

**NORTHERN
VIRGINIA**

NTRAK

**Northern Virginia
NTRAK**

**P.O. Box 1951
Herndon, VA 22070**

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August 1995

Volume 1 No 8

Blowing off Steam

by Charles Greenacre

I apologize for not having any columns recently. It's been hectic around here. Not only have I not written any columns, I haven't made any real progress on the modules that I have been working on for the last two years. Yeah, Dave did put on ten switch motors, but I need to purchase twenty more. I'm still trying to decide how connect several train throttles to these modules as well as letting yellow and blue line throttles control sections of my passenger yard.

Recently, we have had a number of new members joining the club. We welcome you to Northern Virginia Ntrak. We hope you have a good time, build a module, and run trains. We hope you'll stick around help with our convention next year. However, there are members such as myself that have a hard time remembering names. It has been suggested to me that we all wear our name badges—that way we can connect names with faces, and not suffer that anxiety of "What's his name? I knew it! Dang, I wish I could remember his name. He's got that great steam engine that runs beautifully. WHAT IS HIS NAME!?" I believe John Cook is handling the name badges—if you haven't received yours yet, or you left it at some show last year, see John.

I recently had a chance to visit San Francisco, and the client even wanted me to spend the weekend out there to save on air fare expenses. Oh darn! I hadn't been there before, but have heard that California had several tourist lines. One was even close-only an hour away down at Felton—the Roaring Camp and Big Trees. I don't see many narrow gauge Shays and was kinda disappointed after having been around the Western Maryland 6. But that was around the depot and the shops. It was nice to see the one that worked at Swandale, WV close to where I grow up. However, my jaw kinda hit the floor of the flat car when I saw those BIG TREES. I kinda felt a bit dinky compared to those trees. After I heard the measurements of those trees, I quickly calculated how these trees would fit on an Ntrak module. They'd be two feet tall on a module! And almost an inch in diameter at the bottom of the trunk. Wonder if I use a S gauge or an O gauge pine tree? Hmm! a hundred foot tree in O gauge would be two feet tall. Have to check out a store that carries O gauge, and see how expensive they would be. Aww, probably be better to scratch build the trees. Redwood trees up to three hundred and twenty feet tall and Douglas firs up to two hundred feet tall. Naw, nobody would believe the module if I built it to scale, it would make our N Scale trains look puny. Have to get the topo map of the forest from the Geological Survey in Reston to build the canyon scene, wonder if the canyon is deep enough to force a module to sit on the floor. Another module—another day!

NEWS FLASH!!! NVNTRAK Invades Atlanta!!!

By Gil Brauch

Although not as destructive as Sherman, at least nine members of NVNTRAK were spotted lurking in the environs of the Hyatt Regency and Atlanta Apparel Mart during the NMRA CrossRoads '95 Convention. Gil Brauch, Brian Brendel, John Cook and Rodney Smith took modules to be a part of the NTRAK setup at the National Train Show on July 21-23. They were joined with our "honorary member" from Valley NTRAK, John Plant. John Cook's 'Possum Point' garnered 95 points and an honorable mention in the NMRA module judging. John Plant also received an honorable mention. Congratulations! Gil received a ribbon for the Loop Mountain Top in the NTRAK popular vote (he was the only diorama entry). NVNTRAK had about 70 feet (when you count John Plant's 16 feet) of the 300 foot layout. Gil took videos of the setup which he will show at the August meeting.

Jim Alfred, Bernie Kempinski, Matt Schaefer, John Stertz, and Monroe Stewart were also at the convention (my apologies if I missed someone). Matt gave several presentations of a clinic which he entitled "Northern Virginia NTRAK Tricks—and Thoughts on Unconventional Conventions". Monroe did whatever it is that Regional Trustees do at these sort of gatherings (go to expensive dinners and "schmooz" with the rest of the brass', I think). The rest just enjoyed themselves by attending clinics, going on tours, and just generally relaxing in a very enter-TRAINing environment. Each has his own story to tell. Why don't you ask them about it at the next meeting.



