



Northern Virginia **NTRAK** Newsletter

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DECEMBER 1996

VOLUME V NUMBER 12

W The View from Manassas Junction W

by Brian Brendel

"A Time for Giving"

The arrival of the holidays always reminds me to reflect upon the year's accomplishments and this year has been a doozy! We need a calculator to count our blessings. So many times this past year I have been struck by the fellowship and fun this club offers us. The conventions, trips, mall shows, Timonium, work sessions ... the list seems endless. And throughout it all we have kept our good humor and sense of purpose — even while exploring the "serious" side of running trains.

To explain the "serious" side, let me remind you that once upon a time we were just a buncha guys who thought they might like to run some trains. Expanding modeling ability, crazy dreams, and a successful convention later, we are STILL those "runnin' trains" guys, but with one difference. We are now folks who take their hobby very seriously, and are taken very seriously by others in the hobby. Dealers, manufacturers, other clubs, and even other scales hold us in high regard. And we're about to go a step further; community involvement.

For years we have been "taking" the praises, awe, and wonder of the public at our setup events. We have been "taking" the generosity of Prince of Peace Lutheran Church. It's high time that we started "giving" back where we can. Since we are a public-display-oriented organization, part of our fun is based on the fact that we thrive on public attention to our work — it's fun to be noticed! And since the general public has been most complimentary in their response to us, we're going to return the favor.

On December 9 at 2 pm, NVNTRAK will be a Fairfax Hospital Women and Children's Center to present to them a video cassette mini-library and a check for \$1,500. Add to that the \$2,500 that we donated to Prince of Peace's Fire Recover Fund, and you quickly realize that our "giving" has already begun. And it's fun! (And playing Santa by being the bearer of big checks is almost as much fun as running trains ... especially when you don't have to dress up in a Santa suit.)

Speaking of "giving", my wife is "giving" all of us a nice present this year; a place to hold our ANNUAL HOLIDAY EXTRAVAGANZA (a.k.a. "The Christmas Party"). That place is my house on December 15th, 3 pm until we run out of food, trains, presents, and doorprizes. Bring a train to run on the Shenandoah Subdivision. As Colleen says: "What's another 60 people in the house when you've already had 110 on layout tours?"

CLUB PROJECTS FOR 1997

by John Drye

The BOD has begun to look at some potential projects for the upcoming winter. Now that the convention is behind us, we have some time and energy to devote to club operations. The objective is to look at ideas that improve our enjoyment of "RunniN' TrainS". The following are some of the ideas that have been put forward. If you have any comments or suggestions, please let us know.

Inside Four Foot Corners: The "Red Line Route" clearly showed that reversed corners (or inside corners) go a long way at avoiding the "Indy 500" Racetrack look of the traditional NTRAK oval. Reversed three-foot corners, however, don't quite "fit". They are off by about one "matt-meter" which equals about an inch. Reversed corners also require special wiring. A dedicated inside corner consists of a standard four-foot module with three-foot corner radii track laid "backwards" on the module.

Junction Module Yard Lead: We now own *seven* junction modules. That's enough to run four loops with one junction left over. A four loop setup takes up a minimum of 50 by 50 feet, and should be nearly twice that to allow reasonable aisles and operating pits. We won't have that much space again soon, so we have at least one extra junction. It is possible to rewire and re-scenic a junction as an inside corner and use the junction off the mains to lead into a setup yard. At Altoona, we found a great prototype for a small engine facility that would neatly fit onto the junction.

Club Yard: BANTRAK built a club yard that has impressed anyone who has seen it. It has loooong (20+ feet) setup tracks off red, yellow, and blue. We (NVNTRAK) have never been above stealing someone else's great ideas. The

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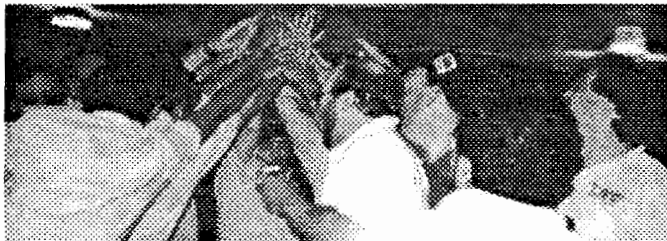
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RunniN' TrainS Brings Family "Out of the Closet"

by Gil Brauch

Stories continue to come in, both through the mail, by fax, and on the Internet about what a positive impact the 1996 N Scale East Convention had, and hobby. One of the latest and faxed to me by Keith Lyons of our staunchest benefactors). It is a powerful lesson to be ever vigilant in all that we do organization. The impressions



continues to have, on our most eloquently moving was Hundman Publications (one of is quoted in it's entirety. There learned here... We must be and say as members of our we make are lasting ones.

"Dear Mr. Hundman,

"While on a working vacation with my family in the Washington, D.C. area in August we happened upon a morning news segment which dealt with the 1009 N-Trak East Convention which was being held in Alexandria, Virginia.

"I had been an N-scaler many years ago and frankly was not that impressed with either the workmanship or quality available at that time so I boxed everything up and put it in storage. However, what I saw on the television broadcast peaked my interest so we decided to visit the exhibit.

