



Northern Virginia NTRAK Newsletter

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W The View from Manassas Junction W
by Brian Brendel

You want me to pay for WHAT???

The other day I counted up the number of our members who have registered for the convention. We have over fifty members on the rolls, but only 20 of us have registered! "REGISTER?" you say, "But I'm going to WORK, why REGISTER to WORK?" That's a good question and I will try to explain why.

NTRAK conventions are truly volunteer affairs with national impact. Usually, a local NTRAK club hosts the convention and the delegates come from all over the place to have fun (...that is, if the convention has been as fortunate enough to get the kind of exposure we have had.) The decision for us to host this event came completely from the members of our club. Now, without the full support of all the members, the convention will fail to meet it's full potential.

Before making the decision to be the host club, the amount of work and sacrifice involved in being the host of a national convention was considered. This is because some of our 'normal' NVNTRAK member services would be consumed by the convention monster. We knew up front that it would require a great deal of time and reap only one solid reward -- the satisfaction in knowing that we put on a great show. A side benefit could be that just maybe some other all-volunteer group of NTRAKers will be inspired by what we did and will volunteer to put on a similar show that both we and the rest of the NTRAK world can enjoy next year. From the beginning, our membership was advised that we would be working FOR our guests and that we would not necessarily get to do everything a 'regular' attendee would. Worst of all -- we pointed out that we needed to PAY (our registration fee) for the privilege of working at the convention! Well, maybe we should have our collective heads examined, but not one single member at the meeting voted against having the convention.

The premise is simple. Conventions cost money. The host club needs to spread these costs evenly so that attendance remains affordable. As usual, most of the convention expenses are covered by registration fees. Whether we are hosting the convention or not, if you go to the convention you should be sharing in covering the expenses. At least in theory, anyway. Of course, the choice is still yours -- to go, or not to go -- and there are some of our members we know will simply not be available for the convention for personal or business reasons. But, if you do go, whether you spend time as a volunteer or not, you should help to fully fund all the cool little things

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More Things To Do To Weather Rolling Stock
By Bill "Ruined Trains" Rutherford and John "Grunge" Drye

You've washed your boxcar (or whatever) to tone it down and discolor it. You've dutifully drybrushed the thing to highlight details, roofwalks, etc. You've even drybrushed the running gear in various shades of brown and gray to dirty them. What next? Chalk!

As mentioned last month, looking at prototypes is the best way to discover what you're trying to do. Note how, after cars have been in use cross-country, they pick up a faded, dusty look - in grays and tans - along their sides and front. Note also the dead, sooty, black and gray deposits on top of a diesel after it's run a bit. These are the effects we're after.

Chalk includes a number of substances, ranging from common blackboard chalk, through the various artist pastel chalks, right up to various arcane formulations sold in little jars by sinister people at train shows. They all work, to one degree or other, and use similar techniques, but this article will stick with oil based pastel chalks such as can be bought in sets at your local art supply store. The sets come in themes - earth tones, grays, brights, etc.. If you don't mind the expense (\$10+), buy a set of grays and a set of browns, as well as a stick each of black and white. If you just want to experiment, just pick up a stick each of white, black, and brown.

First, apply a flatcoat such as Dullcote® to your victim to seal any previously applied weathering, decals, etc., and to ensure a good working surface. Next, take a piece of sandpaper and tape it to the inside of one of the plastic boxes your cars came in (one of the several hundred such you likely have in your closet). Sand the end of a stick of chalk against the sandpaper until you've a nice pile of chalk powder in the box. Oh, use reasonably coarse sandpaper for this or you'll be

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Riding AMTRAK's Crescent

by Gil Brauch

It was just like the screenwriter's description of an opening scene in a classic movie. The thunder was rolling across the skies as the angry flashes of lightning lit up the landscape. Then, in the distance a bright glow pierces the misty darkness and the far-off sound of a lonesome whistle reaches your ears. As the shape of the locomotive looms ever larger, you become conscious of the rumble of the diesel, which builds to an earth-shaking crescendo as the engine flashes past, trailing a string of silvery coaches that glide to a stop just before you. Doors clang open and dropsteps clatter into place before the man in the jaunty cap with bright brass trim beckons you aboard his magic carpet for the ride of your life. Well, almost

In truth, it was raining like heck, the train was an hour and a half late, the Stationmaster announced you were loading at Position 9 and the conductor was waving you aboard from Position 13 at the other end of the platform. You thought you were getting Superliners pulled by a Genesis diesel and end up with the same old Budd coaches and F40PH's on the head end. But what the hey...it's the *Crescent* after all and that's the thrill of it. You're on your way to Birmingham -- but not on the *Wabash Cannonball* (did the *Cannonball* ever really go to Birmingham, anyway???)

