

THE CALL BOARD



A 100% **NTRAK** CLUB

Celebrating Our 11th Year!

October 2002

VOLUME XI NUMBER 10

MIDI-Convention

John Drye and Clint Hyde

This October, the Potomac Division and NVNT continue the series of jointly hosted events with the first “Midi-Convention”. Smaller than a full-fledged convention, but larger than past one-day events, it will provide another opportunity to share mode railroading activities with our friends from the Potomac division. Cheaper than a full-fledged convention too, only \$15 (for all attendees: this just covers the cost of renting the space from the church).

What will it be like? Well, it will be longer than the one-day mini-convention: two and a half days. It will be held at a larger location (St. Matthew’s Church in Annandale, just inside the beltway on Little River Turnpike—same location as the mini-con last year). It will have two good-sized modular layouts, one each from NVNT and the PD Modular bunch.

It will have some serious hands-on clinics (new, different, and substantially expanded over the mini-convention), a chunk of home layout tours, a bunch of suggested railfan sites along with maps, and a special item that will be a secret until the show starts (instead of coffee mugs or hats or convention cars).

We’ll have some serious fun at the modular layouts: plan on bringing a loco or sign up for an hour or two of real operations. The NTRAK layout will focus on operations-oriented modules, both off the blue line as well as oNe TRAK modules.

There will be a white elephant table, model judging, a non-banquet “catered” meal (featuring party subs and pizza, most likely). Outside activities will mostly be self-paced. We won’t provide tour-guides, just maps and pictures.

The goals: have fun, run trains, get your hands dirty making something, yak with your pals, go see a home layout or two, do a bit of railfanning and shoot some photos...



The View Atop Trestle 19

Noll Horan, President

For those of us who ventured to Richmond, I think all will agree the uNconventioN - **Part Deux** was a huge success. Tony and all the **RaNtrak** folks put on quite a show. It is always nice to see friends from the various other clubs from around the country joining together to come up with a large layout.(And as always, it is a pleasure to see our now North Carolina representative, Mr. Gil Brauch.) This time around, two large layouts. With the two layouts, I trust everyone was able to get their fill of running trains, be it DC or DCC.

My thanks to Cotton for coordinating **Part Deux**. I know Tony appreciated it. From conversations overheard, seems some lessons were learned for our 2004 extravaganza coming up. Just remember to take notes so we won't forget those obstacles to overcome. One obstacle I did notice was trackwork. I saw some really shabby trackwork as I walked around the

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HOST CLUB OF THE 2004 NTRAK EAST CONVENTION



MODULE OF THE MONTH



Neil's Creek, New York

Cotton Bowen

My latest rendition of what is becoming the Cohocton Valley Division of NVNTRAK made its debut at the Culpeper Train Days on 14 September. I designed this module to be a prototypical-adjointing module south of Wallace, NY (1936). In contrast to Wallace I did not make Neil's Creek time specific; rather I made it to portray a number of different eras all at once. Not to be confused with the Cohocton River, Neil's creek is the small creek flowing from the hills through a narrow valley west of Wallace. The creek and

the cliff on the side of the valley come from the same geographic formation. The creek joins the Cohocton River just south of Wallace.

Although the Lackawanna Railroad line, which runs just outside Wallace and is now the Bath and Hammondsport Railroad (still active), does not really join the Erie Railroad's right of way (which is now ripped out). For the sake of future operations I had the line rejoin the Blue Line just outside of town. If I ever complete the division, the last module will be "12 Mile Creek". It will have a cut off from the Blue Line on the other side of town.

Further down the tracks is a dairy farm with a beautiful old barn (built in 1876), the "Caboose Motel" of Avoca, New York (not to be confused with the Caboose Motel of Strasburg, PA) and the "Country Goose Diner". All in a few steps one can sleep in a Caboose and walk across the street for a filling breakfast. All for a reasonable price (including a \$0.25 ever-flowing cup of coffee). If you're lucky, you might even see the one train a week run by the B&H RR come by with its lone tank of fertilizer, and a flat car drawn by an S-3 diesel switcher in burgundy and black livery.