"My wife thought it somewhat foolish but once we arrived she soon changed her mind! We saw the most fantastic modular layout! We spent three hours looking and wondering how this or that could be done in such a small area. Everyone was very friendly which really added to the time in Alexandria.

"Our interest was peaked and we couldn't wait to get back into the hobby. We visited several exhibitor tables and found everyone very busy but cordial. My wife and I were particularly impressed with a young man and his mother who were vendors at the convention. Skip Smith and his mother were extremely friendly in handling a multitude of questions about N-scale and made us both feel very appreciated and important. Skip gave me his copy of your magazine and as they say, the rest is history.

"What makes this even more exciting to us is the fact that Skip and his mother are not that far away and since the convention they have provided answers to a myriad of questions we have had about model railroading.

"We would like to thank the hosts of this convention for their time, energy, and dedication. In addition, we wanted to thank Skip and his mother for making our quality time at home a fun experience each and every evening. Our ten year old and our fourteen year old sons have picked up the model railroading "bug" and are very enthused about what we are doing together as a family.

"By the way, we all love your magazine; the quality of the articles, the challenges presented by some articles, and the photography have made us true believers in N-scale and its possibilities.

"Best wishes,

"William and Margaret Bryan

"Dayton, Ohio"

Our thanks to the Bryan family for sharing this with us. 'Nuff said.....

RAIL EVENTS TIMETABLE

Dec 7-8	Model Train Display - <i>The Fairfax Station</i> , Fairfax Station, VA - Sat 12-5, Sun 12-4.	Jan 19	Monthly Setup - Prince of Peace Lutheran Church, Springfield, VA - 1-7 pm
Dec 8	Club Setup - 1-7 pm - Franconia Governmental Center, Franconia, VA - Setup Foreman: John Steitz. Clampdown time 2 pm.	Jan 25-26	Greenberg Great Train Show - PG Equestrian Center, Upper Marlboro, MD - Setup Foreman: TBD. Clampdown time TBD.
Dec 9	Gift Presentation - Fairfax Hospital Women and Children's Center, Fairfax, VA - 2 pm.	Jan 25-26	Great Scale Show - MD State Fairgrounds, Timonium, MD.
Dec 15	Club Christmas Party - Brian Brendel's - 10503 Manor View, Manassas - 3 pm - See directions elsewhere in this newsletter.	Nov 6-9	1997 N-Scale East Convention, West Chester, PA - Hosted by DARN NTRAK.
Jan 4-5	Greenberg Great Train Show - Capitol Expo Center, Chantilly, VA - Setup Foreman: John Steitz. Clampdown time TBD.		

(Items listed in boldface indicate NVNTRAK module events)

**FROM THE SUPERINTENDENT'S
CABIN CAR**

by John Drye

Well, we managed to make it through a "Two Dog" weekend last month. The Lions Club has already contacted us about next year. They are considering moving the date because the second weekend of November conflicts with an NMRA Regional Convention in 1997. The Gaithersburg Club has another show next spring, in addition to the one next November. We'll ask for a spot at the other end of the building to improve railfanning possibilities.

We'll be back at a Greenberg show, at the Expo Center in Chantilly, the first weekend in January. We are also invited back to Upper Marlboro, the last weekend in January. The Greenberg Show last year in Chantilly was exceptional, despite the snow. We've requested a large space, hopefully enough to set up at least two



loops.

In December, we have a setup at the Government Center in Franconia on Sunday the 8th, in lieu of our usual setup at the church. For those with new or "newly adopted" modules, this is a good opportunity to come see how they run.

Congratulations are in order, by the way, to all of our new adoptive parents:

- Vic Graulau (*Orphan Corner*: with new and improved orphanage),
- Dave Freshwater (*Foggy Bottom*: soon to have new and improved legs),
- Chester Fredenthal (the module formerly known as *Turntable Corner*: soon to be *Three Mile Corner*), and
- James Altobello (*Junkyard Corner*: which OSHA has directed be cleaned up)

Thanks to all these new "dads" for taking responsibility for the lost children.

Several members have responded to the many requests (pleadings) for new corners. Hope to see those in action soon. These will make it much easier to manage multiple setups and allow more flexibility in larger setups.

DECEMBER EVENTS

FRANCONIA GOVERNMENTAL CENTER- December 8. 1-7 PM. This is a chance to setup while the Church is recovering. Great opportunity to prepare for our two shows in January. Setup Foreman: John Steitz. Clampdown is 2:00 PM
CHRISTMAS PARTY- December 15. 3 PM until ?? . Brian Brendel's, 10503 Manor View, Manassas, VA. Bring a White Elephant gift for the annual round-robin gift exchange.

