

THE RAIL BOARD

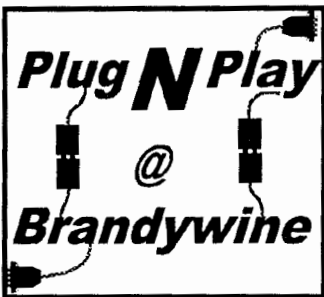


December 1997

VOLUME VI NUMBER 12

So...Who Won This Time? The Plug N Play Convention Report by Brian Brendel

It's getting pretty easy to write these after-convention pieces...all that I have to do is change the names of who won in which category! The West Chester convention was attended by over twenty of our members and, once again, we needed a bathtub gondola to carry home all the prizes and goodies that we picked up.



Gil Brauch took second place in Favorite Module for his *DD&D Mining* and *Loop Mountain* modules. Chester Freedenthal placed third in this category as well with *Peaceful Valley*. Dave Freshwater won the Favorite Train category with his populated **Pennsy** passenger train (see article on page 2). Gil also took second in this category with his **VRE** train. Fred Obermeyer won third place in the Favorite Engine category with his High Hood **NS Diesel**. Congratulations to all! Quite an impressive showing!

The convention had the usual mix of serious fun and silly antics. Bill Baldwin's wonderful hospitality room provided the serious fun — and a bunch of us goofy **NVNTRAKers** trying to run a 243 car (16 engine) train late one night (see story below), the silly antics. I'm almost afraid to go to the next convention...

Running Long Trains or Godzilla's Revenge By Dave Freshwater

So, what do you do on your last night at a train convention? Run trains, of course. But, for the Army of Northern Virginia (aka **NVNTRAK**), **Plug and Play** provided the opportunity to answer the musical question: How long a train can we run?

While the **NTRAK** record was safe from the moment we dreamed up the idea, we did get 16 engines and 249 cars around the **Red Line Route** (10 feet at a time) and learned a few lessons for the next time. And, you know that there will be a next time!!

A "fortress **NTRAK**" layout is probably the best for an attempt at a long train record. Any curves are trouble spots. Multiple loop layouts using the junction modules tend only to provide food for Godzilla. It does look really neat when 30-50 cars all derail and topple to the inside, though!

We did use mostly the same brand and model of engines, **Kato Dash 9s**, until we ran out. We learned that engines need to be in comparably sized groups. We had the sixteen engines divided into head end power and 4 sets of helpers, with varying numbers of engines in each set.

In setting up the helper sets, there should be enough cars between sets so that there is only one helper set in a block at a time. We didn't blow any fuses, but the helper engineers had some fun moments when more than one set of engines was in the same block. Each engineer really needed a helper (fireman) to have the next **Aristo** set up and ready as the helpers crossed a block boundary. And, as we all know, something *always* happens as you cross a block boundary. Finally, engineers should probably concentrate on keeping the slack pushed in on the dozen or so cars in front of their helper set. When engineers tried to react to what was happening elsewhere in the train, multiple problems started to occur.

All the cars that are going to be part of an attempt need to be weighted about the same. Light cars derail first. At least one car truly got squeezed off the rails, lifted

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The View from Manassas Junction by Brian Brendel, President

...Holiday Party time is train time!

As we come down from our two-month model railroading "high", in which we appeared in something like a hundred shows, I can think of nothing better than a party to cushion our landing.

Um...before you guys start screaming "TOGA! TOGA!" a' la *Animal House*, I'm referring to the Club Holiday Party at my house on December 13. This gathering is designed so that you can begin your "busy party schedule" here at 1 PM, and then continue on to other parties afterwards — unless you're all partied out, or *trained* out, whichever applies.

You are welcome to get some running time on the **West Virginia Central**, which resides in my basement. Foreign motive power is always welcome, so bring a train if you'd like to run one. And another thing you won't want to forget is a wrapped gift in the \$5 to \$10 range for the gift exchange. White elephants are certainly allowed! We'll explain the rules when you get here.

On a personal note, I'd like to thank everybody who has helped with our grueling schedule this fall. I had to make a couple of last minute cancellations

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Lighted Pennsylvania Passenger Train

by Dave Freshwater

[Editor's Note: Dave Freshwater's passenger consist won first place in the Favorite Train contest at Plug N Play. This story is about what he did to create this outstanding set of varnish. Congratulations Fresh!!]

During the *RunniN' TrainS '96* convention, I purchased a full 10 car set of **Kato** passenger cars for my favorite railroad. After finding out how well the cars ran, I began to do things to improve them beyond their stock appearance. The end result was a first place award at *Plug N Play* in the popular vote contest. Here are some of the things that I did, and things I learned, so that you can consider working up a contest entry at next year's conventions.

