

2010 Potomac and Chesapeake Division Mini Convention

Reported by Brian W. Sheron

On April 17th, the Potomac and Chesapeake Divisions held the Potomac annual Mini-convention at the South Columbia Baptist Church in Columbia, Maryland. A “Contest Room” is a staple of most NMRA Conventions, whether it is a National convention or a division-level convention. However, at the April 17th Minicon, we departed a bit from tradition and sponsored a “Celebration of Models”. Thus, instead of the usual contest room, we had a combination of contest and model display rooms. In the model display room, members were treated to a variety of models. These included Bill Day’s National award-winning HO scale operational bascule bridge, as well as his HO-scale steel mill. Robert Johnson displayed his collection of O-scale traction cars, and I displayed my HO-scale “Halesite Marine” marina model. In addition, Ben Hom brought his extensive collection of super-detailed HO-scale freight cars for display and set up a modeling demonstration in the model room during the Convention. entered for NMRA merit judging. Jim Burnside from the Chesapeake Division submitted his HO-scale scratch-built Coke pusher structure, and I submitted a scratch-built HO-scale Reading stock car, and a scratch-built pickle car. All three models passed the scrutiny of the judges and won NMRA merit awards.



HO Scale Coke Pusher by James Burnside



HO scale stock car by Brian Sheron



HO scale Pickle Car by Brian Sheron



HO scale Halesite Marine by Brian Sheron



O-scale Traction cars by Robert Johnson



HO- scale steel mill by Bill Day 1



HO-scale freight cars by Ben Hom



HO-scale Bascule Bridge by Bill Day

Chesapeake and Potomac Divisions Make Mini-Con History

by Bill Day

Photos by Marshall Abrams

“The best Mini-con I’ve ever been to”, longtime modeler leaving the Chesapeake and Potomac Mini-Convention in Columbia, citing the modular layouts, educational clinics and what he termed the best convention site he could remember. The Mini-Con was held in the South Columbia Baptist Church.

Superintendent Marshall Abrams, reflecting on the organization and joint effort of the two divisions, said, “It was a very successful operation, the way things came together with everyone contributing their best efforts.” He said he was especially pleased with the organization of the modular setups. “There was a great feeling and a great ambiance because everyone was in the same room. Starting with the White Elephant table, members could see how all the pieces fit together to create a final layout.” Clint Hyde, the ex-president of the Mid-East Region, organized and staffed White Elephant books, kits and memorabilia.



Meade Area Model Railroad Society



Northern Virginia NTrak



Baltimore Area Ntrak Club Layout

Modular layouts, always popular, were the work of the Meade Area Model Railroad Society with 15 highly detailed modules; the Baltimore Area Ntrak Club with 16 modules, including, in part, the Pennsylvania Railroad Station in Baltimore, and the Northern Virginia NTrak club with an astounding 50 mini modules and the biggest classification yard in the room.



John Drye presenting a clinic.

Clinics, organized by Mark Andersen, drew high marks all around. One modeler showed off a sedum tree he had made, saying "it's the most realistic tree I've seen and I've seen them all." Then he said, smiling, "My wife will be growing sedum in the garden from now on." As for Mark, he reported that the clinics were excellent, all serving their advertised purpose, many attuned to operation. "Some," he said, "Were incredibly well-attended."

There was a Lucky Strike Extra in a special demonstration by Ben Hom, a modeler who brought examples of upgraded Walther's X29 rolling stock. Ben showed how he did it, featuring examples of repairing, weathering and detailing, the essentials for a realistic roster.



Bill Demas hard at work

Clerk Bill Demas, as usual and as expected, greeted and registered modelers, holding sway at the registration table, counting money, encouraging formfilling and checking National Model Railroad Association membership, assisted by Chesapeake Superintendent Kurt Thompson. Working the election table were Russ Fort and Gerhard Klose.

In the Contest room, Ed Price, Greg Meeks, Martin Brechbiel and Brian Sheron were among the judges, examining models for Achievement Program points and encouraging exhibits under the title Celebration of Modeling. When the dust had cleared, models by Brian and Jim Burnside had earned achievement points. In the popular vote contest, among models on display and those seeking points, Bill Day's bascule draw bridge took first, and Brian's Halesite Landing and pickle car tied for second.

Modelers weren't the only ones pleased with the convention, held at the South Columbia Baptist Church. Working with Bob Burroughs, the two Divisions contributed to the Church's general fund and to its Youth Ministries. Additionally, those eating lunch helped pay for special missions supported by the South Columbia Youth Group. Five of the young women, each prettier than the last, presided over gourmet pizza, crackers, candy and coffee, using the funds for missions helping inner-city youngsters throughout the country.

Garrett Nicholson, a past Superintendent of Potomac Division, was present, as was John Drye, immediate past Superintendent of the division. John supervised the election of the Potomac Division Board of directors and committee chairmen for the next two years, reporting that Marshall Abrams, Bill Day, Martin Brechbiel, Bill Demas, Mark Andersen, and Brian Sheron will do the heavy lifting he said, his smile getting broader." We've agreed with Chesapeake that we'll make tentative plans to join every other year." It's just a guess, but I think 85 modelers would agree.



Mark Anderson prepares to cast his vote