

The Potomac Flyer



November 2009 — January 2010 The Quarterly Newsletter of Division 2 ("Potomac"), Mid-Eastern Region, National Model Railroad Association, Inc. Winter Quarter

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Does the Clerk
have your e-mail
address? If you
are not receiving
reminders then
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now!

The 2010 Mini-Convention By Bill Demas

Although it seems rather early to be thinking about the next Minicon, preparations and arrangements are already afoot to assure the success of the signature event of Potomac Division. After a one year hiatus because the Division hosted the MER Regional Convention in Reston, VA last fall, the event returns better than ever.

The one day affair will be on Saturday, April 17, 2010 at the South Columbia Baptist Church on Guilford Road (just off MD Route 32) in Columbia, Maryland. This is in keeping with your Board of Directors' aim to annually alternate between Maryland, DC and Virginia in selecting a venue for the Minicon. Furthermore, because of the location, the new Chesapeake Division has been invited and has accepted an invitation to co-host. A record turnout for this event is therefore expected, and the hope is this is the start of many joint ventures with our neighboring fellow model railroaders from the greater Baltimore-Annapolis area.

If you've attended on of these in the past, you know that clinics are the main order of the day. Potomac Division is blessed with some of the finest clinicians in the Mid Eastern Region, and Clinic Chair Mark Andersen (himself an excellent presenter of ceiling tile rock building) is already lining up some of that superb talent. A total of twelve clinics are planned, so there

will be ample opportunity for you to pick and choose those that cater to your particular modeling interests. Among those currently scheduled to appear will be a take-away clinic with Clint Hyde and Martin Brechbiel on building a small building or classic car; Martin will also present resin casting without the pitfalls; Marshall Abrams on the benefits of adding signaling to a layout, and more. The Division web site, http://home.comcast.net/~Potomac_NMRA/ will be regularly updated with news about specific clinics and presenters as they are finalized., as well as AP contest information, participating modular groups, specific times, and so on.

As in any event of this nature, there will be Achievement Program opportunities and model judging contests to enter, so start fine-tuning your prize models to enter in this year's contest. Bill Day could use the competition! Again, check the web site for more from A P Chairman Brian Sheron., who will also be presenting a clinic on earning the Author's Certificate for the AP Program.

Of course, there will be modular railroad displays. There are several active groups in the area within the confines of both Divisions, and the Potomac Module Crew and MARRS from Ft. Meade are two groups expected to have layouts up and running. There will (hopefully) once again be a switching puzzle layout for the young folks (and yes, the older ones too)

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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.

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The Potomac Flyer

Potomac Division's quarterly newsletter © 2008

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For more local information, see the
Potomac Division web site at:

http://home.comcast.net/~Potomac_NMRA/

From the Business Car

by **Marshall Abrams**
Division Superintendent
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There's been so much happening that I don't know where to begin. Let's start by sharing more information. The Board of Directors (Board) meets at least six times a year, as required by the Bylaws. We usually meet at noon on Saturday, trying to avoid other model railroad events. The Clerk produces minutes of the meetings. Someone suggested that we share these minutes with you, which we have started with the July 18, 2009 meeting. They're on the web page http://home.comcast.net/~Potomac_NMRA/; take a look. You'll find the minutes, and lots of other interesting information, by clicking on the menu on the left side.

Another item of interest on the web page is the Minicon to be held April 17, 2010 at the South Columbia Baptist Church in Columbia, MD. Bob Burroughs was instrumental in helping us book into this fine facility. The Minicon will be co-sponsored with the Chesapeake Division. What, you never heard of the Chesapeake Division? Maybe you knew that the Baltimore area did not have an active NMRA division. That has changed; there's a new Chesapeake Division (<http://www.trainweb.org/chesapekemernmra/>) and your Board decided to help them get going by inviting them to join us in sponsoring the Minicon. At present, Howard County (containing Columbia) is part of Potomac Division (PD), but there's a motion at the MER to transfer it back to Chesapeake.