RAIL EVENTS TIMETABLE

October 3-6	MER Fall Convention, New Jersey	November 3	VA, Setup Foreman is Peter Pfothenauer.
October 5	Bethesda-Chevy Chase Rescue Squad Show, Rescue Squad #1 Station, Old Georgetown Road & Battery Lane, Bethesda, MD.	November 3	Backshop-Prince of Pease Lutheran Church
October 5-6	Altoona Railfest, Altoona, PA	November ?	Damascus Railroad Day Damascus Public Library
October 6	Backshop-Prince of Pease Lutheran Church	November 9-10	Rockville Lions Club Train Show Rockville, MD
October 18-20	NVNT/Potomac Division Midi-Convention, St. Matthew's Methodist Church, Annandale Setup Friday Oct 18: 3pm-10pm, Clampdown Fri 10 pm, Hours Saturday: 9am-6pm, Sunday noon-4 pm (layout tours and railfanning), setup coordinator John Drye	November 10	Gaithersburg MRR Club Show Gaithersburg State Fairgrounds, Gaithersburg, MD
October 20	Monthly Setup- Fairfax Station Museum, Fairfax Station, VA, 11:30 - 4:00 Clampdown 12:15	November 17	Monthly Setup- Fairfax Station Museum, Fairfax Station, VA 11:30 - 4:00 Clampdown 12:15
October 26-27	Spotsylvania Mall Public Show, Spotsylvania,	December ?	Club Holiday Party
		December 7-8	Fairfax Station Railroad Museum Holiday Train Show
		December 28-29	Greenberg Great Train Show Dulles Expo Center, Chantilly, VA



(Continued from page 1) **The View Atop Trestle 19**

layouts. And we all know that the track is the key to a smooth running operation. So let us all check the trackwork on our own modules so we will be sure of smooth running. Those track electrons have a mind of their own.

I'm not going to go into the **Henry Clay**. You have to be there to experience the rumblings of those trains going down the middle of Ashland. I appreciate Brian for setting that up for **NVNTRAK**. I will have all the information on what each of us owe at the October **Back Shop**. Remember, we owe the club.

In mentioning the **Back Shop**, there will be a Board of Directors meeting that afternoon. All are invited to join in on this meeting. I can't say for sure as to the time. I will be at the **Mid-Eastern Region/NMRA** Fall Convention in Cherry Hill, NJ that weekend but will be at the church as soon as I get back. Then we will start the BoD meeting.

As we enter the fall season, we will be busy with setups. Sometimes two or even three displays on any given weekend. This is where all of us can participate, other than just running trains. We will be needing coordinators to help set up these layouts. So why not volunteer to help out. With enough members joining in helping, it will ensure each setup will turn out much easier than one Superintendent trying to carry the entire load. You can help coordinating a layout, assisting in coordinating, dragging a trailer, any bit of help will help strengthen **NVNTrak**. So get in touch with Paul, or better yet, come to the **Back Shop** and lend a hand. It all comes back to that involvement thing. Remember??

That's all I have time for this month. I would just like to add my gratitude to those who helped out in making September 2002 a great month for **NVNtrak**, from Culpeper to Richmond.

My time is up. I thank you for yours. And remember, be careful out there.



Club Members,

Sorry that I have not had an article in the past two Call Boards. I was in the middle of moving and many other things going on in my live right now, but I'm back. This past Fairfax Station setup was a great one. A lot of members came out with modules or gust to help.

The next two months are going to be busy with 9 shows in Maryland, Virginia and Altoona, PA. Would love to see a lot of members to come out to help all the shows. In the past its the same 15 to 20 members, but we have over 75 members in the club. So if you have a module and have not had it out for some time, this may be your time to get it out, dust it off and bring it out and have fun running trains and letting the public see our modules. If you would like to bring your module out to a show, just call me on my new cell phone at 703-585-8583. Plan now for what show you would like to attend and let the setup foreman know ASAP.