About the time that I bought the cars, **American Limited** came out with their operating diaphragms. I picked up sets of these, along with **Kato's** light kits for the cars, a few months (and shows) later. The light kits are easy to install. The diaphragms are not difficult either, as long as you don't try to do it the night before a public show! You will likely have some diaphragms come off the cars. The instructions say to use CA (super glue) to attach the diaphragm to the car. This holds until you put too much side to side or up and down movement on the diaphragm. CA doesn't hold well in these situations, which you will often encounter storing or rereiling the cars. The good news is that they glue back on rather easily. Just be careful when handling the cars.

I quickly discovered that the diaphragms required me to convert the stock **Kato** couplers to **MicroTrains**. The diaphragms add some extra space between the cars. I determined that an *MT 1129* (medium) coupler on one end and an *MT 1130* (long) coupler on the other provide enough room for the diaphragms and allow the cars to couple. I tried using some **Unimates**, but even the long size did not seem to provide enough clearance. I thought about just converting over to complete **MicroTrains** trucks, but they don't work for lighted cars.

I next went to work on the interiors of the cars. This involved a bit of research. I am a member of the **PRR Technical and Historical Society**. Their quarterly magazine had a diagram for interior paint colors, fabrics, etc. The **Society** had also published a book with pictures and diagrams for passenger car painting. The *PRR Color Guides* and photos I took up at Altoona rounded out my sources. I had to mix my own colors, trying to match those in the photos or just described on the diagrams. There are some variations in my cars, both because the schemes changed over time and because usage and fading will result in difference between cars that came out of the assembly line or paint shop at same time.

With the interiors completed, I really needed some passengers to provide revenue on the passenger runs. You can quickly go broke buying up pre-painted figures, especially trying to populate a whole train. Before I spent too much, I found a set of 120 seated figures that were unpainted for at least half of the price for 60 pre-painted figures. I completed painting the figures in a couple of nights with *Geezer Goggles* on my head and a football game on the TV in the background. (You never miss any really big plays because the crowd noise tells you something neat happened, and then they show the instant replay.) I had to prune some legs or feet to fit the figures into the seats in the cars. But, you see a fairly full train looking in the windows now.

In painting both the interiors and the figures, I used water based paints. Clean up is simple, and I don't have the thinner smell. The colors that you can buy at the train shop can be rather limited. My wife had some paints she picked up for use in her projects. Most were *Folk Art Acrylic Color* by **Plaid**. I only used them with brushes, but I liked the results. They worked on the plastics and were compatible with the **Polly S** paints I used. I even think that I custom mixed a few shades using both brands. You can buy the *Folk Art* paints at **MJ Design** or at **Pearl**, among others.

The last step was decaling the cars and doing some light weathering. **MicroScale** makes decal sets for most every road. I went back to my sources to try and come up with the numbers or car names that appeared on similar equipment. You'll probably begin to feel naked without the *Geezer Goggles*. If you take your time, you can even put together a number out of individual digits. You may

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R A I L R O A D E V E N T S T I M E T A B L E

Dec 6-7	Fairfax Station Annual Christmas Train Show - Fairfax Station, Fairfax Station, VA. Sat 10 am - 5 pm, Sun 12-4 pm. Caboose Layout only. Setup Foreman, Matt Schaefer.	Jan 18	NVNTRAK Annual Meeting - Prince of Peace Lutheran Church, 8304 Old Keene Mill Road, Springfield, VA. 12:30-6pm. Clampdown: 1:30 pm.
Dec 13	NVNTRAK Annual Holiday Party - Brian Brendel's West Virginia Central RR, Manassas, VA. 1-9 pm. Chowdown: All afternoon and evening. RSVP to Brian Brendel (703) 257-0493 by December 10.	Jan 24-25	Greenberg Great Train and Toy Show - Prince Georges' Equestrian Center, Upper Marlboro, MD. Setup: Fri 12-6 pm, Sat 8-11 am. Clampdown: Sat 10 am. Setup Foreman: TBD.
Jan 3-4	Greenberg Great Train and Toy Show - Capital Expo Center, Chantilly, VA. Setup: Fri 12-6 pm, Sat 8-11 am. Clampdown: Sat 10 am. Setup Foreman: John Drye.	Feb 1	Monthly Backshop Session - Prince of Peace Lutheran Church, 8304 Old Keene Mill Road, Springfield, VA. 12:30-6pm. Clampdown: 1:30 pm.
		Feb 15	Monthly Setup - Fairfax Station, Fairfax Station, VA. 12-6 pm. Clampdown: 1 pm.

**Annual Membership Meeting in January
(A Call for Nominations)**
by NVNTRAK BOD

The Annual NVNTRAK Membership Meeting is scheduled for the third Sunday in January at Prince of Peace Lutheran Church, 8404 Old Keene Mill Road, Springfield, VA. This is our only regularly scheduled membership meeting and is important for a number of reasons this year. This article serves as first notice of the meeting. The official meeting notice and agenda will be published in the January issue of *The Call Board*.