There's an interesting quirk in the NMRA rules. The geographic location where you live determines the Division you vote in, but you can hold office in another Division. And, of course, any NMRA member can attend any NMRA event. The PD will continue to invite those Chesapeake members who are in the PD email contact list to PD events.

The Board reviewed the Bylaws earlier this year and has some proposed revisions that more closely describe how we conduct elections. While we normally hold elections at the Minicon, we had to make an

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Achievement Program News

by Brian W. Sheron

There has not been a lot of Achievement Program activity since the last issue of “The Flyer.”

Yours truly managed to earn the “Author” achievement certificate in June, and the “Civil” achievement certificate in September.



Martin Brechbiel has written an interesting article on model judging in this issue, and I strongly urge everyone to read it, since it provides some interesting insights on the model judging process. I have volunteered to become an apprentice judge for the upcoming MER convention in Hagerstown this October and I'm looking forward to the experience. If you have any models that you've built and would like to get judged, perhaps for AP certificates, please consider entering them.

Speaking of models, at the Potomac Division Minicon this Spring, we are considering a venue in which folks that have built models, and perhaps had them judged elsewhere, can display them for all to see. As an example, one of our members, Bill Day, built a spectacular, operating bascule bridge which won several awards at the NMRA National convention in July. Displaying this model (and others) at the Minicon will allow many folks that didn't or couldn't attend the National Convention to see it.

For this issue, I want to talk a little bit about the Dispatcher AP certificate. This is one of the few AP certificates that you cannot earn by yourself. The Dispatcher certificate is about operations, and operations requires people to do different jobs. You need to log at least 50 hours of operating time, with at least 10 hours each in 3 of the 5 categories, one of which must be Dispatcher. I strongly urge you to read the articles about the Dispatcher certificate on the NMRA AP web page.

<http://www.nmra.org/education/achievement/>

So how does one learn about operations? There is a plethora of information available for one to read about operations. In addition to articles that

periodically appear in model railroading magazines, there are books (e.g., Tony Koester's book) and even a Special Interest Group (SIG) on operations. Reading these books and articles will certainly give you a better feel for operations and the various methods (e.g., car cards, manually or computer generated switch lists) available for setting up operating sessions.

However, I think an integral part of learning about operations is to first participate in one or more operating sessions with some folks that are experienced in operations (e.g., an existing operating club or group), and then to set up a session yourself (i.e., be the dispatcher).

One way to get involved is to find an operations group that is located in your neck of the woods, and if you know someone in it, ask if you can observe or maybe participate in a few operating sessions. If you don't know someone to call, another option is to go to the Potomac Division web page and look at the list of members that have earned “Dispatcher” achievement certificates. One of the objectives of the NMRA's achievement program is for members that have earned certificates in specific categories to help others working on that achievement category. It is likely that these folks will belong to an operations group and are willing to invite you to observe or even participate in a session (or sessions).

If you can't find an existing operations group to join, then consider starting a new one. The requirements for “Dispatcher” specify the minimum requirements for a layout used for a qualifying operating session, but I am not aware of any requirements on the minimum number of folks needed for an operations group. However, from experience in the group I belong to, about 4 people are needed to make an enjoyable session. And remember, everyone in the group doesn't need to have a layout. Several members in our group don't have layouts. Only one layout that meets the AP requirements is necessary, but having several layouts in the group adds to the variety. In groups with multiple layouts, usually the layout owner becomes the dispatcher for that session. However, this is certainly not a requirement, and a layout owner can let anyone in the group be the dispatcher and set up the operating session.

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Northern Virginia NTRAK News

By Steve Jackson



Since my last article, NVNTRAK lost a long-time member: Matt Schaefer. Matt passed away early on August 29. He was a regular author in the NVNTRAK monthly newsletter for most of the history of the newsletter. Matt also contributed to the NTRAK newsletter. He was a friend and mentor to many of us and he will be greatly missed.

