

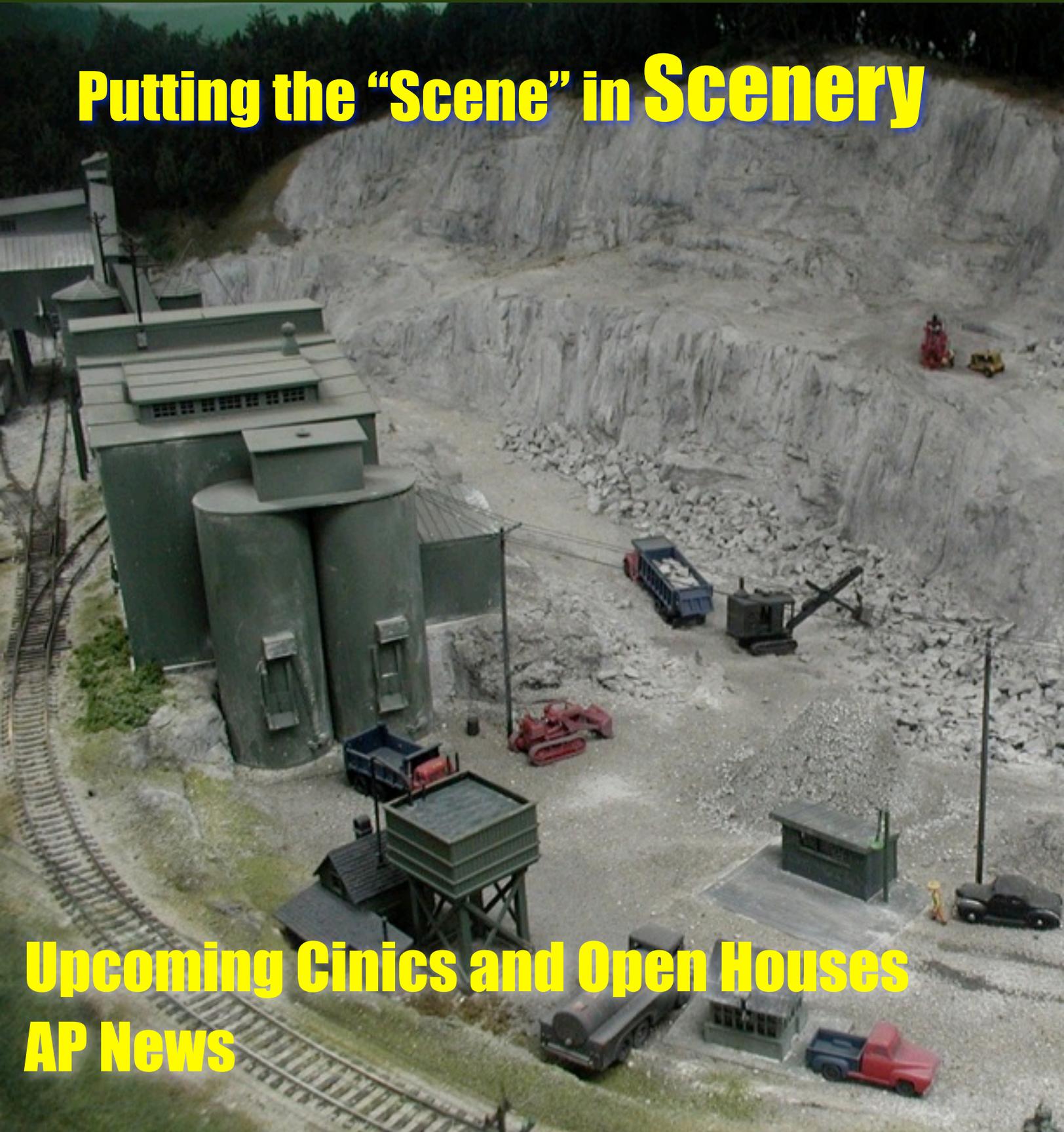
The

POTOMAC FLYER

Oct-Dec 2011

Fall Quarter

Putting the "Scene" in Scenery



Upcoming Clinics and Open Houses
AP News

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The Potomac Division, Mid-Eastern Region, National Model Railroad Association 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.