The principal reason for the annual meeting is to elect members of the Board of Directors. The seven members of the board serve two-year terms, subject to term limits of two consecutive terms, or a total of four consecutive years. Elections of the members are staggered, with four members being elected in odd numbered years and the remaining three being elected in even numbered years. For 1998, the three members who's board terms are expiring are John Drye, Chester Freedenthal, and Fred Obermeyer. All three have served only one term and, thus, are eligible for re-election. All three have agreed to run for re-election. That fact notwithstanding, any member who wishes to be nominated or wants to nominate another member is encouraged to do so by calling Brian Brendel. Nominees must agree in advance to have their names submitted for election.

This year's Annual Membership Meeting has a second, equally important purpose. We have grown by over 300 percent since our incorporation and the formal adoption of our By Laws. Although most of the By Laws are still applicable, there are a few minor revisions that should be made to take into account our current circumstances. In addition, the Board of Directors is pursuing a course to gain non-profit status for the club. There are a few changes that need to be made to the By Laws to take into account this change in status also. A copy of the current draft revisions to the By Laws has been included in this newsletter for all regular members. If any further changes are recommended by the Board of Directors, they will be furnished in the January issue of *The Call Board*.

As usual, any subject can be brought up by any member of the club during this meeting. Persons having significant issues to present that may require preparation of materials such as handouts are encouraged to contact the President, Brian Brendel before December 20th so that the item can be placed on the agenda before it is published in *The Call Board*.

Oh by the way, there **WILL** be a module setup in conjunction with the Annual Membership Meeting. So, bring a module, bring a train, and join us for the Main Event.

Don't forget — you must have paid your 1998 dues in order to vote at the meeting.

WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

Northern Virginia NTRAK extends a hearty welcome to **David Faber** and **Charlie Young**, our newest members, who joined during the past month. Welcome to the club. We look forward to getting to know both of you better in the coming months.

**THE SUPERINTENDENT'S
CABIN CAR**

by John Drye, Superintendent

Well, that was quite a month. The Army of Northern Virginia marched all over the east coast. Good thing we have a dozen trailers. Seems like we hauled them from the halls of **Fairfax Station** to the Shores of Delaware.

Highlights of our fall marathon included a 249-car train which lurched it's way around the *Plug-N-Play Red Line Route* (in violation of rule 27.1), prize-winning setups in Chantilly and Upper Marlboro (which increased the club's treasury), a club-record number of penalty minutes at the U.M. hockey rink, our long-standing setup at the **Rockville Lion's Club** setup, and our first club *Triple Play*.



We even found time to experiment with DCC, thanks to the loan of a **Digitrax Chief** from Dave Davies. We used DCC at our backshop session and on the Yellow Line one day of the Upper Marlboro Show. If interest continues, we will probably try DCC at some 1998 setups. I'd appreciate suggestions or comments. It's important to note that **NVNTRAK** is not likely to become all-DCC anytime soon (if ever). As DCC grows, and with the emphasis on DCC projected for this summer's convention circuit, we'll try to stay in touch with the industry and with members interests.

The **Fairfax Station Caboose Layout** continues to make progress. For a public preview, come to the station's **Christmas Show** on the 6th and 7th. Matt has promised heat in the caboose, and a place to run some trains (a **Southern Crescent** would look nice).

Right after the holidays, we'll be back at Chantilly for the **Greenberg Show**. We have a big space this time, so we expect a lot of room for folks to run any new presents Santa might bring. We have requested the *Penthouse* for the second **Greenberg Show** at Upper Marlboro in late January (the carpeted upstairs room with a view overlooking the whole floor area).

For those who might be running out of steam after our fall marathon, the holidays, and a busy January, there is light at the end of the tunnel (or at least an alternative to non-stop shows). After January, we will have the time to rest up and even work on old or new modules before we get busy again in late spring.

Planning continues for this spring's Club Excursion to Lancaster, PA: home of the

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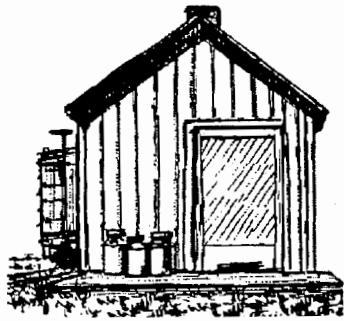