The month of October will see the club with a heavy schedule including the first double-header in a while. The first weekend will see the club with a public setup at the Bethesda-Chevy Chase Rescue Squad during the 20th Annual Taste of Bethesda festival on Saturday the 3rd as well as a backshop session on Sunday the 4th. The following weekend will be the double header with a show at the Franconia Volunteer Fire Department Open House on Saturday as well as a setup at the Great Scale Model Train Show in Timonium, MD on both Saturday and Sunday. The Franconia Volunteer Fire Department hosts our monthly backshop session and our participation in their open house allows us to help them a little since they help us so much. The MER Convention is scheduled for the 15-18 of October and the club will setup at Fairfax Station on Sunday of that same weekend.

The first and second weekends in November will be very busy ones for the club. The first Sunday of the month features the backshop session where we bring out our projects and work together to learn and share. The same weekend (Nov 1) is the Gaithersburg Model Train Show where the club will have a medium-sized NTRAK layout. The following weekend features the return of our annual participation at the Rockville Lion's Club Train show on Nov 7-8. The Lion's Club show was the first one where NVNTRAK participated and it is a perennial favorite for many of our members. The club will also be providing a small NTRAK layout at the Damascus Railroad Day on Saturday of that

same weekend. The second weekend of November is a great one for those of you north of the Potomac River! November 15th will see NVNTRAK participating in the monthly setup at the Fairfax Station Railroad Museum. They have a beautifully restored station and allow our club to set up a train layout each month in the freight area of the old station.

December will be another busy month. The second weekend will include 3 layouts! NVNTRAK will be participating in the Fairfax Station Train Show on Dec 5-6 where we will be running the layout which we constructed for the caboose which is located adjacent to the station. The following weekend will include two shows by our T-TRAK Division. The first show is at the South Columbia Baptist Church. Setup for the show is Friday with trains running that evening and all day Saturday. In addition, the T-TRAK Division will provide a layout on Saturday for the Train Collectors Association holiday show at the Kena Temple in Fairfax. In addition to these two shows, the club will provide an NTRAK layout on Dec 12-13 at the Washington and Old Dominion Station in Herndon. The club plans to return to the College Park IKEA for a layout on December 19-20.

If you want any information about any of our past shows or upcoming shows, you can find it on our web site at www.nvntrak.org. We have an events link that accesses our calendar and an events pictures page that hosts photos of past shows. Our newsletter (The Callboard) is also posted on the site, although this usually lags the publication of the paper copy.

Thanks for your time. Talk to you again soon.



“Don’t Shoot the Judge” - Some Thoughts on Model Contests

By Martin Brechbiel



A few months ago, an email discussion started on the Potomac Division Yahoo group (http://groups.yahoo.com/group/PD_NMRA/) about merit judging. Being a merit judge, and without any opinion on the subject (yuk, yuk), I immediately added my two cents worth. My initial musings on the subject were essentially an unedited stream of thoughts. Nevertheless, Superintendent Marshall Abrams deemed them as useful insights and suggested I turn my musings into a more coherent dialog on the subject for “The Flyer.” With a little editorial help from Brian Sheron, below are my collective thoughts on the subject.

Let’s start with the nature of the contests themselves and their actual purpose. In my opinion, the true underlying purpose of these contests is to provide a mechanism to gather feedback on the qualities of one’s modeling efforts. In addition, I’ve always thought another mission of the contests was to get people out of their basement shops (closets, garages or what have you), show each other what they’ve made, get some formalized feedback on their efforts (judging) for fun and reward (contest rankings and AP program), and then take what has been learned back to the workshop in order to become a better modeler. It’s a teaching and learning experience that’s supposed to be fun and have some rewards associated with it as well.

Judging and rewards seem to be issues, and I’ve heard complaints about them for as long as I’ve been an NMRA member. I’ve even done my share of it (there, confession is good for the soul!). But, sitting on the sidelines and nay saying, turning your back on it all and walking away, etc. is just abandoning an important aspect of the hobby. Let’s say you get judging scores that perplex and befuddle you, and convince you that the judges were total

#\$%#\$\$%’s! But did you ever go and talk to the judges or contest room chair and ask for an explanation of your score? You can and should—that’s part of the entire learning experience. If you think the judge made a mistake, didn’t consider some aspect of your effort, etc. You can request your model be re-judged—mistakes can be made by both modelers and judges. However, you need to make the effort to communicate.