UPCOMING EVENTS

Aug 20	Setup at Prince of Peace Lutheran Church, Springfield, VA - 1 pm
Sep 17	Setup at Prince of Peace
Sep 28-Oct 1	Setup at MER Convention - Timonium
Sep 30-Oct 1	Brunswick Railroad Days
Oct 14 & 15	Great Scale Train Show - Timonium
Oct 15	Setup at Prince of Peace
Oct 28 & 28	Greenberg Show - Upper Marlboro
Nov 4&5	Great Scale Show - Richmond
Nov 11 & 12	Setup at Rockville Lions Club Show
Nov 19	Setup at Prince of Peace
Dec 17	No NVNTRAK Setup - Christmas Party



Tee Module Update

by *Bernie Kempenski*

There has been a bit of discussion in the club recently about Tee modules. The options that they will allow for N Scale East Convention are really quite exciting. Since I currently don't have a module to take to shows (my Port Covington module has grown to monstrous proportions and will probably never leave the basement) I decided to begin building a Tee Module based on the Quinimont Plan that was recently shown in the newsletter. I have taken Matt's plan and adapted to fit in my car and made some other minor changes to make it more accurately reflect the prototype using data provided by the C&O historical society and a visit to the actual location. The module also follows most of the design considerations for the New River Subdivision that Matt has discussed in past newsletters. There is still room for more New River Subdivision modules if you're interested in joining the fun. See the drawing 1 for one configuration that includes Paul Fulk's Thurmond module. The Stretcher's Neck and Prince Station would make a very interesting corner module. Cabin Creek, Sewell and Hinton are other places along the New River that would make interesting modules. (Note 1)

The drawing also shows the track plan for the Quinimont Tee and a three foot corner that will mate with it, which I now call Laurel Creek in accordance with the prototype. If you plan on building a Tee module you might consider how the track plan will relate to this one (after all, this one came first. Actually Brian's crossover Tee came first and I wonder how this Tee will work with that one.) When laying out the track plan for a new Tee one thing you must consider is the possibility of a reverse loop formed when the yellow line is connected to the both the red and the blue. The connection that causes the reverse might not be on your module so I suggest you talk any design over with Matt to make sure it will work properly in the N Scale East show.

The wiring for these Tee modules is a little tricky and it's worth sharing some thoughts on this for future Tee builders: One innovation that I developed for this module is the pig tail reversing connection (see drawing 2). These should allow us to quickly set-up the module in normal or reverse mode without the need for additional reversing connectors. Basically the power bus for each NTRAK line on the module has two connectors on each end: a normal connector and a reversing connector. For example track 1, normally the red line, has a normal male Cinch Jones on the right hand side color coded red and a female Cinch Jones color coded blue spliced to the same power bus but wired with wide pin to the rear rail. If you plugged these two pig tail connectors together you'd get a dead short (however, I tried to make the pig tail short enough to avoid this possibility). Thus to hook up this module you would position it in the correct configuration according to the layout plan and then plug into the adjacent modules with the connectors that fit following the proper color code and pin orientation. I've labeled the connects normal and reverse to help decipher the situation since when you looking upside

down in the dark it's sometime hard to figure out what is going on. If all goes according to plan there will be only one correct way to plug these in and it should be somewhat fool proof. It will be interesting to see if I made all these connections properly during the first test of the module.

The white line was easier to rig since it is not connected to rails that change polarity when the track geometry changes. Basically I attached the white power bus in the center of the module with long enough leads that they can be stretched in the direction that matches the pin polarity. There are several options for wiring the Tee (or Wye) tracks. In my case since Laurel Creek will normally attach to Quinimont, I connected the plugs that lead to Laurel Creek side to the power feeds of the line the rail attaches to, in others words, I followed the normal NTRAK standard without embellishment. There are no blocks or block switches to throw. So even if the Quinimont module is reversed, the connections between Laurel Creek and Quinimont don't change. The disadvantage of this simplicity is that no separate throttle can be used on the Quinimont module.

Furthermore, the Wye tracks that connect to Laurel Creek have a gap cut in them where they join Laurel Creek. The turnouts leading to the Wye tracks have power routing wiring (even though they are all live Atlas turnouts I cut gaps and wired the appropriate jumpers) such that when the turnouts are set for straight through running on Quinimont, the Wye tracks will be dead. Thus a train that is running toward Quinimont from Laurel Creek will encounter a stopping block as it crosses into Quinimont module if the turnouts on Quinimont are not set the correct way. This should help avoid having trains running across a turnout and on to the main. As in the actual Quinimont prototype dwarf signals will also protect the main and give a red indication when the turnouts are set the wrong way.