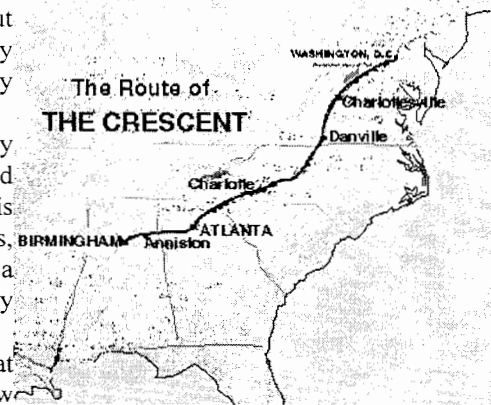
The lateness of the evening and the nasty weather conspire against doing any high iron railfanning tonight, so you make my way through the three coaches and one club car toward the diner, where immediate seating for the last dinner serving is available. An order is placed as the train glides to a stop in a rather soggy Manassas, and then you sit back to enjoy your meal of tortellini and peas, accompanied by a fresh garden salad and topped off with a scoop of vanilla ice cream. Does life get any better than this?

After dinner, a tour of the consist seems appropriate. Behind the twin F40PH's at the head end is Crew Dormitory Car #2459. Following this are two brand-new ViewLiners named *College View* (#62006) and *Atlantic View* (#62001). These are really nice cars. There is a good description of them in the April 1996 *Trains* magazine, which gives a really accurate picture of what they are like in real life. They sure seem to ride smoothly and quietly. Now if they weren't sooo expensive..... (Sleeper accommodations basically double the price of a ticket from Alexandria to Birmingham.) Behind the ViewLiners is Diner #8513, followed immediately by Club Car #28005. The three coaches in the consist are #25091, #25058, and #25052. These are topped off with two material handling cars and, of course, FRED. AMTRAK has done a good job of sizing the consist. There aren't too many open seats and, as we proceed through the night, subsequent boardings and departures keep the train about 80% full.

At 2 am in Greensboro there is a flurry of activity in Coach #25052 as a passenger clatters aboard, and starts talking out loud to nobody in particular as he begins to "settle in". The epitome of discourtesy, he plops into the wrong seat (disturbing the passenger already there), then turns on both overhead reading lamps in his new location (disturbing his new seat-mate), and begins ruffling through a briefcase looking for something to read or eat or both -- all the while alternately muttering or humming (of all things!) just loud enough to disturb the other 12 passengers in the surrounding seats. For all the world, he sounds just like a squirrel arranging his nest as he continues to rustle and fuss with whatever was in that briefcase! It gets so bad that his new seat mate gets up, collects her belongings and heads for the next coach. Can't say that I blame her. Eventually he settles down -- sort of -- and rides quietly all the way (would you believe it!) to Charlotte (1 1/2 hours later), where he, once again, scurries about as he detraines. You meet all kinds

Dawn sees us arriving in Greenville, SC where the locomotives refuel from a fuel delivery truck parked trackside (that would make an interesting detail on *Spider Ridge*) while passenger boarding and crew change are accomplished. Riding through the

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RAIL EVENTS TIMETABLE

July 6	Junction Module Building Session at Rodney's House - 10 am	Aug 15-18	Runni' TrainS 96 Convention - Radisson Hotel at Mark Center, Alexandria, VA
July 7	Shenandoah Subdivision Work Session at Brian's House - 1 pm - This is the last one BC.	Sept 15	Monthly Setup - Prince of Peace Lutheran Church, Springfield, VA - 1-7 pm
July 15-21	NMRA National Convention - Long Beach, CA	Oct 20	Monthly Setup - Prince of Peace Lutheran Church, Springfield, VA - 1-7 pm
July 15-18	NTRAK West Convention - Long Beach, CA		(Items listed in boldface indicate NVNTRAK module events)
July 21	Monthly Setup - Prince of Peace Lutheran Church, Springfield, VA - 1-7 pm		
July 21	Convention Committee Meeting - Prince of Peace Lutheran Church, Springfield, VA-7 pm		

FROM THE SUPERINTENDENT'S
CABIN CAR

by John Drye

Well, this is dress rehearsal month. Only one, critical, setup; at the Church on the 21st. At that point we will be 3 1/2 weeks out (to the convention, for those who have been out railfanning since 1994). Matt has been refining the Convention Layout Plan and is up to version 464 by now. There should be plenty of room for everyone who wants to include their module, if all continues according to plan (more on that later). At this point it's impossible to say just where NVNTRAK member modules will fit, but we should have it figured out by August 14th or so. There are two major objectives to be accomplished at the July Setup.

We'll use the setup to checkout and repair club modules for the convention. We'll also finally have a chance to practice "Red Line Route" operations, with at least three loops.

CONVENTION MODULE CHECKOUT

As the host club for the convention, we need to set an impeccable standard for module performance and appearance.



