

## Club News

Our Bimonthly business meeting will be held on Thursday, September 2, at Obie's Trains in Alexandria. We will discuss setup schedules for the Fredericksburg Rail Fair on September 11th and 12th. The Fair is hosted by the Rappahannock Chapter of the National Railway Historical Society. It will be held at the Bowman Center, Spotsylvania Industrial Park, in Spotsylvania, Virginia.

Not only will our Club be setup there, but there will be many other railroad related activities including Operation Life-saver, dealer sales, prototype equipment, entertainment, and refreshments.

We have our extra corner modules now. The construction session in August enabled us to get the track laid. Now all we need is for some Club members to step forward and adopt a module. You get to personalize it by adding scenery, structures, or whatever. Let any of the Club officers know if you are interested in adopting a corner module.

## Other N-Trak News

*For those of you who were not aware, there is a national NTRAK organization. A bimonthly newsletter is published with lots of info on N-Scale activities. There are also NTRAK resource booklets covering everything from module construction to throttles. You can join by sending \$5.00 to: NTRAK Publishing, 2424 Alturas Rd., Atascadero, CA 93422, (805)466-1758. Jim FitzGerald runs the organization and handles the newsletter.*

## Railfan News

*(contributed by Bernie Kempinski)*

How about a railfan trip to Horseshoe Curve and Sand Patch? Last August my children and I visited the Horseshoe Curve

*Deadline for article and announcement submissions for newsletter is the 15th of the preceding month. Newsletter is mailed last week of the preceding month.*

area near Altoona, Pennsylvania. Our brief visit to the area confirmed what I had heard and read -- it's a great place to go to watch trains. Conrail runs about thirty scheduled freights a day through the curve. Throw in a couple of coal or grain extras, Amtrak runs, and helper moves, and you have a lot of train action. During our brief two hour visit we saw two freights meet in the curve, an Amtrak four car consist overtake a pig train going up hill, and about six other freights move through.

After checking out the horseshoe curve and its beautiful museum, we drove to Gallitizin Tunnels and the engine service yard in Cresson. If you get tired of looking at trains, there is more to see in the Altoona area. There is a railroad museum and also a portage railroad and incline which were used to haul canal boats over the mountain. The Pennsylvania Heritage Trail takes you to historic industrial sites in the area such as a turn of the century steel mill.

If you are interested in making an overnight trip to the area sometime in the Fall, please contact me. I propose an itinerary that visits the Altoona area and Horseshoe Curve on Saturday and Sand Patch Grade and Scenic Western Maryland Railroad near Cumberland on Sunday.

## News from the Superintendent

*(Contributed by Matt Schaefer)*

Not only is it part of my job, but I feel it is my duty to attend railroad conventions and see what's happening. At least nine of our members got to see a portion of the Valley Forge convention, August 1-8, which sported "The World's Largest N-TRAK layout". Besides me, there were Brian Brendel, John Cook, Monroe Stewart, Bernie Kempinski, Fred Obermeyer, Phil Lebet, Edd Braithwood, Dave Greenacre, and Charles Greenacre. The train show had crushing crowds and the hall was hotter than 1218's cab in July! The interstates were backed up for miles Saturday and the ticket line ran 2000' and it took some folks two hours to get in. So the convention of '93 was great, and we

have lots of war stories to tell. But first let me focus on stories about "The World's Largest N-TRAK Layout".

There were 252 NTRAK modules totaling 1106 linear feet, all in one layout. The layout was arranged into two zig zag peninsulas and two big irregular loops (see diagram). These layout sections were all connected together with the famous "Diamond Mill" module which consisted of an eight foot circle of six wye junctions each with three tracks, the N-TRAK community tracks, leading off in six directions. You've got to see it to believe it, and it worked as promised by the DARN group.

Three of the Northern Virginia N-Trak members attending the convention had the pleasure of operating in the "pit" of the Diamond Mill for several hours -- Brian, John, and myself. Brian said we virtually had control of the world there. I heard I was taped on Channel 6 News in Philadelphia. I also had an N-TRAKER fan ask for my autograph on a diagram of my module. All this was heady stuff!

The Diamond Mill operation gave me a feeling like Captain Nemo probably had while playing the submarine's pipe organ with a giant octopus snaking all around -- and the humidity in the hall was just as bad. I haven't seen such crowds since the soccer riots in Italy! Part way into the first day we heard there had been 19 kids under six years old lost. My wife was almost run over by a man in a runaway wheelchair doing 60 down a ramp to the show!