The last Greenburg show was a small layout, but everything ran fine with no problems. The next Greenburg show will be at the end of Dec. and will be back up to our normal size (20x60).

I was not at the show all weekend, had to work. To all members you bring modules out to show, you need to make shure that everything is working order. At the last two shows, some problems where found some modules with power strips missing & wiring that is made too short to connect to other modules. This is not NTrak standard. So up-grade and fix you modules.

If anyone has info on any other show that is not on the events calendar or info that is incorrect, please let me know ASAP.

Thank you for your time. Lets all work together to make **NVNTRAK** better and have fun running train for the public.

k



THE HOSTLER'S SHACK

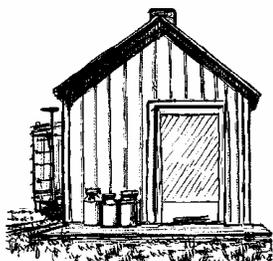


Matt Schaefer

The uCONVENTION II – You just had to be there relaxing at our rail-side flophouse. (NVNtrak turns it into a flophouse.) It was almost too much fun and the layout was reminiscent of our great '96 layout with the circus tent atmosphere and the same clubs and clowns. RANTRAK outdid themselves with their southern hospitality, good times and the Rantrak special \$33 banquet for \$13. There were lots of door prizes with plenty of professional sarcasm as only Don Rickles and Tony could dish out. There was also a sad note that Rick Spano could not be with us and had had a heart attack and we had a prayer for his recovery.

LAYOUTS – Both the DCC and DC layouts ran good were about 125' long and 24' wide and took about 30 minutes each to make a run when there was no traffic delays. See simplified sketch of the layouts.

I could not remember where Nick and some other's modules were. We were spread all around like in the '99 uNconvention when we had "ambassadors" as helpers in every loop.



DCC - Georgia S. and most members took runs on both layouts no problems. Members from Dayton Ohio were told they couldn't run because they did not bring their DCC throttles. NOTE: Everyone should be re-reminded to bring a Digitrax throttle if they want to run on DCC. Joel McCrurry of N. of Raleigh said he would like to see the lessons learned from this DCC layout but the anticipation of the unknown on each new layout seems to be much more exciting for the DCC boys. It presents more of a challenge!

ARISTO LAYOUT - The Peninsula club's junctions (that had no switches) had a short and 2 plugs had to be rewired by NJS. Not a problem for the NJS wire-brained specialists: Carl, Erick and Bob. NVNTRAK and NJS Aristo receivers were installed and managed 100% by NJS. NJS also provided all the staff to sign up all DC trains and controlled the throttles at the table where they sold their club cars. About 120 crews signed up to run on DC during the uNcon. The NJS dog-bone had 8 blocks on one frequency giving a shake down run of about 300 feet plus a diverting route up on green and around two horseshoes. If you successfully negotiated the NJS dog-bone including the New River section the East End tower gave you clearance to enter the other 3 loops. See picture of Bob Utley at the East End tower CTC board.

CHANGING FREQUENCIES - 18 blocks in two frequencies were used on the red line route with no cross-talk problems. NOTE: Both frequency changes were made at the West NJS tower because the operators were there to help. JNS picked frequency 4 and 5 because NJS has had some cross talk

between certain frequencies grabbing the wrong blocks maybe like we had one time at Landmark.

TECH STUFF – NJS uses small bulbs across all Aristo receiver outputs to eliminate the 18 V float when there is no train in the block. This prevents a speed surge when you enter blocks. NJS also ties all the separate receiver power supplies into the white line which should prevent stalls across the gap. Due to shorts in modules and in wiring during Aristo set ups our 2A fuses were repeatedly blown and were finally jumped. We should test #1175 auto bulbs to limit current and they light up when there is a short.

MODULES - I towed our club trailer to Richmond with 6 corners, 2 junctions and two POFFs and in the van I had Glade and New River Gorge. Both of our junctions were used, as is, no problems. We had our modules located all over the layout room which adds variety and spice as if we needed any spice with Tony running the show! You just have got to have fun with all those clowns in one tent!