That isn't to say that all our scenery needs to be up to George Selios' *Franklin and South Manchester* standards. However, plywood plains just won't do. More importantly, our modules need to operate at near perfection. We need to set an example. There will surely be visiting

modules that don't meet basic NTRAK standards, electrically or mechanically, and will be bad ordered until repaired. We simply can't afford to have someone point out that an NVNTRAK module in the layout doesn't conform to those same standards. We'll all also be pretty busy during the convention (or so Rodney has promised). Someone with a critical job to do can't afford to be constantly repairing deficiencies on their module.

To meet these standards, ANY NVNTRAK MEMBER WHO INTENDS TO INCLUDE A MODULE IN THE CONVENTION LAYOUT MUST SUBMIT THEIR MODULES FOR INSPECTION AND CHECKOUT AT THE JULY SETUP. Modules must meet all NTRAK mechanical and electrical standards. They must have all necessary legs. Scenery must be complete. Most importantly, an "average" locomotive and consist must reliably operate on the module. Our intention is to use the July Setup to provide whatever help is necessary to get all NVNTRAK modules up to these standards. Any module that still needs work after the setup (scenery, trackwork, or whatever) will have the deficiencies noted. When the module shows up at the convention with the deficiencies corrected, it can be included when it passes the Convention Module Checklist.

"RED LINE ROUTE" OPERATIONS

At the last Convention Meeting, NVNTRAK acquired

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**RunniN'
TraiNs '96**
N Scale East Convention

Convention Corner

by Rodney Smith

Listen!....That sound you hear is *RunniN' TraiNs '96* approaching the station. 234 registrants and more coming in every day. Over 700 room nights reserved in the Radisson...more than double our commitment. Over 20 major N-Scale manufacturers coming and the dealer rooms are packed. This convention is exceeding even our wildest early imaginings.

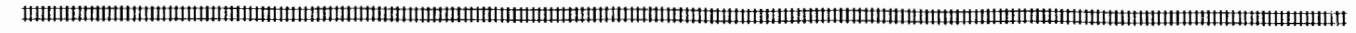
There is still lots to do. For example, I currently have three of our new junction modules under construction in my basement. We started them last weekend and this weekend, two of them have cork roadbed glued down and the track spiked. The third and fourth have the roadbed glued down and are ready for the track crews to go to work. Number four has gone home with John Cook for him to work on during the week. That leaves three still in my basement that will need a lot of attention to get them tracked, wired, ballasted, and scened in time for the convention.

If you want an opportunity to learn the steps necessary to put together a module to NTRAK standards...if you want to learn the techniques for scenery and trackwork that make our modules award winners...or if you just want an opportunity to contribute something tangible to the convention come to the **module work session, 10 am, Saturday, July 6**. My address is 6401 Gregory Court, Springfield, VA 22152. If you need directions call (703) 644-6359.

The next convention committee meeting will be immediately following the regular third Sunday meeting at Prince of Peace Lutheran Church. All NVNTRAK members are cordially invited to attend.

Welcome New Members

Northern Virginia NTRAK extends a hearty welcome to **Ron W. Auld** and **Richard Franco**, our newest members, who joined during the past month. Welcome to the club, folks. We look forward to getting to know you better in the coming months.



THE HOSTLER'S SHACK
by Matt Schaefer

THE CONVENTION - I've been getting lots of comments at the Shack talking to NTRAKers from all over the country that are planning their vacation and their budgets around this convention and are full of questions about all the activities or asking what they can do. They are not only planning for themselves but for their spouses and kids. In many cases it is their **ONE** vacation for '96. We can make it "THE" convention of the century.

THE LAYOUT - We now have room for everyone's modules and clubs are being invited to bring more modules if they like. Our members should plan to budget their time between entertaining the delegates and other activities. The large NTRAK clubs that are bringing 50' or 100' of modules each will have the responsibility of running the railroad for all the delegates. Our satisfaction comes from hearing everyone tell stories about our great convention.

JUNCTIONS - The club has started making 4 each 3x5 junctions which will be in addition to the 3 that we have, *OB, Gaulley Bridge* and *Rocks*. I have started an additional 2 dedicated junctions affectionately called *Horseshoe Curve* see details in our May 96 issue. These will all be checked out at the July 21 along with the *Diamond Mill Junctions* from the DARN Club and all new modules. Incidentally Bob Gatland will furnish and operate a "switching game" in his yard. Wayne Shortman plans to furnish Timesaver Switching Contest on his section.

JULY PROJECTS - We'll be pretty busy in August so July is a good time to touch up your modules and pitch in on other projects. John Cook will take *Galley Bridge* and dress up the pink areas. Allan Griggs is going to pick up his 2x8' *Painted Desert*. John Drye will help on *Horseshoe* which is 3x10'. Tony is working on a block comparitor system. This is an asset to any block system and we can have an comparison using 10 LEDs in a row, each LED lights up for each volt applied to the track, 10 LED's and look out.