The most recent complication to this project involved my decision to add a high line to the Quinimont/Laurel Creek modules that is compatible with the high line on Matt's New River module. The high line extension will allow an extended run on the high line when this module and Hawk's Nest are connected together at shows. Furthermore, I squeezed in an internal loop on Laurel Creek that will allow separate running on just that module when it is set up without the Hawk's Nest Module. To accommodate the internal loop I had to add a 12 inch extension to the rear of the module while keeping the overall length of the module under five feet. Both modules will fit in my Probe GT, albeit only one at a time. The high line addition is not prototypically correct for the Laurel Creek subdivision, but a photo of a West Virginia coal tipple with a high bridge running behind it provided prototypical justification plus it creates an impressive display, so I decided to go for it. The bridge is set back about 37 inches from the front of the module and there are three more feet behind it to the back drop so the view



continued page 3 ...





from the front is impressive. I haven't decided on the scenic treatment for the back but a passing siding is de rigueur and a small switch yard a possibility.

Future plans include a unified scenic treatment for the Hawk's Nest and Quinnimont/Laurel Creek modules requiring a refurbishment of the Hawk's Nest module and perhaps construction of an additional inside corner. If you're interested in joining in give me a call.

(Note 1: Some of you might be wondering why a die hard Wild Mary Fan would build a Cheap & Ordinary based module. I suppose I could have picked a WM Wye, such as Rockwood Junction, and modeled it but what the heck, variety is the spice of life. That's one of the advantages of NTRAK. It allows you the chance to dabble in lots of different areas. My NTRAK module is a steam era scene while my home layout will be modern diesel. In addition the New River Gorge is ideally suited for modeling in NTRAK as Matt's module clearly demonstrates.)

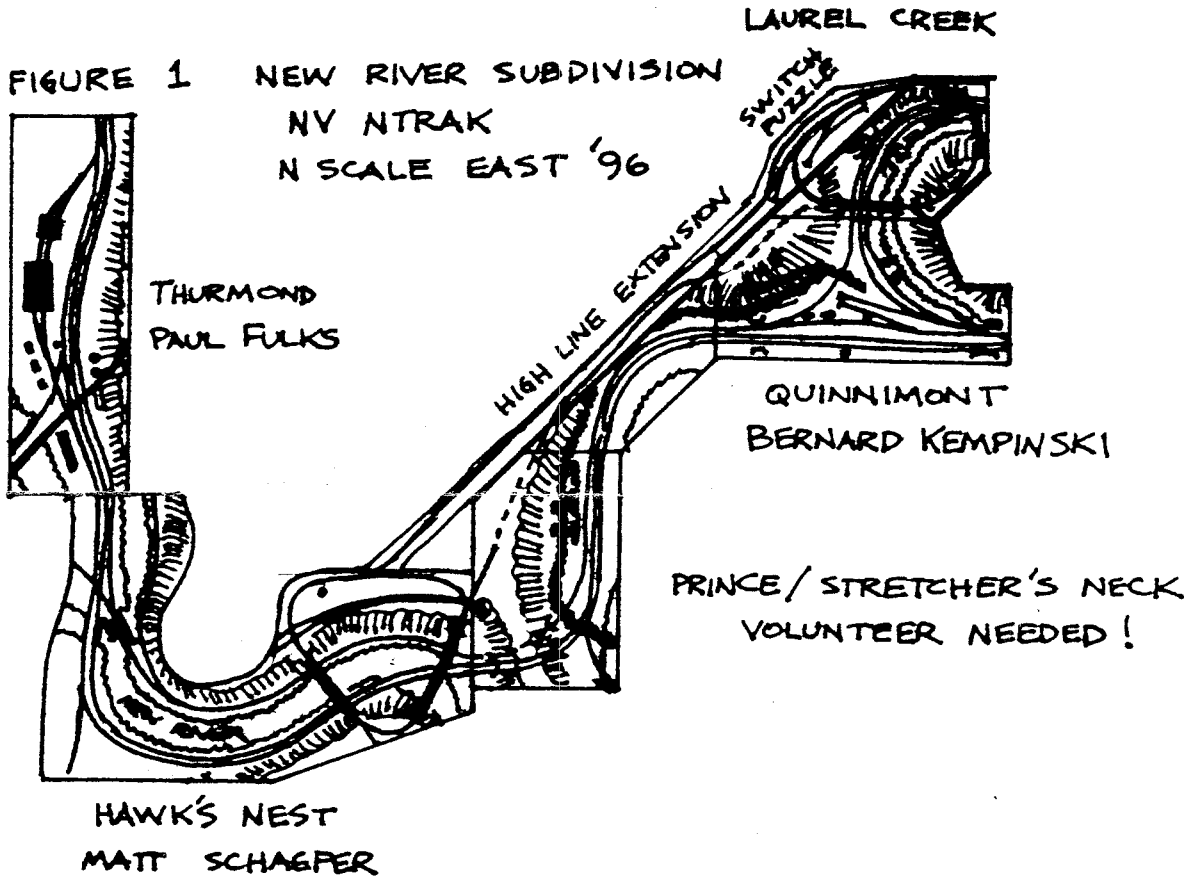
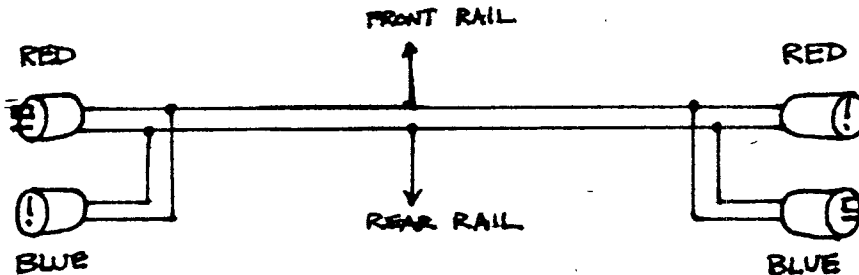