Bill of Lading

Business Car..... 3
 Putting the "Scene" in Scenery..... 4

Around the Division

Achievement News..... 7
 Marty McGuirk's Central Vermont Railway..... 9
 Division Calendar..... 11
 Upcoming Layout Tours and Clinics..... 12

The Potomac Flyer

Potomac Division's Quarterly Newsletter

Submission Deadlines
 Spring Issue March 1
 Summer Issue June 1
 Fall Issue September 1
 Winter Issue December 1

Advertising rates:
 1/8 page business card
 \$30 per year
 1/4 page \$15/issue
 1/2 page \$25/issue
 full page \$45/issue
 Back cover, half page \$45/issue

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From the Business Car

Marshall Abrams
Division Superintendent

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Potomac Division's invitation to the Chesapeake Division to co-sponsor the 2013 MER Convention has been accepted. We've chosen "C&P Junction 2013" as the name, are working on a logo, and have started forming the organizing crew. The site selection team of Bill Demas and Kurt Thompson is currently investigating hotel venues in Howard and Montgomery Counties. If you'd like to participate in the planning and organization of the convention, please get in touch with me at the e-mail address above.

As mentioned in my last column, the PD is now holding White Flag Extra clinic programs and home layout tours on Saturdays, starting in September. By the time you read this we will have held a layout open house at Marty McGuirk's on Saturday, September 17 and a White Flag Extra on Saturday, September 24 with presentations by Stan Knotts on prototype chemical industry facilities with a focus on the General Chemical Corporation in New Jersey and John Teichmoeller on Railroading along the Waterfront with Walthers. We would really like to hear from you about these program innovations. Be sure to mark your calendars for the scheduled White Flag Extras and home layout tours described in this issue.

Piedmont Crossing, the 2011 MER Convention, will be held the last weekend in October (27-30) in Cary, NC just west of Raleigh. I'm giving two clinics and have signed up for two operating sessions. The web page at <http://www.mer2011.org/> is especially informative and well done. I hope to see you at the Convention.

If you know someone in the Potomac Division who doesn't receive this copy of the Flyer please get in touch with me. We continue to hear from people who think that the Potomac Division has gone inactive because they haven't heard from us in a long time. The other side of the coin is that we continue to get notification of invalid email addresses. When you see your model railroad friends, please ask them if they saw this issue of the Flyer. If not, they should contact me or Mike White and we'll get our database updated. Mike has recently merged the official membership list with the contact list that has been maintained in a separate format using semi-obsolete software. It's now all in one Excel file that should be easier to keep current. Thanks Mike!

WANTED: Layout Hosts!

The Potomac Division sponsors layout tours approximately every other month.

Layouts don't have to be complete, as layouts in various stages of construction are often just as interesting and informative to members. If you would like to host an open house on a Saturday afternoon and let other members and friends of the Potomac Division see your layout and enjoy your handiwork and modeling talents, please contact the Division's layout Tour Coordinator, Brian Sheron (BWSheron@mac.com), and let him know you are interested in hosting an open house.

Our Cover Story

Putting the “Scene” in Scenery



Figure 1: James Brewer's HO Norfolk & Western.

BRIAN W. SHERON

Over the years, I've had the opportunity, like many of us, to see many other modeler's layouts, either as part of our Division's monthly layout tours, or the layout tours held in conjunction with Regional conventions. Usually, the spectrum of layouts I visit are in various stages of completion, from nothing more than unballasted track on an open wooden framework, to completely scenicked layouts with intricate detail (and, of course, all stages in-between). Since I'm discussing scenes and scenery, I am basing my discussion only on those layouts that I've seen that are fairly complete regarding scenery.

When you visit a layout and walk around looking at the scenery, you quickly develop an impression. Are the scenes plausible and realistic? How quickly did they grab your eye? Were they interesting? Were they realistic? Did they hold your attention?

Creating scenes and building scenery on a layout is essentially being an artist in three dimensions. Instead of painting with oils or watercolors in 2 dimensions on a canvas, you are creating a scene (a large diorama) in 3 dimensions. So what makes a good "scene"? Just like a painting or photo, a scene needs a focal point; something to which to draw the eye.