RUNNING TRAINS CONTESTS - The purposes of the Running Trains contests are: 1) to bring the rolling stock items out of the contest chambers to where they can be seen and photographed in action on the railroad, 2) to demonstrate the great performance of N scale as well as the great looks 3) to

stimulate ideas of the possible and impossible and to generate new products in N scale and 4) for the fun of it.

AWARDS - Awards will be determined by popular vote and some by their common denominator like the longest train. Some special contests will receive convention committee awards. If trains are run as specified a bonus of 20% of votes will be added.

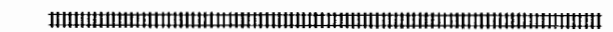
SIGNAL SYSTEM - I have played with the idea of prototype signals along the "*Red Line Route*" to indicate if someone is in the next block so you do not need to know where the block goes and where it ends. I have gotten designs from Keith Lyons of *N Scale Magazine* and Pliny Holt, MMR, and finally have a design that I like. A Bachmann single signal or a bridge is stretched out for three tracks and .032 wire tabs added to hold the bridge between two modules. LEDs give the following prototypical aspects: green over red means there are no engines in the next block, red over red is an occupied block and no light over red means some idiot is backing or headed toward you! All that is required is a diode bridge, an opto detector and a hex inverter to kick the aspect back to green for a total of several dollars plus the signal with LEDs. This would give a big boost to any layout. Maybe we can demonstrate some of these on the '96 layout. That is what seminars are for so if anybody is interested in these signals let me know.

LEGS ON CORNER MODULES - We got an E mail with data on the modules the Philly Club is bringing to he convention. Their corner modules **do not have** legs. In retrospect 1) why have a million legs around a 3' module?

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OOPS!!!!

In last month's newsletter, we misidentified the owner of the **new intermodal yard modules** at the June setup (page 8). The real owner/builder is **George Brown**. We apologize to George for not paying attention!



W The View from Manassas Junction W

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conventions need to have if they are going to be a success (like facility rent, paper, printing, mailing costs, advanced reservations, special modules, "seed money" for convention cars, shirts and other stuff). The list of things is endless.

"What do I get out all this, anyway?" ... You get the satisfaction of knowing that you played a big part in helping to make N-Scale model railroading fun, and maybe even had some fun yourself by being part of running a convention that folks will talk about for years. I wish we could afford to send all the members of NVNTRAK to the convention for free, but we can't. The drain on subsidized convention activities would be too great. As it is, we are just beginning to break even. Our object as a host club is to get through all this without having to tap the club treasury.

So, we are asking that you understand why you get to pay to work. And you also get a convention staff shirt. You get to help folks run trains you haven't seen before. You're guaranteed to get to buy a convention car (and they are really BEAUTIFUL!!). You get to support your fellow club members and take pride in our collective accomplishments. AND.... you get tired, to boot. What's better than all that?

The Other Side of the Tracks

by Chester Freedenthal, Board Member

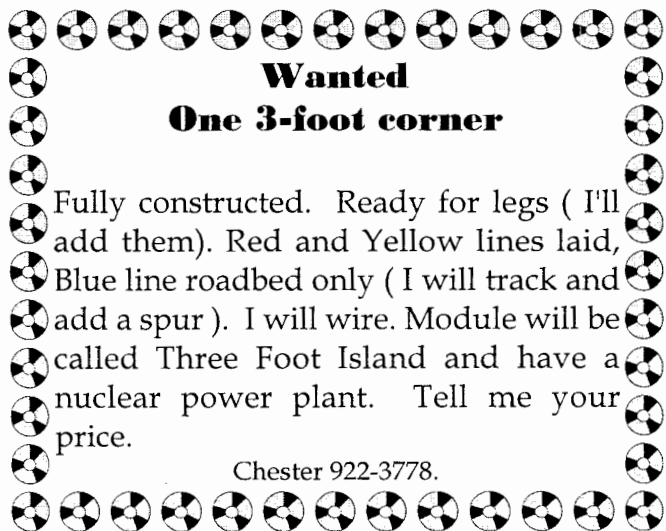
A sincere thank you for the kind expressions of sympathy on the passing of my father.

Once again I have another EMail address (this makes 4 I think!), and of course I changed it right after Gil published his comprehensive list! Please make the correction to his list with my new address: cjfree@erols.com. This will be my EMail address for at least the next three years.

Of course you know I had to come up with a joke this month, which is getting very difficult. Not many railroad jokes out there, and the jokes that are available don't easily adapt themselves to railroading or are unfit to print. Do you know what the difference between taking the train and taking a plane is? Have you ever circled the station for an hour?

