

Potomac Division Annual Meeting Report

Article and Photos by Alex Belida, MMR, Senior Assistant Superintendent

with Additional Photos by Ernie Little

Members gathered at the Arcola Volunteer Fire Department Annex in Sterling, Virginia on May 4th for an in-person annual business meeting with two clinics, two layout visits, socializing, and the presentation of the annual Marshall Abrams Award.



The business discussion focused on the Mid-East Region's (MER) recent request that Potomac consider hosting the 2025 MER Convention. The appeal followed the New

Jersey Division's announcement that it was unable to host as originally planned due to its inability to locate an affordable hotel with the needed facilities.



MER Vice President Gary Brown (photo left) participated in the discussion, answering questions on financial and other issues. Superintendent Ernie Little, MMR, informed the gathering that the Potomac Board felt it was impossible for the Division to step up for 2025 given the short time available to prepare adequately. (The Carolina Piedmont Division, host of this year's MER Convention, has been working for three years to make the necessary arrangements.)

Asked for their views, most of the 19 members in attendance shared the Board's position and approved a resolution that the Board should inform the MER that the Potomac Division is not able to host the 2025 Convention. The resolution recommended that the MER approach the Tidewater Division, scheduled to host the 2026

Convention, and ask if it would consider hosting in 2025, saying Potomac might then consider hosting in 2026.

The attendees also heard the results of the 2024 Division elections. Ken Wilson was elected Assistant Superintendent, and Jerry Stanley was re-elected as Paymaster (photo right). They ran unopposed.



Superintendent Little then announced that the recipient of this year's Marshall Abrams Award for outstanding service to the Division is Alex Belida, MMR (photo left below). The citation accompanying the plaque cited his "contributions and dedicated service to the Potomac Division and to model railroading."



Division Achievement Program Manager Martin Brechbiel presented a certificate to Greg Cassidy for Model Railroad Author (photo above right).



Fittingly, after a short break for coffee and donuts, Greg opened the first clinic of the day on "The Long Road to Achieving a Golden Spike and other APs." Greg (photo left) said that when he first joined the NMRA, it did not occur to him to look into the NMRA Achievement Program. But years later, he revisited the program. He saw that he had met a few of the requirements

and earned his Golden Spike Award, opening new opportunities that excited him. In addition to his Author certificate, Greg is poised to receive his Master Builder-Structures certificate and is working on his Master Builder-Scenery certificate.

Alex Belida ([photo right](#)) gave the day's second clinic, entitled "Motive Power: You Can Do It!" Alex said members no doubt think that getting the Master Builder-Motive Power certificate is too challenging. But he said that it is well within reach with a little effort. He recounted that his interest in old-time backwoods railroads generated three HO scale motive power models: a freelanced "Critter"; a kitbashed Motor Freight "Boxbug"; and a scratchbuilt Vertical Boiler engine that won the 1st Place Steam Award at last year's MER Convention in Altoona, PA.

Following the clinics and a lunch break, members were able to visit two layouts open for the first time for the Division.

These were Jim Rogers' HO B&O Cincinnati to Baltimore model railroad set in the summer in the mid-1960's and John Whittaker's HO_n3 scale freelance model railroad depicting the movement of silver in the Durango/Silverton, Colorado area.

[\(Details of layouts provided by the hosts with Belida photos next pages.\)](#)



Jim Rogers Layout Visit

1. What is the name of your layout (if any)? No special name.

2. What scale is your layout? HO.

3. Does your layout have a specific era and/or location? Mid 1960's. B&O Cincinnati to Baltimore.

4. What are the overall dimensions of your layout? Two rooms, 5' by 39' and 15' by 18'.

5. How do you control your layout? Digitrax DCC.

6. When did you start making your layout? 2008. Dismantled and move to this location in 2021.



7. Do you host operating sessions or would you consider doing so? Yes, I do host operating sessions.



8. What type of track (sectional, flex track or hand laid) and switches are on your layout and what is its code? Mainly Atlas flex track and mainly Atlas switches, all code 100.

9. If you were to brag about your layout what would you describe as its outstanding feature(s)? An interesting switching layout, everyone is busy



John Whittaker Layout Visit

1. What is the name of your layout (if any)?

No name yet. It is a fictitious railroad that connects to the D&RGW at Silverton, Colorado. It is a down-on-its-luck railroad and struggles to make ends meet. It therefore leases its locomotives and most of its rolling stock from the D&RGW. The main source of its revenue is shipping silver ore from the mines along its route to the outside world via Silverton.

2. What scale is your layout? HOn3.

3. Does your layout have a specific era and/or location? As noted, it is located in Colorado and connects to the D&RGW at Silverton. The time period is late 1920s to mid 1930s.



4. What are the overall dimensions of your layout? The room it is in is 16.5' by 14'. The layout pretty much fills the entire room; it runs around three sides of the room, with a connected middle peninsula.

5. How do you control your layout? Digitrax power station and hand-held throttles.

6. When did you start making your layout? Fall of 2019 (4.5 years ago).

7. Do you host operating sessions or would you consider doing so? I don't currently host operating sessions but might do so in the future.

8. What type of track (sectional, flex track or hand laid) and switches are on your layout and what is its code? ME flex track and ME and PECO turnouts. Almost all of it is code 70, with some portions in the main town in code 55. The turnouts are powered by Walthers system switch machines with fascia controllers.



9. If you were to brag about your layout what would you describe as its outstanding feature(s)? Mountain scenery.