JANUARY EVENTS

GREENBERG GREAT TRAIN & TOY SHOW- January 4-5, Capital Expo Center, Chantilly, VA. We have a 50'x40' space. Show hours: Saturday 11 AM-5 PM, Sunday 11 AM- 4 PM. Setup is Friday from 1-6 PM and Saturday from 8-10

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**FACTORY LOOP
An NTRAK Project**

by John Steitz

As most of you who've hung around me since the convention have heard already, I believe NVNTRAK needs more corners! Apart from our junction modules, we have only seven or eight regular, outside, three-foot corners for use in our layouts, out of over sixty total modules. Even if you add the junctions and a few of the specialized corner modules (like Tony's engine terminal or Matt's *New River*) we're still top-heavy with straight modules and lack enough inside and outside corners to make full use of our junctions. (Not to mention all the gray hair our Super is getting just trying to put set-ups together.)

Because of this, I've decided to bite the bullet and put together a home layout made up of 3' NTRAK corners. (More about this in future installments.) John Drye and Dave Freshwater reportedly are building corners this winter - check out their designs.

But I believe there's room for plenty more corners, and the attached diagram gives one interesting way to design them. I came up with this plan while contemplating my own layout. But for the fact that this plan, by itself, doesn't offer a continuous loop, I was tempted to build it. Maybe someone out there could use it instead to build the club some NTRAK corners.

The plan (*diagram on Page 5*) uses five module-pieces to form a return loop. Two of the pieces, "D" and "E", are designed as standard NTRAK three-foot corner modules, and two other pieces, "B" and "C", can combine to form a four-foot 90 degree corner. The fifth unit, "A" is a custom "Y" module, upon which I've sketched in my own five-track arrangement (three mains + orange + the brown line yard lead). Other track configurations are possible, of course.

What I've tried to do with this design is twofold: 1) keep curve radii at least as wide as NTRAK mainline specs (which is where most return loops heretofore have compromised); and 2) make two of the five units, "D" and "E," capable of being used anywhere in an NTRAK layout when they're not hooked up as part of the loop. Moreover, a combination of "A" + "B",

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THE HOSTLER'S SHACK



by Matt Schaefer

FITZGERALD'S NEWSLETTER - Boy, wasn't that a nice spread on our convention layout. All totaled there were 9+ pages of coverage on the ole "garage layout". Jim and others were quite taken with the way we pulled off that sweet contract with the Radisson. The *New River Subdivision* got a full page spread and John Plant's *Hinton* got a two page spread! Did you see the cute picture of the 8" stack of blocks under the *Lakes Division* legs. Whatever it takes!

CABOOSE AT FAIRFAX STATION - We have been offered and accepted the caboose outside the Fairfax station for our displays and maybe a small permanent layout. The exact space for the permanent setup is still being negotiated. Four 20 amp circuits have been installed in the caboose. It can serve as a subdivision club house with a 4 seat lounge - in the copula. Our president suggested painting the caboose yellow with a silver roof and I think the *Red Line Route* and other logos would look impressive on name boards.

COMMITTEE TO REELECT THE PRESIDENT - Brian Brendel has been submitted to Jim FitzGerald as a candidate for director of either the NE or SE regions of **NTRAK, Inc.** The candidates will be listed in either his March or June newsletters. Get the campaign banners and buttons out.

TRAILER REVIEW - Trailers are convenient because when you load up after one show you are packed for the next show - except for upgrades. Parking in the shade is recommended in the summer. However if shade is not available, testing in the summer can be conducted on some modules to see if this is a problem.

Here is a first look at the basics from one manufacturer that I have been able to determine so far. A 6x10, 5.5' high 2 wheel starts at \$2K plus freight. A 7x14', 6' high four wheeler starts at \$2900. All tires are 205/R75-15" and the aluminum shell is typically .030". Options are available. Custom orders take 3 weeks for delivery. Custom colors like yellow with silver top or confederate gray are available. *Red Line Route* and other logos are on your own.

NTRAK WITH DCC - Conrad Schellenberg of Long Island NTRAK reports in their newsletter a "partial success" with their first trial of DCC during a show. They used "common telephone connectors daisy chained at four locations. These locations provided the plug in points for the remote DCC throttles. It took about 40 minutes to set up. They planned to run trains in opposite directions on the red line using two passing sidings but one siding was not usable as operating a turnout dropped the DCC off the line. The cause was never found, but otherwise the DCC did function well. Other comments were that operators need familiarization and accidentally pressed buttons caused problems. I should add improvements are still needed like radio control and simplification. Of course onboard receivers are needed for DCC. The advantage of NTRAK is we have 3 mains, one of

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The Other Side of the Tracks

by Chester Freedenthal, Board Member

Having missed the November setups I'm ready for our January shows and hopefully Springfield Mall in February. The Chantilly show should be a good one, with an area of 50 by 40. I'm working on *Three Mile Corner*, but there's been a slight change of plans... its new name will be *Alien Corner*. It will be a prototypical Alien invasion complete with a Space Ship, Droids, and lots of Aliens. There will also be a few surprises... *may the Force be with you*. It will also be wired as an inside and outside corner. I still plan to do *Three Mile*, but I think it will be on a return loop.

