA 20151-2614

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	Summer issue	April 1
	Fall issue	July 1
	Winter issue	October 1
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	1/4 page	\$10/issue
	1/2 page	\$20/issue
	full page	\$40/issue
	back cover, half-page	\$40/issue

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For more local information, see the  
Potomac Division website at:

<http://home.mgfairfax.rr.com/hydesystems/Potomac.html>  
(that's a capital P)

### From the Business Car

by Garret Nicholson  
Division Superintendent

[garret.nicholson@hotmail.com](mailto:garret.nicholson@hotmail.com)

Many thanks to all of you who helped out at our last mini-convention. Not many venues boast of a built in layout right at a beltway exit. We appreciate all of the work that the Silver Spring Model Railroad club did to make the miniconvention a success.

We note with sadness the passing of Ken Berthoud, our AP coordinator. He worked very hard throughout the year to keep up interest in the model contest as evidenced by the amount of entries that we had when he ran the program. Ed Price and Bill Roman have offered to run the program together on a temporary basis. If any of our members wants to take this position please contact me or them.

Nick Kalis is stepping down from the position of layout coordinator. He has done a tremendous job of ferreting out members who want to show their layouts. Our survey showed that this is the most popular activity of the division. Ed McGill has volunteered to fill this position for one year. Nick has scheduled hosts for the rest of this year and Ed will be working on next year's schedule. If you would like to host an open house, please contact him. If you would like to be the layout tour coordinator contact him as well.

Steve Altheim has told me that he needs to resign as Division paymaster due to pressures of work. He frequently works late and cannot make the Board meetings. When Steve took over the books we only had enough in our treasury to print the next issue of the Flyer. Since then, Clint Hyde has offered to send an e-mail version of the Flyer and Ken Jones has been able to print copies of the Flyer for free at his retirement home. I encourage all of you to get the Flyer via e-mail to keep the free printing we get under control so that the retirement home will continue to offer it. If you would like to be the division paymaster please contact any member of the board of directors to volunteer.

The region (MER) has notified me that the Mount Clare Division is closing and the region requested that the South Mountain Division and the Potomac Division split the membership. South Mountain has declined this request and I offered to take on any members who want to join our division. I will find out more information about this at the next MER convention at the end of this month.

## Achievement News

by Ed Price

NMRA Achievement Program Representative

**Edmund.W.Price@USACE.ARMY.MIL**

Hello. I have volunteered to be the AP coordinator after the unexpected death of Ken Berthoud. I am an active member of the Potomac Module Crew. Some of you may know me from the clinic on Athearn locomotives that Mark Andersen and I did at the last mini-convention. I am new to this job so bear with me. Bruce Strickland has promised to help me learn the ropes.

For those of you that are new to the hobby or those just wanting to know more about the Achievement Program (AP), here is a quick rundown:

Participation in the AP is strictly voluntary, all NMRA members are welcome and encouraged to participate. The AP helps you on your journey through the world of model railroading. The AP also is an incentive to learn and master the many crafts and skills necessary in the hobby of model railroading. Upon completing each category, you are issued a certificate acknowledging your achievement.

Thanks to the entrants and judges who participated in the mini-convention on March 25th. Although there were only a few models presented for judging, they were impressive.

I would like to encourage all of you to participate in the NMRA achievement program. Remember the place to start is with the Golden Spike Award. Many of you may already have met the requirements and all you need to do is fill out the paperwork. The six requirements for the Golden Spike Award are:

1. Display 6 units of rolling stock (Scratchbuilt, craftsman, or detailed commercial kits).
2. Construct a minimum of 8 square feet of layout. This can be accomplished by building a 2 by 4-foot module.
3. Construct five structures (scratchbuilt, craftsman, or detailed and commercial kits). These structures may be separate, or may be part of a single scene.
4. Three types of trackage are required (turnout, crossing, etc.) for the civil and electrical engineering requirement. All the track must be properly ballasted and installed on proper roadbed. Commercial track may be used.
5. All the installed trackage must be properly wired so that two trains can be operated simultaneously (double-track main, single-track main with sidings, block or command control, etc.).
6. Provide one additional electrical feature such as powered turnouts, signaling, lighted buildings, etc.