THE HOSTLER'S SHACK



by Matt Schaefer

FAIRFAX TRAIN SHOW — I plan to set up the 3'x8' layout in the caboose at 9 AM (ugh) Saturday, Dec 6 for the train show. The show opens to the public 10 AM to 5PM Saturday and noon to 4 PM Sunday. Remember the caboose is ours and there is room for club posters, decorations, clinics, cooking clinics, call out pizza, catered banquets or anything the club wants to use the space for. Hang up the club banners and let the fun begin in our 1st class accommodations with 3 large caboose chairs and the upstairs lounge kinda like a 747. The grosser scales will be in the station. Signs will be out on Route 123 for several weeks advertising the show — and we can start on our



second hundred members. The caboose layout was test run Nov 16 at **Fairfax Station** and the 2 main lines ran 80' passenger cars reliably for hours. We had 15 young visitors log in Sunday the 16th and, if we would have had Aristos hooked up, we could have broken in some new engineers. We had 8 to 10 members drop by, so had plenty of help. I get varying comments on the 3.5% grades which are the same as Cajon and Raton for all the **ATSF** fanatics. One **Mike** will pull up to 15

cars on the grades, no problem. The war took its toll on the **Orange and Alexandria RR** and this is definitely not for 6 axle engines.

PLUG N PLAY — We heard many who visited from the **MER** convention say the **NTRAK** show was more exciting. That makes sense because we had a room crawling with trains, operators, relatives, spectators and dealers all around the layout ... almost heaven! I believe the layout is definitely the vehicle to bring people together and *pNp* demonstrated that you can have just as much fun with 30 or 60 modules as you can with 300. It doesn't matter if the show is in the garage, basement or out-house. Friends came together from GA, CN, NY, LI, PA, VA, WA and all over. The *pNp* committee put on a first class show. Thanks again to the **DARN** club.

JUNCTIONS - At *pNp*, **Craig McCulloch** from the **M.O.B. NTRAK** club said Toronto has built and enjoys the use of two 3'x5' junctions. The Yellow is a true wye, so the junction cannot be used as corners like ours. They also plan

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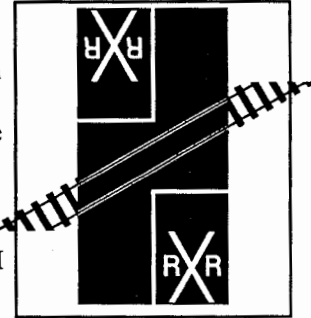
NOTICE

If you are an **NVNTRAK** member, 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 Call Board*, 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.

The Other Side of the Tracks

by Chester Freedenthal, Secretary

This is a month **NTRAKers** dream of and only a club like ours can handle — a set-up on every weekend including one-third of the layout at **NTRAK East**, 3 shows on one day of one of the weekends, and the chance to find out just how understanding your significant other really is about your hobby. While I only was able to play at one of them (**NTRAK**



East), what a time I had! Non-stop running of trains on two days for almost 8 hours. The *Chunnel* performed flawlessly on the Yellow Line as it zoomed past long mixed freights, intermodals, passengers on the **Red Line Route** and slowed down every now and then to let folks see 3 or 4 trains at once at one of the junctions. The convention was great (those **DARN** guys did good) as were the Happy Hours in the *Bill Baldwin Suite*. We even took home several awards for trains and modules.

Except for a few violations of Operating Rule 717, everyone will agree it was a great convention. I even got the opportunity to run the new **LifeLike SW9/SW1200** on *Peaceful Valley*. **Keith Lyons** from *N-Scale Magazine* had one that they were using for pictures, so he brought it around for everyone to see. What a beauty! Incredible detail and it runs beautifully. I barely got the throttle off of zero as it pulled five cars around my small loop (with less than perfect track work!). These engines will be hot!

Speaking of hot... Two Eskimos sitting in a kayak were chilly, but when they lit a fire in the craft it sank — proving once and for all that you can't have your kayak and heat it, too....

Next month we have a special show at **Fairfax Station** with the "public" debut of *Matt's Caboose Layout*, and of course our Holiday party (where I understand special food will be served, reminding me of an old story)...

This guy goes into a restaurant for a Christmas breakfast while in his home town for the holidays. After looking over the menu he says, "I'll just have the eggs benedict." His order comes a while later and it's served on a big, shiny hubcap. He asks the waiter, "What's with the hubcap?" The waiter sings, "There's no plate like chrome for the hollandaise!"

And don't forget the January Membership Meeting and election.

Thanks to All My Friends

by Gene Aldridge

I want to thank all my Northern Virginia NTRAK friends who helped me get around during the 1997 N Scale East Plug N Play convention. I really do appreciate the assistance in getting up and down the stairs to the layout room. Also, thanks to all of you for letting my Holmes Run passenger train travel for such a long time on the Yellow Line. I really enjoyed watching it successfully compete with all those dirty old freight trains.

Thanks again for all the help in making the convention an enjoyable experience.



Superintendent's Cabin Car

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Strasburg RR, The RR Museum of Pennsylvania, the Caboose (Cabin Car, actually) Motel and several railfanning hotspots. Stay tuned, suggestions are welcome.