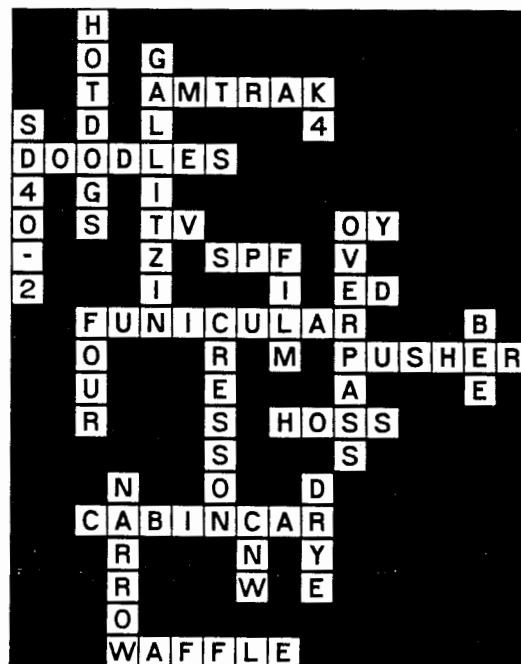
The clean-up at Prince of Peace had a great turn out.. I think we should do this at least twice a year, if not at the church some other place, to give back to the community. And the donation to the church was really appreciated. It felt good that we could do it. Our second charitable donation will be to the Fairfax Hospital for Children. They'll use our donation to help keep the kids and adults that stay with them, comfortable and entertained in the hospital. We'll present the check on December 9th at 2:30 PM. We'll also give them a few videos for kids and teenagers. And they want us to do a small layout for them in the Spring.

Still no train joke... I've looked high and low for a train joke book, but to no avail.. If you locate one get it for me and I'll reimburse you.

This months review is of *Ken's Trains* in Sudbury, MA.

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Solution to Brian's Railfanning Crossword



Projects for 1997....

(Continued from page 1)

yard could both be part of the mainline or function as an inside setup yard off the Junction Yard Lead.

“Club” Corners: Due to their “foster” care, the four club corners have never been among the best modules in the club. All of them could use various sorts of upgrades: legs, wiring, scenery, or trackwork. We are looking for four “full-time” foster parents to take semi-permanent custody of these corners and bring them up to snuff. If you are interested, please see the Superintendent (John Drye).

Junction Modules: Now that they have served their originally designed purpose in the *Red Line Route*, we need to decide what to do with the junctions. They are all in various stages of near-completion. We need to carefully review the junction wiring and prepare wiring diagrams that will become standard. We also need to decide if we want to add switch machines and electrical switches to route power. The benefit of powered turnouts and power routing is that, like **DARN**'s diamond mill, the junctions can be operated from above the table and we'll avoid short circuits due to turnout and under-table power switch inconsistencies.

Please consider these ideas; we'd like to discuss them at the next club meeting and find out what the membership is interested in doing. We have quite a few new members, and hope to provide them (you know who you are) with some interesting and enjoyable ways to participate in club activities and get to know the rest of the membership.

Speaking for myself and a few of the most recent class of “newbies”, the sessions in Rodney's basement where the last four junctions were “born” were as useful a class in model railroading as one could find. The sessions helped me avoid a bunch of mistakes I otherwise would have made on my modules. (I still found plenty of *other* mistakes, though). Hopefully, these projects will help others (as well as myself) avoid similar pitfalls and participate in building modules that improve future club setups.

NOTICE

Included in this issue is the form for renewing your membership in **Northern Virginia NTRAK**. The \$30.00 annual membership fee includes membership in the national **NTRAK** organization, 12 issues of the club newsletter, a club skirt for all modules you own or build, all the benefits and privileges of membership AND the opportunity to run trains and socialize with a great group of N Scale modelers. Act now so you don't forget. Renewals are due before the end of January in order to keep you as a member in good standing

Factory Loop Project ...

(Continued from page 3)

or “A” + “C”, alone, provides a mainline offset to straight trackage in any layout (sort of like Gil's modules). And “A”, “B” and “C” used together create a branch off to hidden staging behind a row of straight modules.

A return loop would be unusual for our club, though they've been used in other **NTRAK** clubs. It actually would be quite useful for practice and show set-ups in our new post-convention environment, allowing us to run an out-and-back branch line off of any junction, without the need to allocate a huge amount of space for a full, four-cornered loop. An out-and-back spur also is a good place to put late-arrival or early-departure modules in any set-up. Moreover, a spur is a good place to

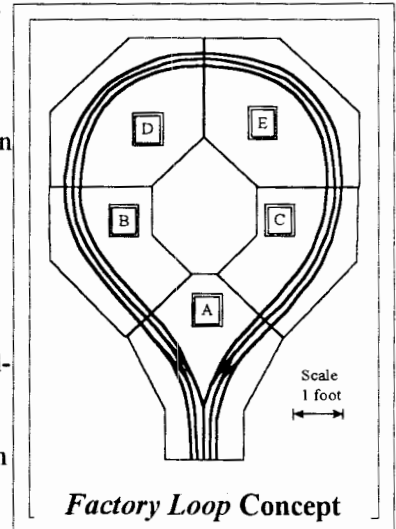
stage trains for tracks without access to a good yard (i.e., most of our *Red Line*), or where crossover maneuvers are dicey.