The model railroads that I like best are those with numerous "scenes", or focal points that draw



Figure 2. Andrew Dodge's Denver, South Park, and Pacific Railroad

my eye to that particular spots on the layout. Model railroads that do not have scenes that are focal points do not tend to be interesting to me because there is nothing which draws my eye and focuses my attention. Long runs of track through repetitive scenery that is not broken up by individual scenes may be aesthetically pleasing, tend to be boring because they do not hold your attention for very long.

Scenes are supposed to capture the viewer's attention. However, just having a scene does not guarantee this will happen, or at least not for very long. A scene composed of a row of fairly identical houses or stores does not have a lot of variety to hold the viewer's attention very long. Also, a scene without a lot of detail will not hold a viewer's attention for long because in a very short time, they will have seen everything there is to see in the scene.

So, what makes a good, or interesting, scene? The three things that come to mind are "separation", "variety" and "detail." I will explain each of these below.

Scene Separation

As I said above, scenes are supposed to draw the viewer's attention. However, if you have multiple scenes that run together, it is hard to distinguish where one scene stops and the next one starts. All of

these scenes that run together will compete for the viewer's attention. The viewer will have a hard time focusing and concentrating on one particular scene if there are other competing scenes blending into it. It also will likely not look too realistic and detract from the realism of your scene. Thus, to help assure that the viewer stays focused on just one scene at a time, don't blend your scenes together, but rather provide some sort of a visual "break" between scenes. This could be many things, like a road, a row of trees, a stream or small river, a row of structures, a hill, a fence, or just a blank, grassy area. In other words, the viewer should implicitly sense where one scene stops and the next one starts. Success is when the viewer stays focused on one scene and takes it all in before moving on to the next one.

Variety

As I said before, a scene with a row of houses or stores that are all approximately the same size, shape, type, and/or color does not make for an interesting scene. However, a row of houses that are all different: some are bigger and/or taller than others, each is shaped different or made of a different material (i.e., a brick house next to a wood house), and some are set back further from the road than others, provides variety. Also, try to create unique scenes. One house could have someone washing a car in the driveway. Another house could have someone building a shed

in the back. As your eye moves from house to house, you see the differences, and you stop to take them all in. The same is true for stores. Some should be short (1-story) while others could be taller (3-4 stories). Each building could be a different color, perhaps weathered differently to indicate one being much older or younger than the others. Variety is usually a good thing. Try and find some interesting industry, or structure, that is not often modeled. When viewers see something they've never or rarely seen before, it will hold their attention. On the other hand, too much or inappropriate variety can be a bad thing. For example, jamming a tall office building close to a farm certainly provides variety, but you likely won't get any points for realism. Also, add variety to some structures by kitbashing them.

Variety also does not have to mean creating different kinds of scenes. I remember the first time I saw photos of John Allen's Gorre and Daphetid Railroad in an old Model Railroader magazine, I was blown away by the magnificent mountains he created that rose from the floor to almost the ceiling. However, what I think gave it variety was the mainlines he had weaving through, across, and over the mountains. Huge wooden trestles spanning deep gorges, with other breathtaking bridges spanning mountains in the background. Each bridge, trestle, and tunnel entrance and exit became its own unique scene.

Detail

Scenes that are self-contained (i.e., the viewer focuses on one particular scene), and offer some variety to the viewer will likely hold the viewers attention. But the question is, for how long? I have visited a number of layouts in which the above two criteria are met, but the scene did not hold my interest. Why? Because once my eyes arrive at the scene, there is not a lot to see!

Consider a town scene. I have seen many layouts in which all the rudiments of a town are present (buildings, roads, sidewalks, a few cars). However, what is missing is the detail that brings the scene to life! People need to be walking on the sidewalks and crossing the streets. There needs to be streetlights, garbage pails, mail boxes, billboards, street signs, store signs, cars, trucks, dogs, fire hydrants, telephone poles, graffiti, sewer grates, traffic signals,

etc. One of the easiest things you can do is the next time you are out either walking around a town or just driving through one, take mental notes of what you see on the streets, on the sidewalks, on the buildings, etc. I have tried to add this kind of detail to my layout, and I have gotten a lot of compliments about it.