If you have access to the world wide web, all the AP requirements can be found at the NMRA web site: <http://users.vnet.net/paulrver/welcome.html>. This site even includes an application for the Golden Spike Award.

## Coupler Comments

### Electronic Communications

by Clint Hyde

Clerk and Flyer Editor

**chyde@bbn.com**

Things change everywhere. On the Internet, it seems to happen a bit more often and faster. I've lived with this for 15 years, and now it's hitting the Potomac Division.

My ISP, where our web-pages are, was Media General Cable here in Fairfax County. Last year, Cox Communications bought Media General.

So now the web-address, which was "mgfairfax" is going to change to "cox". Our web-pages address will change correspondingly, from

**<http://home.mgfairfax.rr.com/hydesystems/Potomac.html>**

to

**<http://home.cox.rr.com/hydesystems/Potomac.html>**

Both addresses will be valid through September, but if you've bookmarked our homepage (you have, haven't you?), that's going to have to get changed. The story is that I'm going to get fancy-shmancy new services at some point, but they aren't ones I'm especially interested in...

Some of you may have noticed I'm also doing the electronic paste-up on the MER Local newsletter. That one has more pictures than the Flyer, and they haven't been too good the past two issues. I think there's something not quite right with my scanner, which is only 4 months old. Things seem to be out of focus somehow; I probably bought one that was too cheap to be good :) See the Blondie comic on page 6 for how well a B&W scan turns out—it's the color photos that are trouble.

Everyone who has received the Acrobat (PDF) version of the Flyer has liked it, it's small enough to email with no trouble, so we'll definitely be continuing this. If you have a computer, and email, you can get the Acrobat PDF reader from one of our web-pages, and receive the Flyer through email—it works quite well, it's not too large.

Receiving the email version or the printed version is not an either/or, you can have both, since the email costs essentially nothing, and it's considerably faster than waiting on the USPO.

Given that the minimum number of pieces necessary to use our mailing permit is 200, if we get too close to that I will be mailing at least that many no matter what.

## Northern Virginia NTRAK News

by Matt Schaefer

There are many ways to attract the public and build membership: the NMRA has the Achievement Program; modular clubs have the mission approach by having a high profile and in April we had our New River Subdivision layout in the lobby of the Hawks Nest lodge. We let a 9 and 11 year old run trains all Friday while we socialized and did other official business like weathering cars in front of the public.

Modular railroads can build model railroading by attracting the young ones and the general public and all at the same time. Saturday the big boys went on a tour and left the two kids running trains. When we got back we heard that two tour busses with 90 people stopped at the lodge and the crowd was 3 deep all around the layout asking who made all this, why is it here, etc. We can't imagine what answers they got but we had a holder full of brochures telling all about NVNTRAK and ALL the brochures were gone!

The Hawks Nest, WV show was unusual in that we took Hawks Nest modules to Hawks Nest along with other New River modules of Quinnimont, Thurmond and Glade Creek. Old friends brought modules from Huntington, WV and Montgomery, AL. The C&OHS Modelers Convention was full of local history and tours so the layout added running trains on the New River to all their static displays and clinics. The local people that came by to see us were an inspiration telling us how it really was back then.

NVNTRAK spares no expense or gas when it comes to spreading the news about module railroading. Our activities this year have already included shows at Hawks Nest WV - 300 miles, Spotsylvania Mall- 50 miles, MER Portsmouth - 180 miles and the our regular shows in Upper Marlboro, Chantilly, Gaithersburg, Fairfax Station and the caboose too. Come and join the party and make new friends. In August we invade Edison, NJ with several NVNTRAK subdivisions.

NVNTRAK helps conventions and shows where we can by providing layouts or in assisting other clubs coordinate big shows. Conventions can attract a repeat crowds with modular layouts. For the Richmond GATS show we attracted the same old clubs from all over the world that came to our '96 Alexandria convention. For more info on your local NVNTRAK club, the past shows and the schedule of coming activities see <http://www.nvntrak.org/>

## Potomac HO Crew Module Notes

by Bruce Strickland

The module crew has lost a close friend and active participant. Ken Berthoud died of cancer in late February. Ken was an avid fan of the New York Central and an excellent urban modeler. Ken was also the Achievement Program Coordinator for the Potomac Division. The Module Crew would like to express our condolences to Ken's family, especially to his wife Sarah.