FIGURE 2: REVERSING PIG TAIL CONNECTORS





Life-Like Field Trip

By K. R. Allen

To B Unit or not to B unit? that is the question for Life-Like Products, manufacturer of the popular F7 and now ubiquitous E8/9 Units.

I took a July trip to company headquarters in Baltimore and came away with no answer to the question; however, I did learn who might have an answer. Write to:

Ed Weiss
Vice President, Marketing
Life-Like Products, Inc.
1600 Union Avenue
Baltimore, MD 21211

I have written to urge manufacture of B Units for the F series, both dummy and power, but made it clear I would buy E8/9 Units, too. "Buy" is the key word here, and the best way to reinforce Life-Like belief in a market is for us individually to tell Ed Weiss what we want. So, write a letter.

For help otherwise, call Customer Service at 1-800-638-1470. Adam Pugaczewski is Customer Service supervisor. When I was there, hours were Monday - Friday, 8 a.m. to 3 p.m. Call before going.

My contact was Tonya Cole, a pleasant young woman who unquestioningly swapped a new engine for the very poorly running F7 I had bought from a Johnsonburg, PA vendor at the June Timonium show, but for which I had no receipt. (I had also bought an Atlas SD9 from the same vendor and found a horn missing, after I got home. I've written Atlas for help with the horn, and I'll report on what kind of customer service they offer.)

It's a little tricky to get to Life-Like. You come off northbound I-83 at Cold Spring Lane, bear left up to the traffic-control light and make a right onto falls road. Go through four lights and make a right onto 41st street. Three blocks later, make a right onto 41st Street. Three blocks later, make a right onto Buena Vista, which will take you to the shipping dock where you make a left onto Union Avenue. Go one block and you're at Life-Like's remarkably unpretentious front door. There's one visitors parking space right by the door.

They didn't invite me beyond the reception area, but everyone was friendly and gracious, and I got what I wanted with virtually no discomfort. They have a customer-relations philosophy which holds that if it's a Life-Like, and you haven't abused it, they'll swap it for one that runs to your satisfaction.