DECEMBER EVENTS

FAIRFAX STATION ANNUAL CHRISTMAS TRAIN SHOW — Dec 6-7, Fairfax Station, Fairfax Station, VA. Saturday 10 AM-5 PM, Sunday 12-4 PM. Clampdown: 1 PM. Caboose Layout. Setup Foreman: Matt Schaefer.

NVNTRAK ANNUAL HOLIDAY PARTY- Dec 13, West Virginia Central RR (aka the Brendel residence), Manassas, VA. 1 PM-9 PM . Please RSVP to Brian Brendel.

JANUARY EVENTS

GREENBERG GREAT TRAIN & TOY SHOW — Jan 3-4, Capitol Expo Center, Chantilly. Setup Fri 12-6 PM and Sat 8-11 AM. Show hours: Sat 11AM-5PM, Sun 11AM-4PM. Setup Foreman: John Drye.

ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING — Jan 18, Prince of Peace Lutheran Church, 8403 Old Keene Mill Road, Springfield, VA. 12:30-6 PM.

Clampdown: 1:30 PM. Setup Foreman: John Drye.

GREENBERG GREAT TRAIN & TOY SHOW — Jan 24-25, Prince Georges Equestrian Center, Upper Marlboro, MD. Setup Fri 12-6 PM and Sat 8-11 AM. Show hours: Sat 11AM-5PM, Sun 11AM-4PM. Setup Foreman TBD.

FEBRUARY EVENTS

BACKSHOP SESSION — Feb 1, Prince of Peace Lutheran Church, Springfield, VA. 12:30-6 PM. Clampdown: 1:30 PM.

MONTHLY SETUP — Feb 15, Fairfax Station, Fairfax Station, VA 12-6 PM. Clampdown 1 PM.

TINY TIDBITS

If you were a participant (or even just a "listener") in the N Scale listserver on the Internet, you will want to know that it has resumed operations after a short "down time" for restructuring. Even if you were a previous subscriber, you must re-subscribe to participate. Just send an EMail message to: "Majordomo@lists.Stanford.EDU" with the line "subscribe n-scale" as the body of the message. For more information, visit the N-Scale List WWW Site at: "<http://www-leland.stanford.edu/~wbarr.Trains/Nscale/index.html>".



Rumor has it that the LifeLike SW9/1200s are the victims of the UP Borg Machine. Someone started the tale that the switchers were in a container on a ship awaiting a berth in the LA harbor. The reason there was no berth for unloading is that the container terminal was overloaded. The terminal was overloaded because UP had to send so much motive power to Texas to unsnarl the nasty yard tangle that UP managers made of the former SP yards. So much for promises of a smooth merger.....



NS and CSX are reportedly concerned about the impact that the UP mess in Texas will have on their split-up of Conrail. Seems that the Surface Transportation Board has renewed interest in how the two plan to keep service from eroding after the split takes place. Some shippers are apparently worried, too. Stay tuned. Film at 11!!!



The View from Manassas Junction

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due to personal emergencies, and you guys came through like champs, of course. (...Um...let's just say that being a daddy is sometimes REALLY fun...and you can sign Jake's cast at the party.)

Please RSVP to (703) 257-0493 and leave a message by December 10. If you DON'T RSVP-- Colleen won't be happy....especially since last year we had 12 RSVP's, and SIXTY of you showed up!

SEE YOU THERE!



Lighted PRR Passenger Train....

(Continued from page 2)

not want to try weathering with an air brush if you haven't used one before.

I did make my train stand out a little more by placing flex track on a board, ballasting the track, and doing some ground cover. The real reason I installed the track was I wanted to be able to light up the cars. I took an old power pack along to complete the display.

There are a few mistakes in what I did (going too fast) and the "rivet counters" will find a few other things that are not prototypical. I'll likely go back and try to improve on these things at some point. But, I was, and still am, happy with the result. After some arm twisting by a few other club members, I entered the contest and discovered a lot of other people liked the train too.

There are a number of categories in these contests at each convention; you don't have to do a full train. Individual cars, engines, and structures all have categories. If you have been lettering or weathering a car or even kitbashing a structure to match a specific picture, you probably have a contest entry already. I've already got a project in mind for next year. Get yours ready and maybe we will sweep the awards.



Easy Research

by Mark Franke

As a neophyte to model railroading with a very small RR library, I was looking for a way to get prototype info without spending a fortune. I began looking through **Granddad's Hobby Shop** library but found this to be very inefficient from a time standpoint. While surfing the Web, I discovered the **NMRA** had a library. Even better, I discovered they had a full time staff that was eager to do research.

All I had to do was give them a topic (i.e., **East Broad Top**) and they did the work (AKA computer search). Ten days later I received an 8 page list of everything published on the **EBT** for the past 50 years. The best news was that each listing had the name/year/page numbers of publication and broke down what each article contained; plans, photos, layout plan or construction article, etc. The search covers at least 75 different railroad or model RR periodicals for many decades. Wow! What a gold mine of info!