The first part of informing or communicating with the judge is the task of preparing the paperwork that must be submitted with any model to be judged. I hate it myself, but that’s because I just hate paperwork! I find it is easier to write an article about what I built than to fill out contest forms. Unfortunately, paperwork is a necessity for almost everything we do today, including getting our models judged, and I seem to muddle through it just fine.

Merit judging requires that the modeler provide a discussion on how their model meets the five merit judging categories. You can write a novel about your model, but it’s just not necessary and the judges quite frankly are not likely to take the time to read it all anyway. A concise 2-3 page document with some pictures that list and define everything done are all that’s needed.

Also, remember that Judges are only human, judging is subjective by definition, and scoring can (and likely will) be variable. However, it should not be wildly variable and that’s why there needs to be a core of experienced judges in each NMRA region. So where do you get a core of experienced judges? I have suggested getting some of the MMRs and AP coordinators across the MER to form a core of judges at the MER level.

Every year at the regional convention we generally have a regular core group of judges which is then augmented by other experienced judges that become available depending on the actual geographic location of the convention. Not everybody’s willing to travel to every convention and be a judge every year. However, there remains a core level of consistency by this action and we almost always have at least two judges per judging category. In addition to this core group, every year we try to at-

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Around the Division

Stan Knotts' Royal Oak and Southern Railroad

by Brian W. Sheron

Sunday, September 13th, was one of those rare days in the Washington area. The sky was clear blue, the humidity was low, and the temperature was in the 70's. It was a great day to get out of the house and enjoy the day. And 28 of our members did just that by visiting Stan Knotts' Royal Oak and Southern Model Railroad.

And they certainly weren't disappointed! Stan is an outstanding modeler and has meticulously recreated the steam era in Western Pennsylvania. Stan was assisted by his lovely wife Pat in hosting the open house.

Stan has been working on the layout for about 17 years, but says that most of the progress was made after he retired. It occupies a 17' x 25' area in his basement and models a small local carrier with a narrow gauge subsidiary in 1939. Stan said he has a preference towards industrial themes, and the many industries around the layout attest to that. Most of the structures on the layout were either scratchbuilt, constructed from craftsman kits, or kitbashed and are excellently weathered and detailed.



Stan Knotts describing his layout to visitors Photo by author

Motive power is controlled by NCE DCC radio control, as are most of the switches. Hence, one of the things you notice on Stan's layout is the absence of control panels! To add to the realism,

Stan has installed several sound CD players under the layout, including harbor, sawmill, and logging area sounds. More are planned, and will eventually be controlled by DCC stationary decoders.

Stan considers his layout a work-in-progress. As he says, "I will probably never be 'finished' as I tend to replace or change items with improved or different ones."



EBT's #14 glides past the car Shop

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There is another side benefit to getting involved with operations. If you ever want to know what is wrong with your layout, just invite other people to come over and run it! When I began setting up for hosting my first operating session, I thought my layout was in pretty good shape. During this first session, cars derailed at unexpected locations, turnouts didn't completely throw the full distance, cars uncoupled for no apparent reason, etc., etc. What I learned was that my layout didn't operate so great after all, and I have spent many hours working the bugs out of the layout. Smooth operation is an essential element of an enjoyable operating session, and getting involved with operations will force you to tune up your layout. I'll probably discuss this aspect further in some future column!

The Potomac Module Crew

by Mark Andersen



With the seasonal changes upon us, it causes one to refocus efforts back on indoor interests and hobbies. Collecting the supplies, paints, glues, engines and cars one wants to change and adjust to the road of choice, either fictitious or real. As much as I like HO scale, I've succumbed to the On30 attractiveness for detail I can see without a jewelers loop. At a recent show, I purchased an On30 4-6-0 and ran it around on our modules. It had that turn of the century narrow gauge look and garnered many questions about my purchase.