The Module Crew has joined the Prince William Model Railroad Club and the Piedmont Railroaders for two joint modular railroads. The first was at the Greenberg Show in Chantilly and the second one was at the Boy Scout Train Show in Woodbridge. The Greenberg Show Layout was approximately 95 modules big and occupied an 80' by 80' space. I walked with my train and it took 25 minutes to make it around the entire layout. We figured that the railroad was approximately 15 scale miles long. The joint railroad the three clubs did for the Boy Scout Show was slightly smaller and "weighed in" at only 85 modules. After some problems concerning the thirteen-booster power system, the railroad ran flawlessly both times. Since we required that all engineers must remain in contact with the Trainmaster, the number of radios used for communication became the limiting factor for the number of trains on the railroad. At one point, we had seventeen trains on the road at once. Train length was not limited and there were many long trains on the main at both of the events. The Crew did two railroads that are more traditional during this quarter. On the third weekend in February, we made our regular appearance at the Lyceum in Alexandria. We presented twenty modules including two from our brethren of the National Capital ETE Chapter (the fellows who follow European Trains). Due to a scheduling snafu, we only set up for one day and because the Lyceum did not get a chance to publicize the event, only a handful of visitors called on us. We did not mind the lack of visitors as we got to play with the trains ourselves and got to spend more time with the visitors that came. The Mini Convention was our last event for the winter. We built a small railroad that consisted of six modules to supply some running trains for the convention. The Club that occupies a room in the church also operated their railroad for the conventioners' pleasure. Future events for the Crew include the Manassas Railroad Festival on Saturday, June 3. We will join the other two HO Modular groups as well as the Tinplate Trackers, NTRAK people, an "S" scale modular group, VRE Excursion rides and other railroad related displays. We are scheduled to do the July Greenberg Show in Chantilly and we have an upcoming event at the Lyceum in August again.

The Module Crew is growing in terms of the number of modules as well as the variety of modules. We now have at our disposal three yards, many corners in two sizes,

*Continued on page 8*

# Model Railroading on the Internet

## by Harry Bacas

The World Wide Web is not the only place on the Internet where railroad modelers can get information. Discussion forums or "newsgroups" operate without the graphics and sound of a website, but they can provide quick, expert help from other modelers. You can use Netscape Messenger or Microsoft Outlook Express or a dedicated program like OUI (Off-line Usenet Interface) to find and read newsgroups.

A favorite group is rec.models.railroad. Here people ask questions about airbrushes and compressors, how to install decoders, how to wire their layout, how to increase the depth of field in model photography. New benchwork builders ask how they should space their joists when using L-girders (one answer: it's nominally 18 inches, but it depends on the material being used above, and you'll be moving the joists later anyway.)

The comments can get quite pointed. In a reply to a request for assessments of the Testors Aztec airbrush line, Andy Harman, a professional model painter, didn't mince words. He said:

I'd recommend almost any airbrush BUT Testors/Aztec. Rather than re\_hash the flames, I'd suggest going to [deja.com](http://deja.com) and search this forum on "Testors airbrush" and read all of the various comments pro and con and decide for yourself."

In the mean time, I'd recommend a Badger or Paasche. I use a Paasche VL myself.

Andy

Andy's signature includes a link to a group he is a member of, Railroad Prototype Modelers. The web Page at <http://www.rpmlrail.org>, welcomes "any model railroader who has a passion for building and operating in a prototypical manner."

Subjects discussed on rec.models.railroad can range from aisle widths to "dadgummed spider webs on layout."

One forum visitor recently asked: "What is the average height of a train layout?"

The first answer he got was not much help: "Everyone has their own 'standard' that they feel comfortable with. And everyone will actively argue why theirs is correct. I'd say averages can be from as low as 0 inches to 4 inches below the ceiling."

But he also got a short, practical answer: "48-inch legs;

experience has shown less backaches to be the result."