You can affect a bad-for-good swap through the mail, but I wanted to get to know folks there and for them to know about Northern Virginia N-Trak. I wrote Pugaczewski a short thank-you letter on behalf of Tonya Cole. "Attaboys" are good for everyone, writers and recipients

Promoting N-Scale

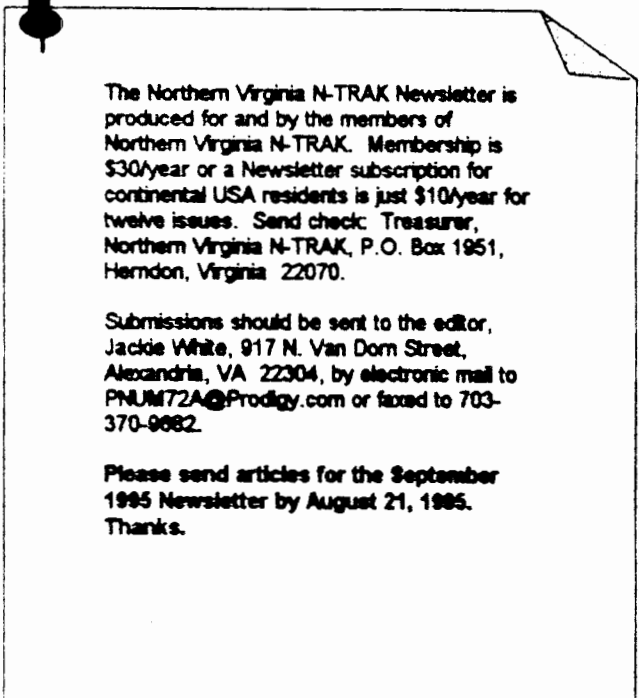
by Fred Obermeyer

We must work together and not alone or in clicks like a clock that operates only when it needs attention. N-Scale is a great hobby for all involved in its world of pleasures. Promote N-Scale yes, but promote trains and all scales so as not to discriminate against others with what we do best.

N-scale has become a very popular scale for people to model because of its size and what it offers us. Five years looking back has brought out dreams that could not be accomplished without the aid of computers. Advancement in motors has created diesels that run like a Cadillac of trains. Paint jobs give better attention to detail on each batch that comes out. Lasers can cut the finest detail into a mold. Wood craft kits have become the highest quality due to the use of lasers which produce the finest details.

You must believe in N-scale to promote it. More and more items each month are hitting the market place for the N-scale modeler. I personally have never seen a more intent to broaden the horizon of trains than the N-scale market. If you don't collect N-scale trains now then maybe you should visit your local club and see how they are doing. It sure is a lot of fun to run trains.

My definition of promoting N-scale is that we buy what we want, happily show it off to everyone, Run the Trains and add cars to engines, scenic our layout or module, escape from the wife and kids, oops!! Hide at the mall when the layout is up and running. Help others that need my help, and share what I know about trains with others. I hope you all enjoy your trains always.



The Northern Virginia N-TRAK Newsletter is produced for and by the members of Northern Virginia N-TRAK. Membership is \$30/year or a Newsletter subscription for continental USA residents is just \$10/year for twelve issues. Send check: Treasurer, Northern Virginia N-TRAK, P.O. Box 1951, Herndon, Virginia 22070.

Submissions should be sent to the editor, Jackie White, 917 N. Van Dorn Street, Alexandria, VA 22304, by electronic mail to PNUM72A@Prodigy.com or faxed to 703-370-0682.

Please send articles for the September 1995 Newsletter by August 21, 1995. Thanks.



FROM THE SUPERINTENDENT'S BUSINESS CAR

Matt Schaefer

meeting old friends
and making new ones.
Enjoying all the activities
and having lots of fun. Thanksgiving? - No
another convention with the members from our club,
other clubs, Jim FitzGerald and Lee, old Lionel
buddies like Dudley Ross from the summer of 47's and
all the other folks. Atlanta was great for running
trains and checking out the vendor's stuff, looking
at the guts of the new Kato Mike 2-8-2, long train
rides on the MARTA for \$1.50, quick meals at
Wendy's, doing N-TRAK clinics, the wonderful "how
can we help you" southern hospitality of the
committee, the local attractions and underground
within walking distance, midnight party at the local
bar with Monroe's crew and the big Hyatt bed looked
so good after each big day of working on the
railroad. What could be finer?