The **NMRA** library turnaround time is 7-10 days. I suggest that your searches be somewhat limited in topic to be effective (i.e., don't ask for everything written on the **PRR**). Once you have your search list, you can order copies for 25¢ page as an **NMRA** member or 50¢ page for a non-member. For small quantities like mine there was no charge.

Now I have no clue as to what the **NMRA** vs **NTRAK** controversies have been in the past. With member service like this, I don't care what they were, the \$30 per year membership fee is a bargain. Everything I obtained was done with 2 short phone calls and magic plastic (Visa/MC). If you have any questions email me at mfmnd@erols.com.

Nn3 News — About a year ago several, N Scale List members started an informal discussion on Nn3. That has evolved into an Nn3 web site and an Nn3 discussion group which can be reached at: <http://www.urbaneagle.com/slim/slim2nn3home.html>.



ITEMS FOR SALE

Gene Aldridge has a number of "Car Case" N Scale storage boxes, made by A & A Industries, for sale at \$8.00 per box. Contact him directly if interested.



The Hostler's Shack



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to build junctions using our track plan. **Valley NTRAK** also liked the **Red Line Route** operation and John Plant's boys asked for our junction plans. North Raleigh-Durham, Kansas City and Orlando are building junctions too.

ORLANDO '98 EAST — Save \$40. Registration is \$50 before Dec 31. Also be in the first 200 room reservations and get a \$30 hotel rebate. What a great idea and it does not cost anything to get a reservation. Just call 1-800-2110. **Orlando N-TRAK** is building junctions. The Red Line will be DCC and Zana Ireland from **Digitrax** reported at *p/Np* that radio control will be an available DCC option by March 1, 1998.

WINDOWS 98 — This a reminder we are again entering the window between Dec and early May when the trees and leaves are cleared away for railfans. During the summer the New River gorge, Horseshoe Curve and most of the east is mainly obscured by foliage for nit pickin' sightseers.

GORRILA ALERT — Did everyone hear Rick Spano's gorilla bit a visitor and escaped? John Plant thinks he is heading south, (or west)? Normally I wouldn't worry but now that he has the taste of blood the situation is getting serious!.....



Triple Play Weekend — Gaithersburg

by Dave Freshwater

Since we do this show twice a year, we don't have a lot of guess-work about how to design the layout, how much space we get, or where the layout goes. But, we always have a few new things, or old friends, appear. And, we get to watch trains go by on the **CSX** main.

In the old friend category, Brian Brendel's *Shenandoah Junction* left the friendly confines of the **West Virginia Central** and was included in a layout. This was the first appearance of *Shenandoah* in close to 2 years. As a result, we all had to learn how to fish engines and cars out of the tunnels, when a newly installed, but unchecked **MicroTrains** trip pin would hang up on a switch or rerailer. In the new things category, Greg Nagy made the trip down from Hagerstown with his new module. It was also in the show at the Fairgrounds back in August. If you have missed those shows, you probably still have not seen this excellent piece of work.

We also did an uncontrolled experiment on the newly improved **Intermountain** couplers, which are included on the new **deluxe Innovations** 1944 AAR box cars. A pair of cars was part of a short consist behind a new engine being broken in on the Blue Line. When the engineer exceeded the track speed limit, they plunged off the bridge on *Foggy Bottom*. The cars not only stayed coupled down into the river; they remained coupled as I lifted them out.

And then there was the train watching. One **CSX** freight headed towards D.C. actually had mid-train helpers — an extremely rare occurrence these days. At least one freight headed towards Hagerstown had an **EMD** demonstrator unit with a wine and gray paint scheme included among the engines. (I saw a freight Monday in D.C. with 2 **SD70M EMD** demonstrators, with very little gray in the paint scheme.)

With three events to choose from on Sunday, we all got to run trains for as long as we wanted. We talked to lots of people visiting the show and may have recruited a few members.

NMRA-NTRAK RELATIONS

by Matt Schaefer

Up front, I want to say that the views in this article are mine and do not reflect in any way NVNTRAK as an organization. I appreciate NVNTRAK for allowing me to express my views on relationships between NTRAK and the NMRA.

Over the years there have been misunderstandings between the NMRA and NTRAK to the extent that some NTRAK clubs will not participate in NMRA events. Information on NMRA tours was late getting to *Plug and Play (pNp)* and some other things were not as everybody would like and there were hard feelings on the NTRAK side. This article is offered to give some insight into what is happening "behind the scenes" for those who may be interested in the politics of model railroading. I may bring up some old problems herein but the purpose is so new members know about the problems we are vaguely talking about.

There are basic differences in approach to the hobby by the two organizations. NTRAK gatherings are geared toward giving train shows, running trains and increasing the public's interest in model railroading NVNTRAK has been very successful at increasing NTRAK membership from 5 to 95 in 6 years with shows for malls, museums, and benefit shows for other non-profit organizations.