Add some tongue-in-cheek humor too. Visitors appreciate it and it helps hold their attention to a scene. A drunk leaning against a lamp post outside of a tavern, a dog relieving itself on a fire hydrant, a group of hobos around a campfire are some examples that I've put on my layout.

And roofs are very important. Unless your benchwork is exceptionally high, most of your visitors will likely be either looking down on, or at least be at eye level to your buildings, and thus will see their roofs. Any commercial building with a flat roof has a wealth of scenic detail that can be added. A few examples are vents, furnace flues, access doors or hatches, TV antennas, and billboard signs.

Figure 1 is a mining scene on Jim Brewer's Norfolk Southern, and is a good example of a self-contained scene. It not competing with any adjacent scenes, it provides good variety because of the many different structures and vehicles, along with the loose stone, and has lots of detail. Figure 2 is a scene on Andrew Dodge's Denver, South Park, and Pacific, and also is a self-contained scene. It has lots of variety and is quite unique. Andrew also has lots of detail which holds the viewer's attention.

So in summary, try to make your scenes self-contained so they hold the viewer's eye on one location. Once the viewer's eye is focused on the scene, make it interesting. Make sure there is some variety in the elements that make up the scene. And finally, add detail. Making it look realistic will help to hold the viewer's attention.

Achievement News

Brian W. Sheron



This last quarter, we had two AP submissions. Bob Reid completed his “Chief Dispatcher” requirements, and I completed my “Master Builder-Cars” requirements, and the certificate application packages were forwarded to Charlie Flichman, the MER AP coordinator.

While working on my “Cars” AP requirements, I had a few interesting experiences that I’d like to pass along to those of you working on your “Cars” AP certificate, or contemplating it for the future. These have to do with merit-judging.

There are two ways to get a model merit-judged. One is to bring the model to a convention (Divisional, Regional, or National). The other is to call your division AP coordinator when you are ready to have a model judged, and the AP coordinator will arrange for judges to merit-judge your model. The obvious questions you might ask are “So, what’s the difference?”, or “So, is one judging venue better than the other?” The two major factors that I discovered that can affect the two judging venues are judging time and re-judging. Let’s discuss both:

Judging Time:

I have had models judged both at regional conventions and in my home. At conventions, Judges have to divide the available judging time by the number of models to be judged. Some studies done at the Divisional level show that in the contest room, a group of judges will spend from 7-9 minutes judging a model against one category. Thus, the total judging time for a model in the contest room for all 5 categories is in the range of 35-50 minutes. In

comparison, the total judging time by one group of judges judging all 5 categories outside of the contest room (typical home judging), seems to be about 2-2.5 hours per model. You might first be inclined to think that if judges spend less time scrutinizing a model, they will find less wrong with it (i.e., the more they look, the more they can find wrong with it). This is not necessarily the case. For example, in the contest room, if judges see something on the model that doesn’t exactly agree with the prototype photo, they don’t have a lot of time to discuss it, and will most likely reduce the points awarded. However, if the judges have more time to discuss the discrepancy, they may rationalize the difference between the model and the prototype photo, and not reduce the points awarded. Hence, I have not seen any point benefit or detriment associated with the amount of time judges have to look at a model.

Re-Judging:

The judges will award points for each judging category. In the end, the points for each category are added up, and if they total more than 87.5 points, then the model receives a merit award. If they total less than 87.5 points, then the model does not receive a merit award. Regardless, the judges will fill out a comment sheet providing the submitter with details about what they did well on the model, and what caused them to lose points. If you did not receive enough points to earn a merit award, you have essentially two choices: you can build a new model and submit it in the future, or you can try to correct the deficiencies on the model that didn’t earn enough points for a merit award, and then get it re-judged.