ATLANTA - The convention was planned for 1200
delegates and 1900 registered. The Trade Show
covered an area of about 800x230 feet packed solid
with trains. I was surprised to see the HO modules
outnumbering N-TRAK modules 4 to 1. But modules "is"
modules and they all promote model railroading, and
are a good way to expand the hobby. The "big" N-TRAK
layout had 70 modules.



BALTIMORE, THE NMRRA 50th REGIONAL CONVENTION -
Sept 29 - Oct 1, 1995 - Enjoy clinics, tours,
dealers, N-TRAK layouts, new N-TRAK contests, the
fine fall weather AND the best of hotel facilities
including tennis courts all at the Marriott in Hunt
Valley, MD. Rooms are \$73 for up to 4 and roll-a-
ways. We have been given space for 90 modules, 20
more than Atlanta had - so bring lots of modules.

VOLUNTEER BENEFITS - Bring module(s) and receive ALL
convention volunteer benefits. You do not need to be
a NMRRA or MER member. Contact me for the details.
This will be our opportunity to meet N-TRAKers from
around the Northeastern region and to enjoy running
a railroad together. Also it is an opportunity for
you to volunteer for other MER convention jobs, give
clinics and help with our new popular vote N-TRAK
running trains contests, see below. The convention
has one hour volunteer jobs available so you can get
more out of the convention.

THE N-TRAK LAYOUT - We have a generous layout area.
We may interconnect several layouts with T's and
bridge modules and presently our club has about 22
modules signed up plus some corners. The famous
Quinnamont "T" with a new switching contest yard
will be there on the New River Subdivision and The
MIT Module will be there (Monroe's Intermodal
Terminal). John Plant and Bob Gatland hope to bring
some of their club members. This will be an
opportunity to operate modules with N-TRAKers and
clubs from all over the Northeast and to show the
NMRRA the kind of shows that N-TRAK can put on.

POPULAR VOTE CONTESTS - The more volunteers we have
the more awards and running trains contests we will
have. For example most popular - 1) Passenger train,
2) freight train, 3) work/wreck train, 4) kit bashed
loco, 5) double-headed steam train, 6) unique
individual module(s), 7) and set(s) of modules with
mountain, heavy industry, and seaport scenery.
With additional volunteer support we will try the
following: 9) Switching contest at QN (open to all
delegates), 10) pulling contest or highest tonnage
rating on grade, and 11) the scheduling of one track
for prototypical operating and dispatching of
trains. Many activities are dependent on the
volunteer support we get. IMPORTANT - bring all your
contest quality items and photos just to show or to
enter in the NMRRA judged contests however to enter
you must be an NMRRA member.

NV
N-TRAK





RADIO
CONTROLLED



N-TRAK UNPLUGGED - Northern Va N-TRAK will have 4 Aristo Craft radio controlled blocks plus any others that you can bring. Operate from wherever the action is or for localized switching. For added action we normally run 3 trains continuously on one of the mains with one hand held radio control. Locomotive receivers are not needed with Aristo.

SCHEDULE - Set up is Friday morning and modules can be added Friday evening. Tear down starts at 3 PM Saturday. This convenient schedule should allow all members to make it to part of the convention. If I haven't gotten your space reservation already call for volunteer benefits and other information, (703) 978-2946 or (703) 620-0812 giving information on module(s). To get the \$73 rate at the Marriott call (800) 228-9290 before they sell out or before Sept 7th and ask for the \$73 NMRA rate. For info from the internet key up:

<http://metro.turnpike.net/N/nvtrak/index.htm>

I am also sending out flyers inviting all the surrounding N-TRAK clubs to enjoy running a railroad together. The details are also given in newsletters coming from Jim FitzGerald and the MER Division.

N-TRAK VISIBILITY - It has long been the wish of most of us that N scale have a larger visibility in the NMRA and we will have it at the MER 50th from the NMRA president on down. I wish every regional convention offered volunteer benefits and N-TRAK layout space like the MER 50th. The NMRA is losing membership fast - and NV has been doubling membership every year by pulling members in off the street.