The benefit from this design as a loop is that the mainline trackage skirts the perimeter of the modules (as it does on most **NTRAK** corner units), and the whole interior is open to model a large industrial scene. Industrial scenes are some of the few places where prototype railroads actually build return loops. There are many possibilities: a steel mill complex; an auto-assembly plant; a petroleum refinery; a rail-rebuild facility; a power plant - to name a few. The innermost track of the “Y” module could be used as a switching lead for this industrial area.

If anyone is interested in building one or more sections of *Factory Loop*, please call me at (703) 526-0758, or catch me at the December Christmas Party. While I've committed myself to other building projects this year, I'd be willing to give a hand planning and building this complex if someone wants to bring it to reality. (I also have information on how to obtain pre-fab module frames if anyone lacks a woodworking shop.)

One person could decide to build the whole complex, or several could split up the pieces and build cooperatively. Joint builders would have to sit down to figure out what sort of industry they'd want to model, to decide how to configure the inside industrial trackage, and to set timetables for construction. The **NMRA** National in Madison, WI next summer is a good target for anyone wanting to build a module in early '97.

I think that *Factory Loop* would be a real eye-catching part of any **NVNTRAK** set-up, and would produce distinctive modules that could be used in a variety of different layouts.



Factory Loop Concept

Baldwin Locomotive Works

by Charles Greenacre

The DeGolyer Library at Southern Methodist University contains many drawings from the **Baldwin Locomotive Works** in Philadelphia. These are the original drawings on linen. The size of these drawings can be up to 3ft by 8+ft. There are approximately 3500 drawings of various engines proposed or built by **Baldwin**. The earliest date that I could find was a pair of 0-4-0's built in 1874 for the Spanish Government.

The latest date I could find was a Santa Fe 4-10-2 built in 1938. Most of the drawings are in the 30 year period 1890-1920. Most of the drawings are side elevations and cross sections of the engines, however, in some instances, one of the two drawings is missing.

The following quotes are from the preface of the *Baldwin Locomotive Works Erecting Card Drawings-2nd Ed- A Guide to the Collection*.

"Most of the drawings in the DeGolyer Library **Baldwin** collection were purchased from Owen Davies who was acting as an agent for C. W. Witbeck of Hammond, LA. In 1953 or 1954, Witbeck acquired a narrow gauge steam locomotive from Godchaux Sugar Co. which in turn he sold to Gerald Best. Best, it turned out, was acting on behalf of Disneyland. When Witbeck approached **Baldwin Locomotive Works** in Eddystone, Pennsylvania, about the original drawings for the locomotive, he learned that **Baldwin** was preparing to destroy their inactive records. He requested permission to retrieve what he could and was given a period of time to make his selections.

"Matt Gray, an employee of **Baldwin Locomotive Works** in the Engineering Department, describes Witbeck's visit in a letter to John Kirtland (1977) 'While still at Eddystone about the year 1950 and later on about 1956 or so, a fella named Whitbeck [sic] was given permission to gather steam loco data and drawings from the files. I recall he would spend all night on the 7th floor and would bundle this stuff and carry it over to the train station.

"Gray adds that 'no one seems to know exactly what sort of rhyme or reason he was supposed to following in separating the material but I would hazard a guess, by judging by what was left, that he tried to get material from pre-1920 vintage locomotives. [Editorial comment, Based on the fact that **Baldwin** was getting ready to destroy their **INACTIVE**

records: Witbeck may not have had access to the 1920-1950 era steam engines-these engines may still have been considered active during the years 1950-1956.]

"Apparently, Witbeck sold and gave away small lots of these records to other collectors. Between the years 1962 and 1967 Everett Lee DeGolyer, Jr., Director of the DeGolyer Library, acquired the bulk of Witbeck's collection of **Baldwin Locomotive Works** material. While most of the original drawings came from the Witbeck collection, a small number of the mechanical drawings were also purchased from Herber L. Broadbelt. In May 1989, Mr H. Charles Yeager donated a group of drawings to the DeGolyer Library. Yeager received these drawings as gifts from Witbeck."

I purchased the index to the drawings-it's 200 pages long. I had not realized the number of locomotives built by **Baldwin** (over 70,000) and sheer number of customers. For example, the following list of customers is from the first page of the plans roster by customer name:

- Aberdeen & Asheboro
- Aberdeen & Rockfish
- Acme Red River & Northern
- Adirondack & St. Lawrence
- Akron & Barberton Belt
- Akron Canton & Youngstown
- Akron Gravel & Sand
- Alabama & Vicksburg
- Alabama Central
- Alabama Consolidated Coal & Iron
- Alabama Great Southern
- Alabama Tennessee & Northern
- Alapiff Mining
- Alaskan Engineering Commission
- Albermarle & Pantego

Now, I know that I'm a young'un, but I ain't heard of any of these railroad or industrial companies. **AT&SF** engines don't appear until page 5 of this roster.