The trains covered not 1106 but 1656 total feet of track which is fifty (50) scale miles by running out and back on the two peninsulas. A train running all the 1656

## Wanted

If anyone has information they could share concerning rail-to-ship coal loading piers, dumpers and conveyors I would appreciate it. I am looking for photos, plans, diagrams, track layouts etc. I am particularly interested in the Western Maryland facilities at Port Covington, but info on other railroad's facilities would be appreciated.

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feet of track took about an hour if there were no problems. Up to the time of the convention there had been a lot of concern from many sectors including the show committee about the dependability of the Diamond Mill. The whole layout worked well to the credit of the DARN group.

At the beginning, we were advised to follow our trains around the layout. If a train got lost one would have to spend hours looking for it! The N-TRAKers that followed the first trains around the layout on Friday experienced long delays and some showed the strain of the trip after being on the road for up to an hour and a half. Later, train chasing was complicated by the crush of the crowds and became impossible on the outside (spectator side) of the layout.

Train chasers went by the Diamond Mill with their trains telling stories about some wild out and back stretches of modules -- and telling us like nobody would believe them. After going by the Diamond Mill Junction several times, they were begging the operators to short cut their train back to their home yard. they were really worn out by the trip. Some may never return, like on Boston's MTA, or like some of the convention tour busses. But that is another book of stories.

This layout could have handled much more train traffic if members had wanted to send their trains out. Some clubs did not send some trains out of their peninsula for reasons mentioned above, but preferred to run their trains continuously on their leg using dogbones. I'm sure there would have been more trains running if the mod-

ules had been put into smaller layouts of 20 to 50 modules. So it was a trade off to get the world's largest layout. Saturday was long train day, and there were probably five or more 100+ car trains running at one time plus the regular traffic. Each of the two peninsulas and each of the two loops had major yards for marshaling trains.

The layout was divided into 36 blocks using the N-TRAK Lindsay controllers, detectors, and overhead signals. Thirty operators were needed. At least one operator was prepared and used 7 x 50 mm binoculars to see what was happening straight down his block at a distance of 12 modules (that is looking for one inch trains at 48 feet distance). Radio head sets had 5 or 6 channels. Each channel was dedicated to a section, and a channel was used for the Diamond Mill pit.

There were several nice stretches of the elevated Mountain divisions; the Northern New Jersey club had one 30 modules long. But they were tied in to, and paralleling, the mains, which didn't have enough traffic to keep both the Branch Line and the Mountain Division busy. The DARN club had 15 modules containing a PRR style four track main line by adding the orange line in the front. The parallel Orange and Mountain Divisions could have run additional trains like freight drags when the traffic was light if they had connections to a dogbone loop setup.

Our group was inspired by the many fine modules displayed, in all gauges. One N-TRAK module had the best operating hump yard we have ever seen with air

propulsion and air retarders that gave very close control over each car. N may have had the quantity and the technology, but the small 14' x 20' HO Porta Rail Layout from Mt. Laurel, New Jersey had not only beautiful scenery, but the scenery, sky boards, overhead lighting, name placards, and brochures were all coordinated and had a professional look. Our group was impressed, and we took lots of notes. You may not be able to coordinate all the modules in a layout this way, but a small group can have a stretch of track or a subdivision finished to their own particular requirements. Anyway, we're game and charged up for the next convention (or whatever).

### Meeting Reminders

**Sep 2** 7:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m. September business meeting at Obie's Trains in Alexandria.

**Sep 11-12** 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. each day. Fredericksburg Rail Fair '93 at the Bowman Center in Spotsylvania, Virginia. From Washington D.C., take I-95 South to exit 126 (Rt. 1 North). At light on the exit turn left. At McDonalds turn right onto Mine Road. Proceed 1.5 miles to left on Rt. 638 (Lansdowne Rd.). Travel 2.4 miles to Rt. 2 & 17, turn right. Follow Rail Fair signs to the entrance on the left.

**Sep 19** 2:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. Setup session. Location to be determined.

**Oct 30-31** 11:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Greenberg Show at Mt Vernon High School in Alexandria, VA. Club layout.

## WORLD'S LARGEST N-SCALE / N-TRAK LAYOUT 1993 NATIONAL CONVENTION - VALLEY FORGE, PA