Like others in the club I travel a lot for business (and pleasure when possible) and also like others I stop in every hobby shop I can while on the road. I'm going to use this column to review some of the shops I visit and invite others in the club to send me (EMail or snail mail) a review of any they visit and I'll include it here.

This month's shop is *End of Track Hobby Shop* in suburban Chicago. *End of Track* is a trains only shop that specializes in N Scale. It's very large and everything is clearly visible and accessible. Prices are regular retail. The shop specializes in power and rolling stock and so is very broad and deep in just about everything. The owner said he goes to **Kato**, **Con-Cor** and **Walthers** personally to pick stuff up (they're only a few miles away). He has a vary large selection of **MicroTrains®**, including 2 or 3 racks of discontinued. The shop recently sponsored a Railroad Day where some locomotives (including a CP Dash 7) and rolling stock were displayed on the tracks behind the store. Folks had to enter his store and walk through to the back to get to the displays! If ever in Chicago make sure you stop in. Next month, *Des Plains Hobbies*.



Wanted
One 3-foot corner

Fully constructed. Ready for legs (I'll add them). Red and Yellow lines laid, Blue line roadbed only (I will track and add a spur). I will wire. Module will be called Three Foot Island and have a nuclear power plant. Tell me your price.

Chester 922-3778.

Denver Collector's Convention

By George Johnsen, deLuxe Innovations (via the Internet)

A very tired Hi All! from the Denver Squad.

Richard (*Ed: Buike of Trackage Trains*) is substantially correct in his "press release" concerning Hiroshi Kato's speech at the NSC Convention in Denver (*Ed: Kato is considering a C44 between now and May*), except that he repeated many times that the C44-9W was an idea, not a committed project. They are still deciding whether or not this is a viable project, based on the limited roads that can be done. Believe you me, we pounded and pounded on getting a commitment from them, but they are holding off on a final official announcement until Long Beach. The photo they showed was of an HO model, and he specifically said they were considering an N Scale version, but hadn't made up their mind yet.

The CB&Q prototype Budd car (*Ed: by Kato*) is official, and they did say they would be doing more cars of this type. They also showed the N Scale survey chart from a year or so ago and stated that they would be looking into more number one choices. (They spent time on the fact that they were the only company that responded to the #1 request in locomotives, the SD 45).

If you want this engine to be built, let Mr Hiroshi Kato or Mr Charlie Vlk know by fax as soon as you can that modern power is viable in N Scale.

Additional product announcements were revealed at the show. Frank Angstead from *Intermountain* did confirm the next project for them would be the Santa Fe 40' reefer, and those with good eyes could see a 100T truck in the tooling machine on the (*Ed: Intermountain factory*) tour. *deLuxe* showed test shots of the 40' wrinkle-side container. **Key** and **Hallmark** were in attendance promising a greater commitment to N Scale. **GHQ** had a nice sample casting of a shell for the Milwaukee Road streamline *Hiawatha* locomotive and tender.

The Georgetown Loop tour was beautiful, and the *Intermountain* factory tour was fascinating, and beneficial. Each attendee received a DRGW Cookie Box kit as they exited the tour! 'Twas interesting to see how much more inventory they are carrying in N than in O at this time.

No truly significant action at the auction, although much equipment changed hands. Interesting discussions throughout the weekend about collecting vs. operating. At least for the 375 people in Denver, collectors are also operators to a very large extent. There were a few "speculators" in attendance, but last years "*Fallen Flags*" frenzy was not repeated. In fact, several exchanged hands at \$85, where last year they went for \$350. Even the Great Northern Circus Cars were flat. Perhaps we are becoming sane in our maturity!

Except for the crappy hotel, reports were that all had a good time. From the N Scale collector's point of view, this was a very big learning experience. Interesting that this is the 4th time this event has been put on, and still we learn. Next time is Chicago. I'm sure even more will be gained from that excursion.

In the meantime, see you all in Long Beach! (*Ed: We wish!!*)

Why Have Conventions Anyway?

by Gil Brauch

I'm not sure there is a connection between this article and the box on this page, but since *RunniN' TraiNs '96* is closing in, I thought I'd share this with you. It's just one example of what hobby conventions can produce, in addition to the more obvious and advertised purposes. I hope it will also give you an idea about the impact that individual modelers, working collectively, can have on the products that appear in the marketplace.

At the 1995 NMRA Convention's Train Show, *Overland*® showed off their brand new version of AMTRAK's *Genesis* engine in N-Scale. I was allowed to run in on the NTRAK layout. The model is exquisite and I could picture it slamming around the Red Line with a consist of John Cook's *Kato* cars behind it. Boy, were we surprised!! The model would only run about 45 mph and it wouldn't pull more than 4 or 5 cars. Both the importer and the builder were there to witness this and listen as we commented about the model.