ACL on page 6 and **B&O** on page 7. No, they didn't have David Greenacre's favorite **B&O** engine, the *Royal Blue*, a P-7d, but the collection does have the drawings for a **B&O** P-6, among others. **B&M** is on page 10, **CofGa** page 16, **C&O** page 18, **WM** page 83 of this roster. So, if a club member wants to know if SMU has the original drawings for one of your favorite steam engines, let me know RR name, wheel arrangement, and date built.

Baldwin had proposed some interesting, but never built engines. They proposed a 2-12-4 for **CB&Q**, a 2-10-10-2 for **N&W**, and a 4-10-0 for the **USSR**.





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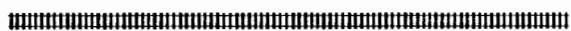
which can be used for testing new controls.

ARMCO STEEL - There is a good reason we haven't seen much of Bernie lately. He is overseeing the beautiful old ARMCO steel furnaces and mills rising up in his furnace room like a set out of the Alien Terminators. The AFL-CIO boys and gandy dancers have been working overtime every night.

COUPLERS - Let me add my 2 cents worth to John Steitz's epistle on couplers last month. Unimates are inexpensive and easy to install by twisting into the pocket and look good. But it takes longer to couple up trains with Unimates where Rapidos and MicroTrains automatically couple. Also Unimates, when under constant loads, occasionally uncouple due to a design flaw causing the knuckles to rotate up. As John said, the Rapidos are the most reliable over all. The low profile flanges like on the deLuxe tubs are hard to keep on the tracks - even sitting still. George Johnson states he will replace his low profile wheels with regular wheels on cars returned to him.

SKIJUMPS - The engine crews are coming in the shack telling about ski jumps you wouldn't believe! Guys, do we really need to model the "vertical curves" like on the Milwaukee Road when in bankruptcy? One time I rode the Quad Cities Rocket and the springs were bottoming out on a the Chessie dome car owned by Mr. Butterworth and he could not keep shocks on the car. In the 70's this was a \$10 ride from Chicago to Rock Island (US Army Depot) including dinner in his diner. Lets imitate the smooth "Broadway" so we can run the T-1's and H-8's at speed.

DAZZLING CLINICS - Members are hoping to see Dave Greenacre repeat his soldering clinic with the feature attraction being his death defying, electrofrying fire dance around the 110V power strip. Don't miss the great clinics planned for our upcoming club meetings.



The Other Side of the Tracks...

(Continued from page 4)

Ken's is an N-Scale exclusive store in a small town west of Boston. He's located in a small shopping plaza on the second floor and has a shop not much bigger than Obie's.. but all N-Scale. He has a small selection of rolling stock and motive power, but also handles a lot of consignments. I was able to pick up six old Con-Cor billboard reefer beer cars. His biggest strength is in detailing stuff and it looks like he carries one of everything in the Walthers catalog! I can also find something when I visit. Ken's also has a big mail order business and sends out a monthly listing of new items in stock. Prices are a little less than full retail.

My thanks to the John's (Steitz and Drye) for pointing me to the N-Scale listserver. I just love getting 20-30 EMail messages a day! Until next month... look both ways before crossing.

The New MicroTrains Magne-Matic® Couplers

by Fred Obermeyer

Here are a few questions and answers about the new Magne-Matic® couplers from Micro-Trains.

1. Are my old couplers obsolete?

No. The refinements improve coupler performance, but do not obsolete the original couplers. The Magne-Matic® coupler system is already the finest and most reliable system available.

2. Will the new couplers mate with my existing couplers?

Yes. The new couplers mate with the existing couplers. No modifications are necessary.

3. What makes them better than the old ones?

For years, MicroTrains has said that a reverse draft gear angle on the pulling face of the coupler, made with an X-Acto® knife, could improve coupler performance. The reverse angle makes the coupler less likely to slip in a vertical direction when the train is under load such as going up grades or on less than perfectly level track. With the reverse angle, the greater the load, the tighter the coupler faces grip each other for maximum gripping performance.

4. Why introduce improvements now?

Thanks to new tooling techniques, it is finally possible to make the coupler.

5. How can you tell the difference between the old and new?

The difference is not possible to see with the naked eye. A magnifier can show the subtle difference.

6. Do all new couplers have the new reverse draft angle?

No. A variety of popular couplers do have the reverse draft gear angle. Eventually, all couplers will have it. The new coupler has had already been shipping for several months.

7. What about the couplers on MicroTrains Line® rolling stock?

MicroTrains Line® rolling stock has been shipping with the new reverse angle couplers for several months now.

8. What about packaging?

There is no change in the packaging. It remains the same.



✂ SUPERINTENDENT'S CABIN CAR ✂

(Continued from page 3)

AM. Setup foreman, John Drye. Clampdown Saturday at 10 AM.

PRINCE OF PEACE LUTHERAN CHURCH- January 18 (TENTATIVE). 1-7 PM. . We'll see whether the Church has recovered from our painting efforts. Setup foreman: John Drye. Clampdown 2 PM.