On the other hand, NMRA regional conventions concentrate more on modeling tours and contests. These contests are considered more difficult for the smaller scales, HO tougher than O, with N perceived as being at the bottom of the heap. Some claim the judges are more familiar with the HO modeling details and have a mindset attuned to HO. Also, lots of paperwork is required. The average N Scaler can be set up for disappointments by entering judged contests.

A HUMBLE PROPOSAL — In spite of who did what to whom in the past, I thought this was a good time and sent Bob Charles, President of the NMRA, a proposal where NTRAK layouts could be standard attractions at all, ALL, NMRA regional conventions to smooth the relations and increase the NMRA membership in several ways:

1) There are NTRAK members that want to get more into NMRA activities and maybe join the NMRA. Working and running trains together bonds groups together. The potential of this and NTRAK should not be underestimated.

2) If NTRAK layouts were a standard at regional conventions this would be an attraction that the public could come to expect and hopefully would return over and over.

3) It would draw N Scalers to run or test their own trains.

4) Remote control and high tech NTRAK could be used to interest new and young modelers in railroads.

5) Additional N Scalers and attendees would increase hotel room nights and benefit the convention financially.

TOUR WITH BOB CHARLES — At *pNp* I happened to be on a MER, Mid Eastern Region NMRA, tour with Bob and we went over my proposal. Bob showed little or no interest. To kick start the program I even proposed the regions give a registration rebate and I mentioned the committees and NTRAK was given rebates at both the Hagerstown and Hunt Valley convention where NTRAK was considered as part of the host committee. Space was discussed as a problem but NTRAK can have a point-to-point layout in a 3'x16' or less, and can get more into a smaller space than the larger scales. Bob surprised me saying he has very little influence over what regions do.

MEETING AT pNp — A meeting with Bob was held and it was agreed the strain in relations in October was due to routine lack of coordination between the two busy committees. Again, Bob was not interested in NTRAK layouts and had his own plans. One was to

"lower expectations" of what one would get from belonging to the NMRA and another was to "change perceptions" within N Scale that N Scale was considered inferior to the larger scales. Just join and ask what you can do for the NMRA [except don't offer layouts to help the NMRA raise membership]. Bob said the board was now "overloaded with N Scalers and N Scale is not lacking in representation".

BULLETIN PICTURES — Our delegation to Madison was disappointed that the Best of Show display, Bernie's steel mill, was not given a picture in the *NMRA Bulletin*. Bob said this was not the NMRA's job to take pictures of the winners. This did not explain how Best of Show was left out. I was official photographer for the MER for years and I did not just take pictures of certain scales but of the winners regardless of scale. But I didn't even want to explore this situation further. N Scalers can submit their own photography in the future.

STANDARDS — Bob pointed out one reason for joining the NMRA was they maintained all the standards. I mentioned the **Rapido** coupler, the **MicroTrains** coupler, nine mm track and the NTRAK standards were not generated by the NMRA. Terry pointed out the questionable low profile wheels were also generated by the NMRA. Standards to obsolete all NTRAK modules were also generated by the NMRA in the late 1980's. I regarded that as an NMRA offer to choose between the NMRA and NTRAK standards and I dropped my NMRA membership. [After two years the NMRA reversed their decision and adopted the NTRAK standards outright.] Now the upcoming technology is radio control. I have heard nothing about that being standardized. Transmitters and receivers from different manufacturers may not be interchangeable, even if DCC compatible.

CONCLUSIONS — Two weeks after the meeting I called Bill Gruber, the president of the MER and he had NOT heard about the meeting regarding his, HIS, MER convention. Also he had not been furnished a copy of my proposal about increasing membership in all NMRA regions. I consider this another case where NTRAK was rejected outright, the excuses made no sense and the NMRA apparently needs members and help. NTRAK is capable of exciting conventions on it's own like *pNp* that are focused on the interests of NTRAKers. NTRAK can look forward to *Orlando '98* and *Edison 2000* coming up with junctions, R/C and all sorts of treats. That being said I initiated coordination with the MER.

MER PLANS — I called the president of the MER, Bill Gruber and went over my proposal. Bill mentioned the MER was having trouble getting local clubs to sponsor MER conventions and welcomed help and attractions outright. The situation seemed serious and Bill asked for contact points for local NTRAK clubs so that the MER could coordinate with local NTRAK clubs as to interest and layout space needed. This is a win, win situation for the NMRA. MER conventions are planned for Charlotte in the spring and Allentown in the fall. It is a shame Bob will not even advise other regions of the potentials offered by NTRAK for increasing memberships.

ACTIONS:

1) I will send Bill Gruber NTRAK club contact points for upcoming MER conventions. Nothing ventured, nothing gained. No guarantees.