At one of the Timonium shows this winter, *Overland*® was there showing off both versions of the *Genesis*. I gazed covetously and lovingly into the case and I reminded the importer of the Atlanta experience and how I hoped they had fixed the mechanism (because I *really want* one of these hummers, but won't pay the price for one that won't run!!)

Now, I don't want to make any grandiose claims, but the announcement that the engines are being returned to fix their mechanisms *could* mean that *Overland*® is listening. I hope so. This example is not to slam *Overland*®, but to point out that they could have put a piece of poorly running, expensive stuff on the market and have had the backbone to choose not to do that. They are to be thanked, in my opinion.

How does this relate to *RunniN' TraiNs '96*? Many major manufacturers will be at our convention. Talk to them. Tell them what you like about what they are doing and what you wish they would do in the future. Not only will individual inputs to manufacturers be possible, but we are having at least one clinic specifically designed to solicit input - addressing the design of N-Scale stock couplers in the future (see the May *NVNTRAK Newsletter*). Roy Parker of *Micro-Trains*® is having a clinic on coupler conversions. What a great opportunity to learn *and* comment on what you really want (*If they could just keep those tiny springs from flying across the room.....*) Try it, you may be able to see the results someday.

Gleaned from the Internet..

TRACKSIDE TRAINS Burlingame CA
1145 pm/pt Thurs June 6 1996

Today we received word from *Overland Models* that the *Genesis* locos were in Indiana but would be taking another little trip back to Korea for repair/redesign of their mechanisms.

There were no survivors to be shipped to any dealers. It will be a minimum of a month before any return, and quite possibly much longer.

More Things To Do To Weather Rolling Stock ...

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at it a while. You see now why you're using a box - the powder gets everywhere. Repeat this process with each of the colors you plan to use, each in a different box.

Use old, worn-out, brushes (you'll never paint with *them* again ...), cotton swabs, and even bits of sponge (the real fine type that sometimes pads models) to apply the powder. Keep everything dry. Dip your brush into the powder and note how it clings to the brush. The oil base helps with this.

Now, apply chalk to your rolling stock. Working from pictures, you can do a number of things. Apply vertical strokes of light gray and lightly dust them out with a clean brush to represent dulling and fading. Lightly brush the lower body with light browns and tans to give the car a road worn look. Brushing gently with a clean, soft, brush or cotton swab will spread and remove the chalk. A very light dusting of red-brown over the running gear, immediately flatcoated, makes it look as if it needs a paint job. By the way - we've chalk-dusted our rolling stock running gear without ill effect, but if you want to be careful, remove the truck frames from your locomotives before trying this (the chalk dust mixes with any oil in the gears to make a nice goeey slurry that probably doesn't help operations...) This treatment works well on boxcar roofs, too. The chalk's easy to apply and if you don't like it, wipe it off and start over (that was why you applied more flat coat). The key is to know what you're trying to do - use references! The various colors of chalks mix well with one another and you can get specific shades of road dirt with a little experimentation. Apply several dustings of different shades of dark gray and black to the tops of your diesels (and to the cars immediately behind) to deaden them nicely. Coal hoppers and steam locomotives also benefit immensely from this. Heavy-handed light gray and white chalk, dusted onto the sidewalls below hatches, does a good job of weathering a cement hopper. Use other colors for various chemicals.

After you've applied a protective flatcoat layer, you will notice that what was almost garish is now muted. Maybe too muted. Apply another layer of chalk dust and more flatcoat and see how the weathering and dirt slowly build up!

This is only one tool in your weatherbox. Washing (as described last month) over chalk (after you've applied flatcoat) gives, for little effort, a very nice effect. Drybrushing chalked areas with contrasting dirty colors, with lightened body colors, etc., can all lend depth to your weathering job and make it more realistic. If you're feeling particularly dirty, mix a bit of chalk (or talcum powder, for that matter) with your favorite dirt color and lightly drybrush the running gear or sides with this. The dirt now becomes three dimensional. Do this with rust colored paint and your rust spots will look really corroded... The key is to keep an open mind and experiment. There's very little you can do to a model boxcar that hasn't happened in prototype somewhere...

In the next article we'll deal with damage and dings, clutter, repaints, and other signs of old age... 

Riding AMTRAK's *Crescent*.....

(Continued from page 2)

South Carolina and North Georgia countryside in the early morning hours is a relaxing experience and very green. The two ladies from New York in the seat across the aisle are talking about how different things look "down here". At the mid-morning stop in Atlanta, the material handling cars are cut off the rear and two new locomotives and one AMTRAK baggage car put on the front end. We head out past Inman Yard (where there are lots of the new NS wide-cabs), still 1 1/2 hours late, toward the Alabama Division along the section of track that I had railfanned one day during the 1995 NMRA convention in Atlanta. It is interesting to see the various photo locations from the track perspective as we slide down the double-tracked mainline towards Austell, GA. In the 12 or so miles between Inman Yard and Austell, we cross over from one main to the other no less than four times. We pass five opposing freights, one of which is a coal drag (probably one of the Powder River through consists that frequent this section of mainline).