For several of my car models, I did not receive enough points during the first judging to earn a merit award. For one model that I had judged at a convention, I decided I could not practically improve the model to address the judges concerns and chalked it up as a good learning experience. However, that car served as one of my cars that did not need to be merit judged, so it was not a loss! However, for a couple of others that I had judged outside of the contest room, I concluded I could improve the models to address the judge’s concerns. In one instance, after I made what I thought were



Figure 1. Brian Sheron’s scratchbuilt HO scale Spent Nuclear Fuel Transport Car.

the necessary improvements to a model that addressed the judge's comments, I asked to have the car re-judged.

Since judging is a voluntary activity, I found I was having trouble getting the original 3 judges back into a room at the same time to re-judge the car. As an alternative, I asked some other judges who were available, and who hadn't participated in the original judging, to conduct the re-judging.

Well, what happened was that the new judges that were re-judging the car came up with a whole new list of issues. In essence, they were judging the entire car again, and not focusing only on whether I had addressed the first set of judge's comments. I could not blame them, since it would not be fair to ask them to blindly accept other judge's evaluations. Thus, I had to again decide if I could now improve the car yet again to address yet this whole new set of concerns. Fortunately, I concluded I could and had it rejudged a third time. This time it passed. Although it was frustrating, perseverance and persistence paid off!

For the last car I had merit-judged, an HO scale model of a spent nuclear fuel transport car (see Fig. 1), it received 83 points for the first

judging, and in talking with the judging team, I concluded I could make the necessary improvements to the car to address their concerns. I made the improvements, but this time got the same judges together to do the re-judging. I was not privy to their deliberations, but after about an hour, they informed me that my improvements addressed their concerns satisfactorily, and the car earned a merit award.

So what is the lesson here? If you submit a model for merit judging at a convention, in particular a regional or national convention, that doesn't earn a merit award, and you decide to improve the model to address those judge's concerns and then get it re-judged later, it is highly unlikely the same judges will do the re-judging. You should therefore assume any re-judging will be the equivalent of first-time judging of the model. In other words, don't be surprised if you receive a whole new set of comments on the model. Moreover, if you have a model judged outside of the contest room and it doesn't earn a merit award, it is probably in your best interest to request that the original judges do the re-judging, if and when you decide to improve it and then get it re-judged.

Around the Division

The Central Vermont Railway in HO Scale



For the comfort of guests, he has carpeted his layout room with plush wall-to-wall carpeting, brightly illuminated the track, and used hand-operated turnouts to eliminate learning curves for operators. Although our obsession is blessed with expert modelers, Marty, in many respects, has raised the bar. the one scene closest to being

BILL DAY

Many of us know Marty McGuirk from the pages of *Model Railroader*, but dozens of us finally caught up with him in person during his layout open house in September.

Marty is one of a handful of nationally-recognized modelers. He combines experience, history, research and skill into his Central Vermont Railway, an HO railroad in an 18 x 45 foot space. But, more than that, his layout is built around a track plan that features distance - the *raison d'être* of railroads.

Further, while he has given specific attention to operating, he also wants the finished layout to capture the openness of the prototype. In fact, he dismantled a previous double-deck version of the layout because it didn't favor the scenic realism that is more important than an even longer mainline.

“done” on the railroad - a girder bridge over a small stream - is beautifully modeled, using Supertrees, foxtail fern pine trees, Enviro Tex water, Micro-engineering girders sitting atop plaster abutments and piers that match the prototype stone-for-stone. Working from photographs and historical society bulletins, the scene is technically and photographically superb.

The result of extensive planning will be a classification yard, turntable, hidden staging, reverse loops and mainline. Marty models November 1952, with trees, foliage and ground cover keyed precisely to late autumn. The layout, most of which is under development, has bench work, fascia, backdrop, preliminary lighting and track already laid. He will run CV freights mostly, with passenger service limited to railfan and college football specials, just as the CV operated in the fifties.

(Continued on next page)

Visitors were impressed with the benchwork and trackwork and equally impressed with plans for the future. Does the layout succeed? One pint-sized visitor named Maria said, putting first things first,

“I’m in first grade but people think I’m in second. I liked the bridge over the river.”
All of us did. And most of us can’t wait for Marty’s next open house.