Recently, a fellow Potomac Division member, Stan Knotts, had an open house layout tour. Talk about detail and scratch built structures, I was in awe! Aside from his city scenes and harbor loadout structures, was the mining route in Hon3. This line depicted many mining details and scenes I want to model incorporating them on my new module, a standard flat door. Easy to store, takes up little room and allows for my Dorr Valley Railroad to coexist with HO modules, though not connected. Creativity, the bug we must spark and start modeling our interests.

After our summer break, our August 2009 started a night late with Greenberg's Dulles Expo Show on the 22nd and 23rd. Friday setup always a choice, allowed many to setup readying track and connections, let Bruce and Colin work their DCC wonders of readiness and letting the rest of us toddle on over to Willard's Bar-B-Q, always a stop for the three days we're there. Trains ran smooth as always, including a new member Doug Whitehead and his consists. Welcome Doug and enjoy.....

The Friends of Fairfax Station Show occurred over the Labor Day weekend of September 5 and 6, 2009. We were greeted as always by Joan Rogers of the Friends and thanked repeatedly for our efforts benefiting the Station's efforts to raise funds. Several members staffed the gift shop. Coinciding with a church celebra-

tion up the road, the Friends open their doors for parents and their young families to share in the love of trains in both HO scale by the crew and NV-NTrak in the caboose. Also, sharing the limelight is Monty Smith and his Lego Empire RR that is constantly evolving and growing. An ever growing display, we see more detailed structures and custom built cars every time he sets up, and plus, he's one of us!

We're also in the planning stages of converting our electrical connections to positive lock Anderson Power Pole connectors

<<http://www.andersonpower.com/products/standard-powerpole.html> > This will eliminate one issue we have with old style Cinch Jones connectors, loose connections and lost connectivity. Upgrading is an issue not enjoyed by all, but sometimes changes are for the best. In the past, a seamless improvement included power district protection circuits. Unnoticed by most, this always keeps us up and running, including our largest layout for the Four Clubs Boy Scout show.

Another new twist to DCC was Bruce Strickland's purchase of the new Digitrax DT402D duplex radio-equipped super throttle and transceiver. All I can say is this is cool. It works just like the old system but with one improvement. Once the system is up and running, you plug in your new throttle once, unplug, step back, and acquire your locomotive without plugging in, operate your consist, and when finished, drop the loco address, again without plugging back in. I can't wait for Digitrax's next toy!

Our next venues include the Fredericksburg Greenburg show on October 24 & 25, the Rockville Lions Club Holiday show November 7 & 8, the Holiday Show at Fairfax Station December 5 & 6, the Herndon Days Town Celebration December 12 & 13 followed by our last Greenburg Show at Dulles Expo Center January 2 & 3, 2010. Stop by and say hello, as we'd love to see you.

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Continued from page 5 “Judge”

tract a group of apprentice judges to work with at least two of the experienced judges to then judge one of the categories. Given time, this activity is intended to grow experienced judges that will be available not only to their respective Divisions, but at the Regional level as well. Obviously, the more experienced judges that are available, the more there will be consistency in judging. I personally know of many models that have been judged at both Division, Region and National levels that have received very consistent scores. Good, consistent judges that understand the rules and how to use the scoring matrix rationally in fact does result in fairly consistent scores.

So, for those that complain about Judges—have you ever been a judge or would you like to be one? I can virtually guarantee that you will learn how to be a better modeler, if only by sitting next to an experienced judge/MMR through an entire judging session. Come into the contest room and be a participant and see what kinds of constructive changes you can make for your own modeling and for the NMRA.

Remember, this is about you learning to be a better modeler so you really are working for yourself; you are testing yourself in regard to what you can create. If you don't challenge yourself, then it's difficult to see how you can improve your modeling skills. Remember, everyone has room for improvement and to learn something new.