With the material handling cars gone, you are able to engage in Matt Schaefer's favorite pastime of standing at the rear of the last coach and watching the line unwind behind the train like the silvery trail of a snail as it glides through the countryside. The Alabama Division of NS (old SOU mainline) is single tracked, with lots of long passing sidings. It is also a very hilly and winding mainline, with a 45 mph speed restriction over most of its route between Austell and Birmingham. You begin to wonder where all the trains we had seen between Inman Yard and Austell came from. We seem to be passing no other trains (except one rail grinding operation) on the scheduled 2 1/2 hour run to Anniston. Suddenly, there they are!! We first encounter two trains in the hole at one siding just 1/2 hour out of Anniston. One is a pig train and the other a drag freight. Both crews are on the ground (it is a little warm out in the midday sun) observing us as we passed. Then, just 15 minutes later we encounter a local turn in the hole, again with the crew on the ground waiting for us to pass.

The only action between Anniston and Birmingham is a long freight in the hole between Embry and Coosa and a track maintenance gang working just before Lovick. The track gang, which appears to be four people, is doing some selective tie replacement. Their equipment is a hi-railer truck and a backhoe, plus assorted hand tools. We go really slow through this section and as you watch out of the rear car you see why. About a dozen fresh ties are under the rails, still unballasted. The spikes are not set, either. The heads are driven down just far enough to clear the railhead. There are also hand tools and a pneumatic hammer lying between the rails. All this, and on a fairly sharp curve, too. . .!

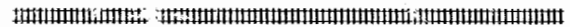
Just before reaching Birmingham, the conductor comes into

our car and announces that he is asking us to move forward into the next car in Birmingham. It seems he has 60 or so kids traveling in a group boarding in Birmingham and he wants to keep them together. Everyone present agrees that it would probably be a good idea to let the kids have the car to themselves. All except, that is, one couple. They come back from the Club Car after the Conductor had left. When told about the request to move forward, the man's 'knee jerk' reaction is: "I don't think so..." At this point, I felt it my duty

to explain to him that the move was occasioned by 60 kids traveling together taking over the car. His wife immediately volunteers to move. He also starts collecting his things and says: "Let's go back to that drinkin' place..." I guess your

point of view depends upon how things are explained in the first place. When I get off in Birmingham, there they are ... thirty or so preschoolers with accompanying adult supervision, off on their graduation excursion between Birmingham and Tuscaloosa. I'm glad they got the chance to ride the train (few kids do these days), but I'm sure glad I was getting off as they got on.

Now that I've done the *Crescent*, I'm looking forward to one day doing the *Cardinal* to Staunton, VA to see the New River Gorge. Want to come along?



The Hostler's Shack

(Continued from page 4)

2) Wouldn't corner modules set up faster and line up quicker if you did not have to fiddle with the legs? 3) In addition our club 3 foot modules are so small and wobbly on legs it is dangerous to have them stand on their own.

EXPEDIENT LEG - Brian has a good compromise, a one inch conduit steel tubing is made into a standard leg and that can be used if and where needed. They are all interchangeable. A 2x4" block is fastened in the corner of the frame with a 1" hole for the leg. It is heavier and not permanently attached but an expedient.

NS TRACK ONE - My daughter lives close to the NS line through Burke. I noticed a string of box cars pushed into the Burke siding and checked on the action. I learned that 30 miles of track one, the VRE track, will be worked over by the track gang, maybe to eliminate some ski jumps. There are 50 in the track gang and they wanted to put their camp cars in the Burke siding but that was not approved because of the good neighborhood so they just pushed them in the siding at Manassas.

JUNE WAYFARING RAILROADERS - The Zutters took a sabbatical for the weekend to Prince and Quinimont for high level research. Monroe went to Bluefield, WV for the N&WHS convention and on line inspections.

Obie's Corner

See us at the *N-Scale East Convention* with custom painted cars by **Micro-Trains®** and lots of stuff to fill a 200 sqft booth space. Special guest will be **The N-Station** with Dave Thurston.

Many vendors will be present from Florida to Washington State with enough variety to certainly please everyone present at the convention. Special products and new releases are to be announced at the convention by manufacturers, *keep tuned in on it!*

I have worked hard to bring you the most premier of all vendors possible to be at an N-Scale convention ever. Excitement is generated everywhere for the event. Special areas have been set aside for the vendors and their products in luxurious rooms **WOW!** I never got space this nice when I hit the shows -- those guys are lucky. Some of our manufacturers will be doing clinics and special guest speeches about N-Scale.