Division Calendar

October 27-30

NMRA MER Convention, Cary, NC

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

October 29-30

Great Scale Model Train Show, Timonium, MD

www.gsmts.com

November 12, 2011 2-4 pm

White Flag Extra Clinics

Making Dwarf Signals

Southeastern Pine Trees

George Mason Public Library, Annandale, VA

November 20, 1-4 pm

Layout Open House, Bill Day, Reston, VA

December 3, 1-4 pm

Layout Open Houses (Double-Header!)

Mike White, Lower Marlboro (Owings) MD

Bob Reid, Lusby, MD

January 14, 2012, 1-4 pm

Layout Open House

Roger Sekera, Potomac, MD

January 21, 2012 2-4 pm

White Flag Extra Clinics

Using Structural Steel

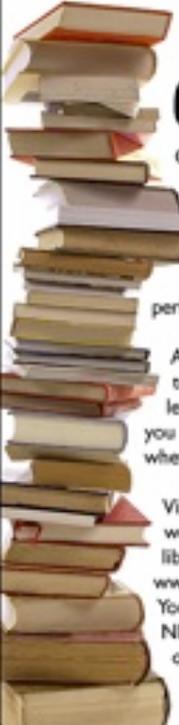
Complex Rock Formations Made Easy

Leisure World, Silver Spring, MD

July 29-August 4, 2012

NMRA National Convention, Grand Rails 2012, Grand Rapids, MI

<http://www.gr2012.org/>



Check out 6,000 train books.

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Upcoming Event: Clinics, November 12, 2011

Don't Miss These White Flag Extras!! Two Clinics in One Day!

Refreshments at all clinics.

Reserve with Bill Day, billday22@verizon.net, or 703/406-4112, although walk-ins are welcome.

WHEN: SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 12, 2011, 2:00 – 4:00 pm

WHERE: George Mason Library, 7001 Little River Turnpike, Annandale, VA

Modeling Dwarf Signals: Marshall Abrams



This Power point presentation has complete instructions for modeling dwarf signals. The presentation includes prototype photos, use of LEDs, soldering techniques, painting, finishing touches, use of cables versus single wire, and links and references.

Marshall Abrams, currently Superintendent of the Potomac Division, models the HO Abrams Railroad Empire. He has conducted clinics at Potomac Division and Mid-Eastern Region Conventions, including clinics on block detection, and developing urban backdrops using the internet.

Constructing Pine Trees of the Southeast: Mike Hart

This clinic covers constructing pine trees of the southeastern United States using stick, clay and caulk techniques, together with natural tree root branches. The result, in four easy steps, creates one of the most realistic looking trees in modeling.

Mike Hart is an experienced modeler with clinic credits including Mid-Eastern Region Conventions. His comprehensive clinic covers materials, armatures, trunk textures, painting and, for a dose of sophistication, applying needles.



Upcoming Event: Clinics, January 21, 2011

Don't Miss These White Flag Extras!! Two Clinics in One Day!

Refreshments at all clinics.

Reserve with Bill Day, billday22@verizon.net, or 703/406-4112, although walk-ins are welcome.

WHEN: SATURDAY. JANUARY 21, 2011

WHERE: : Leisure World, 2901 Leisure World Boulevard, Silver Spring, Maryland

Using Structural Steel to Create Industries and Scenes: Tom Brodrick

The structural steel clinic shows use of steel after it leaves the mill and before it becomes a finished structure. Bridges, cranes, shoring, steel construction, and fabrication are covered. This power point presentation uses prototypical photos of the steel industry.

Tom Brodrick, a past board member of the Potomac Division, models an HO Layout with emphasis on operation. He is professionally employed in the iron and steel industry and brings that knowledge to his clinic.



-and -

Complex Rock Formations Made Easy: Bob Johnson

Using a variety of dyes and stains, this clinic shows how to mold, fabricate and assemble complex rock formations in an easy and straightforward way. A major focus is on quick and easy techniques to realistically color assembled castings using a combination of washes, dyes, chlorine bleach and dry color powders.

Bob Johnson, a modeler from the South Mountain Division, has conducted rock formation clinics at Division and Mid-Eastern Region Conventions. His techniques for stippling, filling, carving, dying and highlighting castings produce different looks for different rock strata.