GREENBERG GREAT TRAIN & TOY SHOW- January 26-27, PG Equestrian Center, Upper Marlboro, MD. We' have a 36' x 40' space. Show hours: Saturday 11 AM-5 PM, Sunday 11 AM- 4 PM. Setup is Friday from 1-6 PM and Saturday from 8-10 AM. Setup foreman: John Drye. Clampdown Saturday at 10 AM.

Obie's Corner

New Products

Atlas - GP-40 expected release Dec 15th. About \$85 each list. Caboose - Undec, **Conrail, BN, Cotton Belt, Burlington Route, D&H, Chessie (C&O).**

Bev-Bel - 50' Christmas Boxcar (gold).

E-R Model Importers - New N-Scale #70300 **REA** Express Boxcar track cleaning car - \$15.95.

E&C Shops - Announced the release of aluminum coal cars for **UP and C&NW.**

Kato - F7A set or separate F7's - **EL, Santa Fe, Soo Line.**

Out West - Vinyl windows N-#N20WD contains 100 window styles in residential, commercial windows to follow soon. Also header, lattice and brick patters are available.

LifeLike - E-7 is put off until January '97 (oops! It was announced for Nov '96).

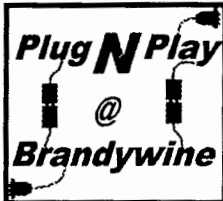
MicroTrains - Reverse Draft Angle Magne-Matic® couplers. See article on page 7 on improvements and answers to a few questions.



1997 N-Scale East Convention

hosted by **DARN NTRAK**

The N-Scale East 1997 Convention will be held November 6 through 9, 1997 at the West Chester Holiday Inn, in West Chester, PA. Full convention registration is \$45 per person before April 1, 1997; \$55 after that. Registration is



refundable up to September 15, 1997, subject to a \$10 service charge. Hotel reservations must be made separately. Call (610) 692-1900 for the Holiday Inn and ask for the N-Scale Convention reservation. Rooms are \$75 per night, up to four person occupancy. In addition,

registration for the N-Scale Convention will get you admission to the NMRA East Regional Convention, being held the same weekend at the Ramada Inn, Concorville, PA. Hourly shuttle bus service between the hotels will be provided by the host club.

The convention will feature several railfan trips and prototype tours, home layout tours, silent auction, contests, clinics, and seminars. And, of course, there will be an operating layout and trade show. Remember, November is National Model Railroading Month!

There are plenty of non-rail local attractions, too. There are Longwood Gardens, The Brandywine River Museum, Hagley Museum, Winterthur, and the Franklin Mint, to name a few. This can be a wonderful weekend for rail and non-rail fans alike.

A registration form is available on the Internet at: "<http://dept.physics.upenn.edu/~www/shop/NEast97.html>".

NOTE NEW ARTICLE DEADLINE

Your Editor will be unavailable during the time between Christmas and New Years, so the plan is to put the January 1997 issue in the mail on Dec 24. Get your articles in by **Dec 16th**, please. Have a Merry Christmas.

Gil Brauch

Fire Recovery Update

by *Gil Brauch*

Repairs and recovery from the fire that Prince of Peace Lutheran Church, the site of **NVNTRAK's** monthly setups, experienced on November 3rd are proceeding very well. Although the process of doing actual repairs in the area that was burned is a long way from complete, those portions of the building that were not actually fire damaged have been cleaned, painted, and restored to full use.

About 24 members of **NVNTRAK** participated in that cleanup effort by marshalling our forces on November 17th and painting the library and the hallway outside the main church offices. Work began about 2 pm and by 3:30 we had completed the first coat and were conducting a business meeting in the church narthex. The results of that meeting are reported elsewhere in this newsletter.

At 4:30, we reactivated ourselves, put a second coat of paint on the library walls and cleaned up. The members of the church were amazed at the amount of work that was accomplished so quickly. But then, we are an amazing group, aren't we.....

Brian Brendel and I stayed for the evening church service that was held to celebrate and give thanks for those who participated in the efforts to put out and recover from the fire. About 200 church members and friends were at the service. During the service, I was given the opportunity to introduce Brian, who formally presented our donation of \$2,500 to the church's fire recovery fund to the congregation president. You should have heard the "OOOHHHs" when they announced the donation ... and the spontaneous and hearty round of applause that followed. Ya'll done good.....

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 523051, Springfield, VA 22152-3051.

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 January 1997 newsletter by December 16, 1996. Thanks.

IT'S PARTY TIME!!!