2) NVNTRAK could develop a core group that can help coordinate with the NMRA and with MER conventions. Have trains, will travel! These can be NMRA members or any others interested in the NMRA convention.

3) NTRAK needs to insure pictures of NTRAK winners are sent and accepted by the *NMRA Bulletin* editor.

Terry suggested that NTRAK have a handout for the new members listing all the NMRA activities and special interest groups (SIGS) available.



Atlas: N Scale Switch Tower available in December.

ConCor: Now available - in stock —
SW-1200 3rd release now in stock for WC, GN,
and Amtrak, CB&Q, Southern, SP.

N&W and EL Mallets and UP Big Boys

Coming in December — LV Black Diamond Set, D&H PA-1
passenger engines with cars to follow, NYC and UP passenger car
sets

MicroTrains:

49230	40' Dbl Sheathed Boxcar - Crazy Crystal	\$14.70
58072	40' Reefers - Meat Packers (3 pak)	\$56.85
27250	50' Ribbed Boxcar - ATSF	\$15.25
22090	40' Standard Boxcar - NP	\$13.00
23140	40' Standard Boxcar - CP	\$11.35
55130	33' Twin Bay Hopper - DL&W	\$12.10
102030	60' Hi-cube Boxcar - MTL 50th Anniv.	\$14.50

LifeLike: SW9/1200 IN STOCK SOON List: \$65.00

These are really nice jewels... Get one and wear it out at an
NTRAK meet. Two numbers each roadname: ACL, ATSF, BN
CNW, Chessie, Conrail, Milwaukee, MP, PRR, and undec.

Kato: NS, BNSF, Santa Fe C44-9 second run. All will have two
road numbers and one unnumbered. Due to shorted supplies these

OBIE'S CORNER

will be almost impossible to find, I will have some but
not many ... Boo Kato! For more answers write Kato and
complain so they will produce more next time.

Glad to have had all of you around all year and it is nice
to go to some other convention for a change. Well, tons of stuff like
Wookland Scenics new styrofoam display rack with all kinds of
goodies for modeling your track and scenery is coming in Jan '98.
Hundreds of new products from Walthers will arrive soon after
springtime. Plastruct is sending out new display racks with its new
products with white styrene in them and new sizes of products.
LifeLike will do another run of the SW9/1200.... The list will go on.

Oh, I talked to Key Imports and only 250 Cab Forwards were
produced and only 200 20th Centruy Limited steam engines. And, of
course, they asked me when we were doing another convention. I
said: "Down the road somewhere." They asked me to make sure they
are the first to have a booth at the convention.... Ha! Ha!

Overland will be shipping the Genesis engine and passenger car
combo set in January '98. I hope all of you have a nice holiday
season and keep building corners and 4' modules.

Your Best Friend with trains.

Obie

Long Trains

(Continued from page 1)

straight up, by the force from the helper set behind it. A couple of heavier cars had the
king pins and trucks pull right out (the model equivalent of breaking the coupler
knuckle?). Obviously, you don't use your scratchbuilt contest entries for something like
this.

We probably should have set up a number of 70-car trains, with the same number of
engines, and run them around the layout. After we found out the problems, we could
have closed the intervals between trains and created one long one. The technique of
building the train by adding cars as we passed *Red Line Route* sidings tended to cause
problems. If you are going to participate in this madness, you should have your cars
inconspicuously marked so you can get them back at the end. Surprisingly, everyone got
all their cars back without any big problems. (Did someone finally claim that "extra"
box car?) We were cleaned up and put away within a half hour.

Last, watch out for Godzilla! He was last seen in the *Obiechobee Swamp*, munching
on a *Dash 9* and carrying a couple of 50 foot box cars for dessert. Having gotten a taste
of that high quality injection molding, I'm sure he will be back, looking for seconds.

FOR SALE

The "Masonic Temple" module — Call Chester Freedenthal

This module was one of the first to be constructed for the club. It was
in a few shows in 1992 and then put into retirement by its original owner,
Bob Spitzer. I bought it from Bob earlier this year, spruced it up and
checked the electronics. It appeared in a show at Chantilly. It is a 2'x4'
with a six inch removable extension in back. Well constructed with
contours and detailed accurate scenery. It is a prototype of the Masonic
Temple in Alexandria. Includes, module, skyboard, legs, power pack
shelf. Has buildings, Masonic Temple (one cardboard, one half
completed balsa foam) and more. Just too much for me to handle. Sell for
\$70.00. Great module for one of the new members.

The *Call Board* is produced by and for the
membership of NVNTRAK and selected subscribers.

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Dec '97

MAY THE PEACE AND JOY OF
THIS HOLIDAY SEASON GIVE
YOU REST FROM YOUR
LABORS AND REFRESH YOU
FOR THE NEW YEAR.

Happy Holidays to all from Northern Virginia NTRAK