I've completed several of the AP categories that involve the contest room, so I feel I have a justified appreciation for this topic. To receive a Merit Award a model must receive a score of at least 87 ½ points. Winning is not a requirement—just building models that receive at least 87 ½ points is all that is required. If your ultimate goal is to achieve the rank of MMR, remember it is not supposed to be easy. It has to be earned. As far as I can remember, just about every MMR has stated that they learned how to be a better modeler by virtue of their participation in the program.

So, the entire exercise can really be reduced down

to a fundamental concept of learning to be a better modeler. If you've got something constructive to add, feel that your participation will improve how everything works, or if you simply just have some ideas that could improve things, then please become part of the solution. Interact with the judges, perhaps become a judge (you might find you like it!), get involved in your organization, because the NMRA really does belong to its members and you are its life blood.

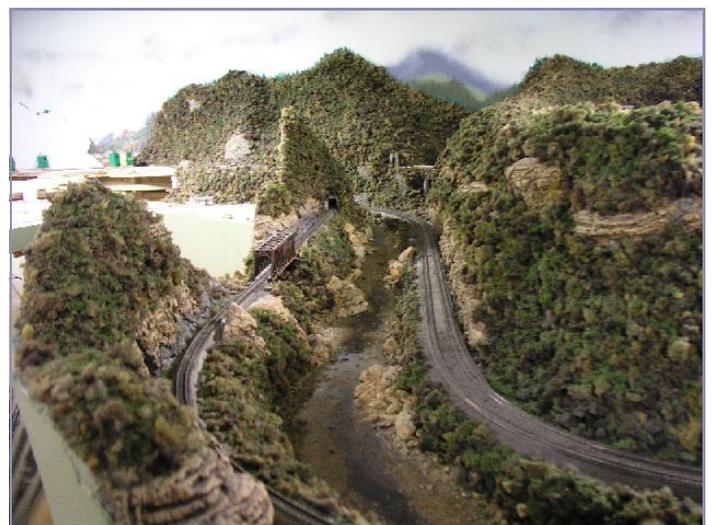
NOTE:

For further information on participating in judging at the MER level, contact Martin Brechbiel at martinwb@verizon.net. Contact Brian Sheron at BWSheron@mac.com for participating at the Division level.

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As always, “We're always looking for a few more members!!” Our website, now with a much shorter address,

<www.potomacmodulecrew.org> is professionally maintained by Colin Weiner. If there are any questions, any member can answer these, but if you need an immediate or more personal answer, please contact me at andersmd@cox.net or call 703-625-1272. Again, thank you for your time-Mark



Scene on Monroe Stewart's Hooch Junction

Potomac Division Division 2, Mid-Eastern Region, National Model Railroad Association
4604 Bel Pre Road Rockville, MD 20853-2208



Web page:
http://home.comcast.net/~Potomac_NMRA

Email :
Potomac_NMRA@comcast.net

The Potomac Division provides various activities for all interested model railroaders, such as home layout tours, prototype tours, and Mini-Conventions. 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 more than 10 NMRA Master Model Railroaders in our area, as well as hundreds of other outstanding modelers.

The Potomac Division includes: The District of Columbia; Calvert, Charles, Howard, 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. All members of the NMRA who reside in one of these areas are automatically members of the Potomac Division. Guests are always welcome at Division events.

Personal Information

First Name	Last Name	Work phone
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City	State	ZIP+4
Email		

Interest Survey

Primary Scale	Secondary Scale	Favorite Railroad(s) & Prototype(s) Modeled:	
Do you have in primary or secondary scale		Please list the NMRA Special Interest Group(s), model railroad clubs, and railroad historical societies to which you belong:	
<input type="checkbox"/>	A layout		<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	Narrow Gauge interest?		<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	Module interest		<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	Traction interest interest?		<input type="checkbox"/>
Would you be willing to host a Home Layout Tour of your Layout? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No			

Newsletter Election

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National Model Railroad Association membership is \$55 per year for full membership including the monthly *Scale Rails*, or \$36 per year for an associate membership. Full Members receive the monthly *Scale Rails*, associate members do not. You may send your dues directly to the National Model Railroad Association, Inc., Headquarters Office, 4121 Cromwell Rd., Chattanooga, TN 37421. <http://www.rhistorical.com/NMRA/>