I think the NMRA National conventions are consistently good and they offer top clinics and generous space for N-TRAK. (At Atlanta N-TRAK did not even fill the space given.) Again here is a chance to show the NMRA the kind of shows that N-TRAK can put on with layouts and clinics, including Kimpinski's QN clinic.

By working with the NMRA regionals and getting space and benefits N-TRAK avoids the hassle of financing and running a convention - if we do not want to get that involved - or do not have the resources for a big convention.

USAir



'96 GOLD FILE CARD - For a 5% discount off of U S Air's lowest discount fares and business class and for 10% off 1st class call 1-(800) 334-8644, give Gold File number 5023 0001 or ask for the N Scale East Convention or Running Trains Convention fares to Washington, D.C. airports or US Air's BWI hub.

T MODULES - Bernie is finishing up the QN T and I have laid out "ObieChobee Swamp" on plywood. To get a professional look like Cat Creek I suggest we pass the module around and let our experts do their magic, on the frame, track work, foam, wiring, buildings, testing and zip scenery. This T has a tidal swamp theme which gives a low profile like a snake's belly and would work great with bridges and our new seaport modules like MIT.

MICRO ENGINEERING TRACK - The Rapido engines do not clear the ties with the ME 55 rail but the Peco and ME code 70 are OK. The club needs to make a decision on use of tracks not specified by N-TRAK for the community mains so bring whatever equipment you may want to run for an evaluation at our next meeting.





Obie's Corner

Micro Trains: 3-pk. U.P. 40' box cars #20286-2 \$31.20
50' Fishbelly Gondola W.C. #46330
39' U.S. Army Tank Car #65370
50' Standard Box Car W.M. #33070

Concor: DL-109 SantaFe Chief Scheme
Powered A-Unit Dummy. B-Unit Set.

C/C Great Northern Add on Set is in stock

**Precision
Masters** 1533 C.N. #2 Covered Hopper New

**American
Limited** Operating Diaphragms for Concor Pa-1
Rivarossi Heavy weight, Kato E & F units

Badger: Badger will discontinue the use of Accu-Flex paint and introduce
a new line of paint very shortly, the Accu-Flex will be sold to another
supplier.

Intermountain Swift 60506 12 each on No's
Rath 60515 12 each on No's
PFE 12 each on No's
G.N. 40' box 12 each on No's

Late Breaking

News: Life-Like SD-7
Delivery December 1995
Road Names
B&O #762 & 763
Bessemer & Lake Erie #452 & 465
CB & Q 300 & 3003
Milwaukee Road #2208 & 221
S.P. #5231 & 5324 (Black Widow
EMD Demo 990 & 991

Also they are doing an HO SW950/SW1200, maybe it will be in N-Scale late
in 1996, like all other Life-Likes they copy big brothers. The SD-7's will be \$50.00 retail.

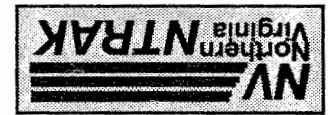
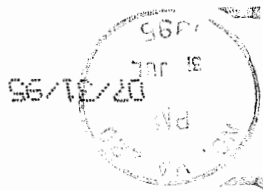
Summer is almost over so get those hammers and those saw bucks cranking out the lumber, because winters
coming and you need a module completed for those giant mall shows. Anyone may put a show on anywhere, any
time, any place they choose, so start looking and cooking up some places to have shows. A lot of neat places are
available in the Washington area so keep your eyes open. Good luck with running your trains . . . See Ya in the
Shop (OBIE WANT RAILROAD SOCIETY) Ha! Ha!



07/31/95 MD 09 CME 220 22:22

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is sponsoring an **NTRAK** layout
in support of the ...

MID-EASTERN REGION'S

50th

ANNIVERSARY

September 28 to October 1, 1995

Marriott's Hunt Valley Inn, Timonium, Md.

Mark your calendar now and plan to bring your module!

See Matt's Article inside for more details or:

for convention information contact:

Fred H. Voelcker, Jr.
P.O. Box 4003
Timonium, MD 21094

for NTRAK information contact:

Matt Schaefer
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Annandale, VA 22003
(703) 978-2946