And a longer answer: "If this is your first shot at it, I would suggest 42" which is the height of a standard counter and is a good compromise for standing. If you prefer to work sitting, then about 28" is comfortable. On your next railroad, (and there will be a next!) you'll know if that should be higher or lower for you."

Finally he got a really detailed answer: "I've always varied the heights of my benchwork to allow for more scenery options. Benchwork varies from as low as 24" with the lowest trackage at 34", to 32" with track at approx. 38". Upper tier benchwork can vary but usually starts at around 54". Current plans call for joists on the upper level to be part of the wall framing; would do the same on the lower level to eliminate legs but the masonry stemwall appears to be an obstacle. Don't hesitate to drop a section of your benchwork lower to increase scenic possibilities; at trestle locations for example."

A new modeler asks what is the tightest curve radius in HO?

One reply says: "What kind of equipment are you going to run? If you like 0-4-0's pulling 30-foot cars, then 15 inches would do fine."

But another contributor answers: "I've bent a train of 40' boxcars around a 15" curve before. I've seen people run traction layouts with 6" curves, using heavily modified cars and locos; 18" is more or less the minimum for most 'standard' rolling stock; 22" for the rest as a minimum."

Newsgroup messages frequently mention a favorite website. Less often, a website will promote a railroad forum. For example, check out [www.railroad.net/forums/](http://www.railroad.net/forums/).

At the [www.deja.com](http://www.deja.com) website, referred to by Andy Harman above, you can get a listing of other model railroad newsgroups and search any or all of them for messages on a single topic.

Then, there are Internet mailing lists . . . let's leave them for another day.

**Reminder:** If you haven't been receiving division-related emails, it means we don't have your address in our database—send an email to the clerk ([chyde@bbn.com](mailto:chyde@bbn.com)) in order to get added.

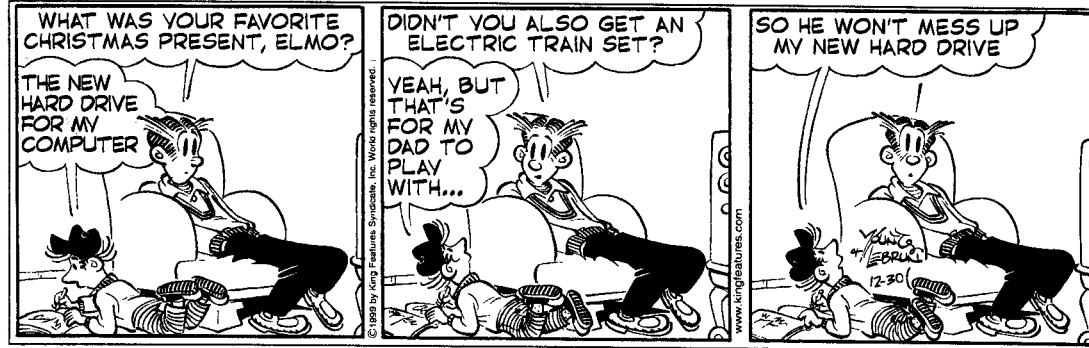
Are you a scratch-builder? Interested in participating in a group purchase of some materials—scale sizes of stripwood? We are contemplating making a bulk purchase of wood from Kappler USA (<http://www.kapplerusa.com/k-p-dlr.htm>), a dealer pak of KP090N (\$117) or KP090HO (\$150), or KP090O (\$175). If we do this, we need a list of who's interested and how much they want to figure the per-person cost, whether that's acceptable to those interested, and then have money up front (the Division does not have the money to pay for it). These are dealer packs, with a fair amount of stuff in them, at a 40% discount. The material is all basswood. Let Clint Hyde know, at either 703-803-3068, or [chyde@bnn.com](mailto:chyde@bnn.com)

Only two members have responded on this so far...

### Reminder:

The Flyer is *always* accepting submissions for publication—and you get NMRA AP Author points when things get published! Don't wait, get that stuff in now! You can see that there are holes to fill

### BLONDIE YOUNG & DRAKE



and a significant number of traditional straights.

