

March 16, 2019 Minicon Report

By Alex Belida

A total of 74 avid model railroaders, mainly from the Potomac Division but also a large contingent from the Chesapeake division, met for a day of model railroading enjoyment at the 2019 MiniCon at Emmanuel United Methodist Church in Laurel on March 16.

The final attendance totals:

48 Potomac

22 Chesapeake

2 South Mountain

1 Susquehanna

1 James River

The Potomac Division held its annual Business meeting after lunch and elected three new Board members: Martin Brechbiel, Andrew Dodge and Nick Kalis. They replace Brian Sheron, Marshall Abrams



Brian Sheron

2



Marshall Abrams

3



Alex Belida Two Scratchbuilds

4



Andrew Dodge Scratchbuild

5



John Paganoni

6

and Bob Sprague, who did not seek re-election. The outgoing Board members were recognized with a special presentation of plaques.

Martin, who will become the new Division Superintendent, was unable to attend the meeting due to a prior commitment. But Andrew, the new Senior Assistant Superintendent, offered congratulations to the outgoing board for mounting what he described as “a successful convention.” He noted that the “clinics were well attended” and said the room-space was ideal “in that it was small enough that the clinician and the attendees were able to establish a closer bond than one would have



in a larger venue.” Andrew noted four modelers submitted work to be evaluated and earned Merit Award certificates, adding his thanks “to Mat Thompson and the three other judges who provided their time and expertise.” During the meeting, Achievement Program Coordinator Mat Thompson presented Master Builder-Scenery certificates to Nick Kalis and Alex Belida. Nick, the incoming Board Clerk, also received recognition as a Model Railroad Volunteer and Alex was given his Golden Spike award.

There were eight clinics. Dave Arday talked about railfanning and its relationship to model railroading. Marshall Abrams provided useful advice on the disposal of a model railroad with his estate planning clinic. Former Division Superintendent Brian Sheron drew on the experience of his HO scale Long Island Rail Road to discuss urban model railroading.

Norm Reid and Jeff Fleisher conducted a briefing to help model railroad photographers with their clinic on “Focus Stacking” while Ramon Rhodes shared his “Half-Century Love Affair with Trains.” Alex Belida explained how he enhanced the experience of building his fictional Eureka and South Pass RR by making up his own articles and history only to discover a real-life prototype for his operation.

Nigel Phillips briefed the attendees on building a turntable and all the intricacies and options involved in the process. And Mat Thompson explained how operations can increase the enjoyment of model railroading. Mat also unveiled



BSME Time Saver

plans for “Potomac Operations Saturday” scheduled for June 29 and announced the four layouts that will be hosting operating sessions that day.

As usual, the MiniCon included a White Elephant sale that drew much interest. The Baltimore Society of Model Engineers set up a challenging Time-saver layout. And there were N-scale layouts on display.

The guest speaker at the MiniCon lunch was Bryan Kidd, author of the book *The Chesapeake & Ohio at Alleghany, VA*. Bryan described in detail the importance of tiny, out-of-the-way Alleghany (with an “a”), located at the summit of the Eastern Continental Divide on the Chesapeake & Ohio’s busy Alleghany Subdivision between Clifton Forge, VA and Hinton, WV. With as many as 30-40 trains passing through or stopping each day, and pusher engines cutting off and squeezing onto the turntable for their return moves, Alleghany was, in the author’s words, “an unsurpassed beehive of activity.” Asked for his opinion of the MiniCon, outgoing Potomac Division Superintendent Sheron reflected: “All I can say is that it appeared to be successful, and everyone seemed to enjoy it.”

The only downside, Andrew Dodge noted humorously, was among the pastries set out with coffee in the morning, referring to the green donuts included in celebration of St. Patrick’s Day. “The frosting looked like algae from a pool, and even the hardest attendee turned away and held their appetite at bay.” Still, he said, “a nice day was had by all.”

Photo credits: Marshall Abrams — 1,9; Alex Belida — 2, 4 - 8; Elizabert Boisvert 3; Tim Beaty — 10, 11.



Bryan Kidd

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