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In the Web By Mike White

There are now two pages up that, while somewhat similar, are intended to have distinctly different content. The first "Neat, Nifty and Cool" is for simple *finished product* ideas that can be explained in a page or less of text. There is also a new page up called "Tips 'n Tricks". "Tips 'n Tricks" is intended to showcase those ideas and techniques that help you get to that finished product. Take a look at each page, and the difference becomes apparent. So far, the contributions to "Tips 'n Tricks" are all from the same person. These are contributors' pages. If you have something that you would like to see published that fits the concept of "Neat, Nifty, . . . , or" "Tips 'n Tricks", then send it and a digitized photograph to me at mm.white@comcast.net and I'll take care of the rest.

New this month – just a few weeks actually – is the "BOD-Minutes" page. As Marshall explains in his introduction on the Business Car page, this is a response to a sometimes asked question, "What do you guys do at the Board meetings?" Since these meetings occur approximately every two months you can expect to see this page change six times per year.

Last quarter, this column talked about Potomac Division members' websites that are featured on our Division website under the "Home Pages" heading. If you have a website for your

Great Decals!™

Fallout Shelter Signs
CP Mandarin Orange
NYC/PC—Budd car stripes
Interstate Railroad—2 titles
Virginian Railway—15 titles
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PRR X-29 box cars
L&N—5 titles
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model railroad that you think would be of interest to your fellow modelers, then send me the link (see address above) and I'll add it to the list.

There is also a new page up for "Minicon 2010". It doesn't contain much except the date and location at this point, but it will be growing as more details are finalized. Check back often.



Scene on Mat Thompson's Oregon Coast Railroad

Bulletin Board

Have information of general interest? Send it in we will post it here.

Continued from Page 1 “Minicon”

if I can convince Dave Arday to bring it. There will be a white elephant table as well, where you can probably find just that right thing at just the right price for your layout you’ve almost given up searching for.

Fair grub, hot dogs, hamburgers, chips, soda, and the like will be available at modest cost from the South Columbia Youth Group. There are also many easily accessible restaurants in the area.

The Minicon is also the venue where Potomac Division elects the five elected Board members. They are not elected to specific positions, but at-large and decide among themselves whom will perform the various duties. So if you’re so inclined, now’s the time to think about volunteering to stand for election. Speaking for the incumbents, I can assure you no one’s feelings will be hurt at all!

The Minicon, as always, is a great resource. Here you can learn new ways to improve your skills, exchange how-to ideas, share quality family time, put a face and voice to some folks you’ve never met in person, perhaps come away with a hands-on model from a clinic, make new friends (you’d be surprised how many fellow model railroaders live right near you!), and generally enjoy a great time.

Mark the date on your calendar now for Saturday, April 17, 2010.

Continued from Page 2 “Business”

adjustment because there was no 2009 Minicon. It was cancelled because we had sponsored the 2008 MER Convention. We fixed the election procedures, terms of office, and related provisions. The revisions are posed on the PD webpage. Comments and suggestion should be sent to Potomac_NMRA@comcast.net.

Operating your layout in a more-or-less prototypical manner is increasingly popular. We noticed “Operations Weekends” in nearby divisions. The Board has been discussing how to share the fun among more PD members. We’re discussing the concept of a series of operations clinics to be held independently of other events. The general concept is to hold one clinic that is an overview of operations and of the three systems used for organizing operations: car cards, computer-generated orders, and timetable-train order. There would be subsequent follow-up clinics combined with operating sessions for each of the three systems. The series of sessions might spread over several months and could be repeated if there were sufficient interest. The Minicon is getting priority attention, so this “operations series” might not occur till next Spring.