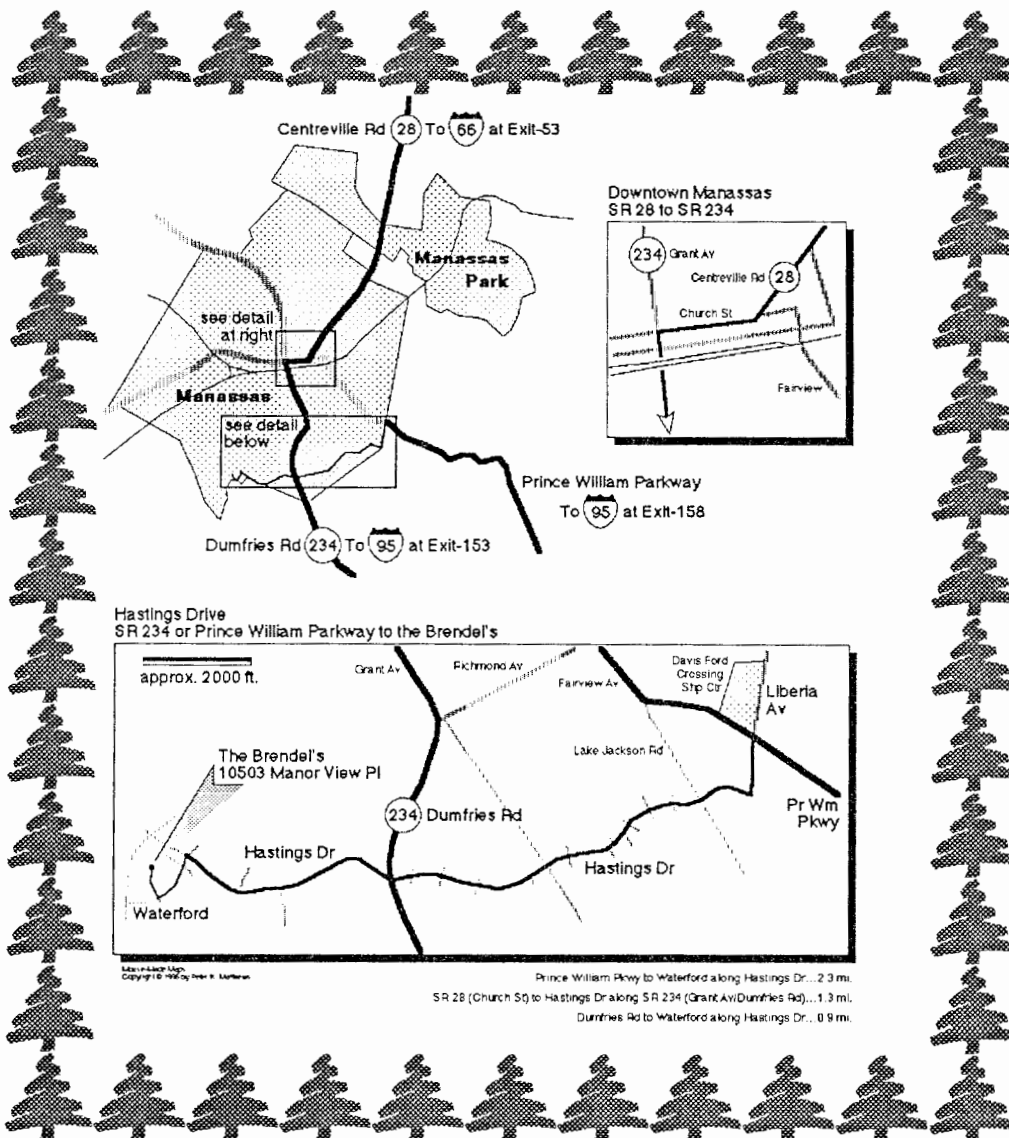
The NVNTRAK Annual Christmas Party will be held at Brian Brendel's house, 10503 Manor View, Manassas, VA on December 15th beginning at 3 pm. The map below shows how to get to his house. In case you get lost, call him at (703) 820-2345 for directions.

For those of you attending this party for the first time, you need to know that you only have to bring yourself, your appetite, and one wrapped White Elephant Holiday Gift (RR-related of course). The gift will be a part of the annual "pass-it-around" gift exchange. It's too hard to try to explain here, so just come and we'll explain as we go along. It usually turns out to be the entertainment highlight of the evening. (I wonder who'll get the ORNAMENT this year????)

Current plans are to gather and run trains and socialize for a while. Then we'll eat and after that we will have the door prize drawing and the gift exchange. That's right, you have TWO chances to win — one nice, and the other... well, just wait and see.

Since we have so many new members this year, we are asking all of you to call the club helpline **before December 11th** and let us know if you are coming. That number is: (703) 620-0812 (Ext 3). Just leave your name with an indication as to whether you are coming or not. This will keep us from "overbuying" the food for the party.

We hope to see all of you at the party to cap off what has been an outstanding year for NVNTRAK.



Edward G. Brattinwood
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Exp 1/97

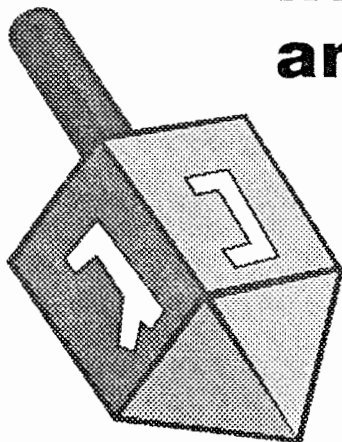
P.O. Box 523051
Springfield, VA
22152



Dec '96



wishes all of our
friends and members
and their families



Happy Holidays