We would like to thank those vendors that have helped promote the *N-Scale East Convention*, Especially

Micro-Trains® with the convention car. Special gifts of appreciation will be given out as door prizes from some of our vendors. Thanks for your support vendors. *YEA!*

More to come will be special events that I have personally worked out with Dave Davies' friend Sam, who coordinated with Conrail, NS, & CSX Corp. I won't spoil it and tell you what they are doing but it is worth the wait. Thanks Sam for all your help.

We have one of the finest bunch of vendors and manufacturers to display products at our convention. The modules will set off the entire event and make there products show it off. One of our vendors is bringing an author to sign his railroad book. No, I won't tell you who it is -- you will have to see. *He! He! Ha!* One manufacturer is bring 3000 -- *yes 3000* -- free hand-out railroad prints. **WOW!** and more **WOW!** So, see, you can't miss the event because it will be the best Convention ever. Lots of neat and new stuff and plenty to do so come join us and see the most N-Scale ever to be assembled under one roof, we will see you at the *N-Scale East Convention, August 15th-18th., Radisson Mark Plaza Hotel at Mark Center, Alexandria, Va.*

For more info call (703) 971-1590 and ask for Fred.

SUPERINTENDENT'S CABIN CAR

(Continued from page 3)

trackage rights for two pair of club junction modules. These modules will be built to the 'Matt Mod 2' standards for junctions. This design provides for a Red Line passing siding between loops. The sidings will give operators a chance to overtake that slow 100 car coal drag. Rodney's gandy dancers have been busy laying and ballasting track, and putting in CTC. These four new junctions, plus the three already in progress, will finally allow us to try *RunniN TraiNs* on the "Red Line Route". Once we're setup and clamped, we'll dedicate the Red Line to through operations.

Matt Schaefer and John Steitz have been working on Operating Procedures to be used on the convention "Red Line Route", so we'll get a chance to try them out. We'll also train and qualify "Red Line Route" tower operators. Just like at the

convention, blue and yellow lines are available on each individual loop along with the multi-loop "Red Line Route" All the available lines will let us test all the consists we each intend to run on the convention layout. We have the opportunity to bad order or r.i.p. any cars with problems. As with modules; as host, our trains ought to run impeccably.

JULY SETUPS

PRINCE OF PEACE LUTHERAN CHURCH - July 21. 1- 7 PM. This is our dress rehearsal for the convention. We will have at least three loops, to practice "Red Line Route" Operations. All convention modules must be checked out during this setup. Clampdown is 2 PM.

AUGUST SETUPS

NTRAK Convention-August 14-18



For Your Information

Enclosed with this newsletter is the latest membership listing. In keeping with our policies, this listing is provided only to those newsletter recipients who are members of NVNTRAK and to the National NTRAK coordinator.

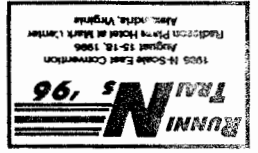
The Northern Virginia NTRAK Newsletter is produced for and by the members of Northern Virginia NTRAK. Membership is \$30/year or a Newsletter subscription for continental USA residents is just \$10/year payable in January. Send check: Treasurer, Northern Virginia NTRAK, P.O. Box 1951, Herndon, Virginia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

Submissions should be sent to the editor, Gil Brauch, 6111 Lorcom Ct. Springfield, VA 22152, by electronic mail to gbrauch@lmi.org, or faxed to 703-917-7482 (and clearly marked for Gil Brauch on the cover sheet).

Please send articles for the August 1996 newsletter by July 24, 1996. Thanks.

**NORTHERN VIRGINIA NTRAK
Membership Roster**

<u>Name</u>	<u>Address, City, State, Zip</u>	<u>Home Phone</u>	<u>Work Phone</u>
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Allred, J. S.	11707 Indian Ridge Rd., Reston, VA 22091	703-860-3343	703-787-7300
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Zutter, Steve	8567 King Carter St., Manassas, VA 22110	703-369-5092	703-369-5902

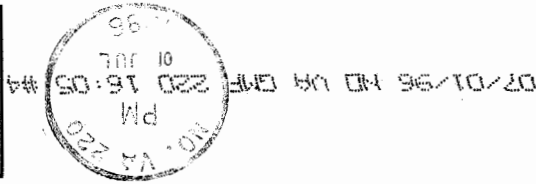


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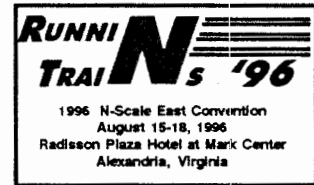
Jul 96



**Are you ready
for this?**



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And Counting!