Brian Sheron is asking many, many questions as he works on promoting the Achievement Program (AP). Like many people who strive to earn AP certificates, Brian asks “What do I have to do? What are the rules?” As AP coordinator, he asks the same questions. Also, just like many other people who have read the AP requirements, he wonders why the rules are so unclear. He saw an excellent series of articles in *Scale Rails* –“What I learned by becoming an MMR” by Gerry Leone, MMR—and pushed, successfully, to have it placed on the national AP web page. Unfortunately that’s not enough. Brian has discovered that the AP has an oral tradition and that each interpreter of the tradition has different derived knowledge and understanding. In other words, if you ask two different people the same question, you will get at least two different answers. Brian is considering developing a web-based FAQ (Frequently Asked Questions & Answers) to capture the oral tradition and is discussing the possibility with Charlie Flichman, the MER AP coordinator.

Home Layout Tour

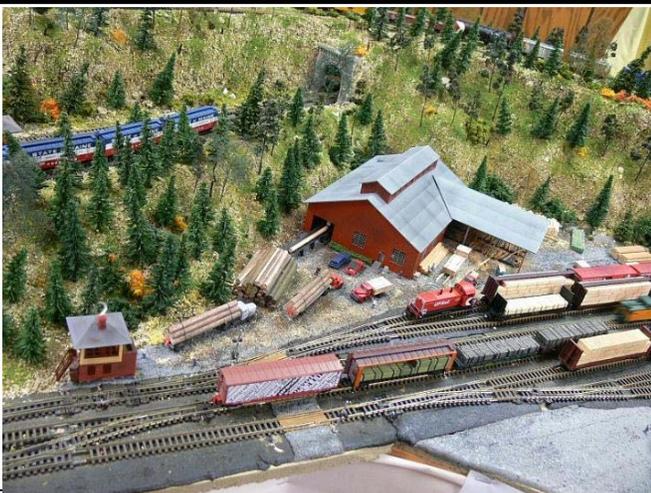
Steve King's

Virginia Midland Railway

Sunday, 6 December, 2009 1-4 pm

Under construction since moving to the area in 2005, the freelance N-scale Virginia Midland Railway occupies a 26x38 foot basement. The railroad is fully operational while scenery and finishing touches continue as "work-in-process". The 405 foot single-track mainline covers the segment between Marion (VA) and Welch (WV) - a 27 scale mile run for train crews when measured against the 2.4:1 fast clock used during Timetable & Train Order operations.

The operating era is 1967. Second generation diesels handle the principle trains while first generation units continue to serve as pushers, on mine runs, and on local services. Coal trains dominate, but the Virginia Midland's Pittsburgh-Charlotte routing serves as a gateway for merchandise traffic too. The railroad is normally operated with a crew of about ten - dispatcher, two train order operators, a Marion yardmaster, and 5-6 train crews. Please be sure to sign up if you would be interested in participating in the VM's prototype based TT&TO operating sessions.



Home Layout Tour

No Layout Tour in

January 2011

Have a Safe and Happy New Year!

Scene on Jim Hellwege's Rangor and Aroostook Railroad Photo by Mark Andersen

Potomac Division Calendar

√ Mark events now which you don't want to miss

November

- 1 NVNTrak at Gaithersburg Model Train Show, MD
 - 1 Layout tour at Baltimore Society of Model Engineers, Baltimore, MD
 - 7 NVNTrak at Damascus Rail Road Day, MD
 - 7-8 NVNTrak and PD Module Crew at Rockville Lions Club, MD
 - 15 NVNTrak at Fairfax Station Museum, VA
-

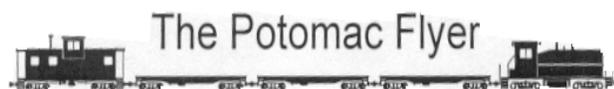
December

- 5 PMC and NVNTrak at Fairfax Station Museum, VA

- 6 Layout tour at Steve King's, Germantown, MD
 - 12-13 PMC Herndon Holiday Show, VA
 - 25 Merry Christmas!
-

January

- 1 Happy New Year!
- 2-3 Greenberg's Train Show, Chantilly, VA
- 23-24 World's Greatest Hobby on Tour, Chantilly, VA



The Quarterly Newsletter of

Division 2 ("Potomac") Mid Eastern Region

National Model Railroad Association

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