Even with this many modules, the only style of railroad we could build was a closed loop. This configuration gives us the opportunity for relatively bulletproof operation because we end up with two independent loops that do not interact with each other at all, unless we choose to use a crossing or crossover. This style of running is excellent for train shows because trains can run essentially unattended. With only a small number of trainmen, a large number of trains can be run, and the general public likes this. Trains have run all day without being changed out and although relative positions of the trains with regard to spacing can change, the order does not. The introduction of Digital Command Control (DCC) gave us more control over the individual trains, the pattern of operation has not really changed at all. The immediate effect of DCC allowed us to run more trains on the railroad and maintain control of each of them. The addition of two wye modules built by Bill Brandon has introduced us to Point-to-Point (really loop-to-loop) operation. After learning how to properly control this type of operation because it now contains two reverse loops and enjoying the lack of duck-unders, this, too, is relatively old hat. I have noticed that now we have only one main rather than two and we still operate the "old" way. We still operate in the "same order, one behind the other" fashion. The wyes have given us the potential to operate in a more interesting fashion. We now have the opportunity to have a real, two-track mainline. The next step would create a dispatcher position for the railroad. The dispatcher could actually set up meets and passes on the main. The dispatcher would have to know the exact position of the train on the railroad, the lengths of the trains, the distances of passing sidings, and distances between crossovers. I feel that this would generate a new challenge for the engineers and make the railroad an interesting puzzle, a form of "linear chess". As the number of trains on the main increases, the number of possible situations increases dramatically. I would not consider timetable operation or freight car forwarding yet because these situations further complicate matters. In the future, I would add these dimensions as our skills improve.

We have two modules that are up for adoption. Ken Berthoud had two straight modules that the Crew would like to find a home for. The only strings on the modules would be that they be available for the Crew's use. If you are interested in joining us but feel you do not have the time or money to build a module, this might be your opening. Bill Brandon would also like to part with one of the two wyes he has built. He would be interested in recovering some of his costs by swapping railroad goods or accepting some money to defray his costs. Bill has said that he is not interested in recouping his total investment.

We are always looking for new members. If you think Modular railroading is for you please contact us via our Web page, E-mail at [Bstricklan@aol.com](mailto:Bstricklan@aol.com), phone at 703-361-5620, or by mail at:

Bruce Strickland

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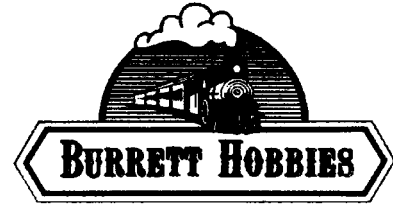
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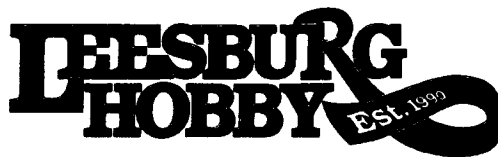
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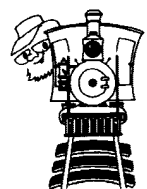
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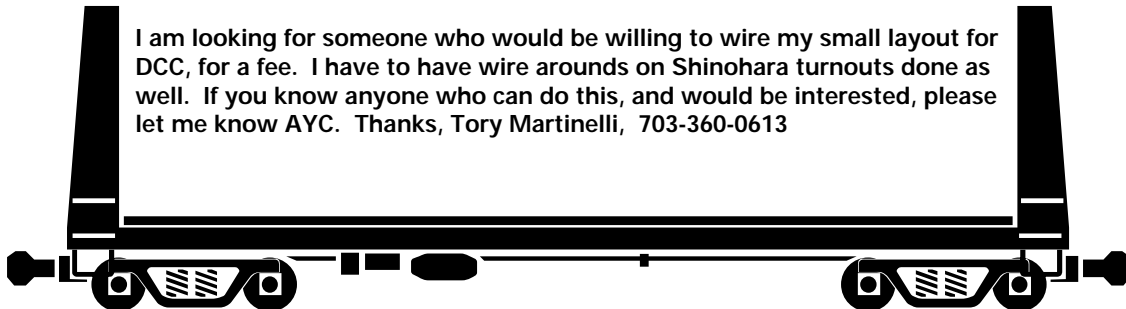
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I am looking for someone who would be willing to wire my small layout for DCC, for a fee. I have to have wire arounds on Shinohara turnouts done as well. If you know anyone who can do this, and would be interested, please let me know AYC. Thanks, Tory Martinelli, 703-360-0613



# POTOMAC DIVISION

Division 2, Mid-Eastern Region, National Model Railroad Association  
MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION AND INTEREST SURVEY

The **Potomac Division** provides various activities for all interested model railroaders, such as home layout tours, prototype tours, and a Mini-Convention every March. We publish a quarterly newsletter, the Potomac Flyer, detailing Division activities. We proudly boast one of the greatest concentrations of model railroading talent in the country with over 10 NMRAMaster Model Railroaders in our area, as well as hundreds of other outstanding modelers.

The **Potomac Division** encompasses the District of Columbia; Calvert, Charles, Montgomery, Prince George's, and St. Mary's Counties in Maryland; Arlington, Fairfax, Fauquier, Loudoun, Prince William, and Rappahannock Counties in Virginia, as well as all area independent cities. Local residence and MER or NMRAMembership are not required for Division membership. Anyone interested in learning more about model railroading, improving their modeling skills, and enjoying the company of fellow model railroaders is invited to join the **Potomac Division**.

## PERSONAL INFORMATION

Name

Street Address or PO Box

Additional Address

City

State

ZIP + 4

email

Home phone

Work phone

NMRA #

Exp. date

MER #

Birthdate

## INTEREST SURVEY

Primary Scale

Secondary Scale

Do you have

A layout or module?



Narrow Gauge interest?



Module interest?



Traction interest?



Would you be willing to host a Home Layout Tour of your Layout?

Favorite Railroad(s) & Prototype(s) modeled:

Please list the NMRA Special Interest Group(s), model railroad clubs, and railroad historical societies to which you belong:

New and renewing members: please include a short paragraph or two describing yourself and your railroading interests for possible inclusion in upcoming Call Board columns.

## DUES CALCULATION

Please fill out this section completely, including whether you are new or renewing. Renewing NMRA and MER members, please supply your birthdate, membership numbers, and expiration dates in the Personal Information section above. *Incomplete information may delay your renewal.*

**Potomac Division:** Membership is **\$4 per year**. Members receive the quarterly *Potomac Flyer*.

\$

New

Renewal

**Mid-Eastern Region:** Membership is **\$8 per year**. Members receive the bimonthly *MER Local*. You may also write MER directly at: The Mid-Eastern Region \* Office Manager \* 13212 Bellevue St. \* Silver Spring, MD 20904. **NOTE: You must be a member of the NMRA to be a member of the MER.**

\$




**National Model Railroad Association:** Membership is **\$32 per year for full membership**, or **\$16 per year for an Associate Membership**. Members receive the monthly *NMRA Bulletin*. You may also write the NMRA directly at: National Model Railroad Association, Inc. \* Headquarters Office \* 4121 Cromwell Rd. \* Chattanooga, TN 37421. **NOTE: Associate members DO NOT receive the NMRA Bulletin.**

\$




Please make your check payable to *Potomac Division*. Send check with your completed application to:

\$

TOTAL

Clerk, Potomac Division \* POBox 3204 \* Manassas, VA 20108

The Division will forward National and Regional dues. Allow 6-8 weeks for processing, none of us are fast.

# Potomac Division Calendar

✓ Mark events now which you don't want to miss.

## May

7 Pliny Holt's Layout Tour. see page 6.

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28 Northern Virginia Model Railroader's Club Open House. see page 7.

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## June

3 Manassas Railway Festival. see page 1.

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4 Alan Sinclair's Layout Tour. see page 7.

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24,25 Great Scale Model Train show,  
Timonium, MD.  
[www.gsmts.com/next.htm](http://www.gsmts.com/next.htm)

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## July

16 Al Pritchett's Layout Tour.  
see page 8.

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15 Greenberg's Train Show  
July 15, 2000  
Capitol Expo Center  
Chantilly, VA

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15 Northern Virginia Model Railroader's Club Open House. see page 7.

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The Quarterly Newsletter of  
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National Model Railroad Association, Inc.  
P.O. Box 3204  
Manassas, VA 20108

The Potomac Flyer