November Coming Attractions

Dave Freshwater

November is **Model Railroad Month** and we have traditionally started with a set-up at the *Damascus, MD, Library*. We have to wait a little longer this year, because the *Library's Train Day* will be the third Saturday, November 16th.

This small, 6 POFF maximum layout is a popular secret among the Maryland members. The *Library* is a great host; they fill all the available public rooms with trains of all scales, G, O, Lionel, HO, N and Z. Many of these are home, somewhat portable layouts that residents bring out for the show. We get to show off the comparative advantages of N Scale and modular layout concepts. And we try to show off all the different technologies in use.

Look for more on the show hours next month. But, if you want to bring a module, contact me soon (e-mail or 301-717-6501). 6 POFF slots go fast.



2004 Convention Status

John Drye

It's been a while since the Convention Committee has made a report to the membership. The main reason is that discussions on the Chantilly facility have been painfully slow. We're finally to the point where we expect to have a formal agreement next month, but it's been a long process.

A bit of a recap might help. We actually had a draft agreement last spring. Some of you may remember that's about when K Mart went bankrupt. Turns out that K Mart owned the facilities in Chantilly and the bankruptcy set us back to square one. For a while there was discussion about using the facility for retail shops, but finally another management group (fortunately with many of the same people) took over and only changed the name to Dulles Expo Center.

It's taken until now to get the discussions to the point where we were last spring. We'll have a draft proposal to share at the Backshop next month.

The Holiday Inn in Chantilly finally opened in August. Mark Franke was almost the first person who went to talk to them about renting some space (the entire hotel, as it turns out.. which was a bit of a shock to the manager). John Cook has also been talking to hotels and discovered that one of the managers at the Fair Oaks Holiday Inn was on the staff at the Radisson in 1996 and does happen to remember NVNT. We're likely to fill up both of these hotels plus another Holiday Inn at Dulles airport and still need some room.

Now that we've had a chance to run train models at Richmond, we have some more ideas on how to fill 48,000 square feet with a layout. Matt Schafer has already unleashed the pizza boxes and claims that we might be able to squeeze in 400 or so modules.

The NVNT/Potomac Division Midi Con this month will provide a sneak preview of some of the layout tours, clinics and railfan activities that 2004 will offer. Once we get formal agreements in place with the facilities and the hotels, we'll start to ramp up the publicity campaign. The next 22 months will start to go by in a real hurry, and the closer we get, the more time will fly.

So, what can individual members do right now to help us get ready for 2004?

- Work on getting existing modules ready now (trackwork, scenery, NTRAK standard

wiring): we'll all have plenty to do in 2003 and 2004- and we want to set a great example.

- Write a model railroading article! In 1996, not a month went by without an article about NVNT, and with it, an opportunity to publicize the convention in the Model RR press.
- If you have a home layout, start thinking about getting the layout ready for a layout tour.
- Pick a spot where you'd most like to help out. We'll need volunteers to help with clinics, tours, contests, facilities, the company store, the layout among others.

We have the opportunity to host another spectacular convention, one that folks will still be talking about years later, but it will take the effort of everyone in the club. Come to the meeting at the October backshop with ideas and enthusiasm!



Members of NVNtrak lounge at the Richmond uNcoNveNtioN ... come 2004. we will not be taking it easy very often. (Davies)



The troops relax at breakfast during the occupation of the Henry Clay during the Richmond uNcoNveNtioN. (Davies)

RuNNiNg traiNs at the uNcoNveNtIoN

Cotton Bowen

A contingent of the modular armed Army of Northern Virginia (consisting of myself, Matt Guey-Lee, Nick Sklias, Dave Davies, John Steitz, Matt Schaefer, John Cadasil, Bill Rutherford, James Altobello, Gil Brauch, and Leonard White), invaded Richmond's Museum of Science and Technology, (the old Broad Street Station for those of you who can only identify with railroad stuff), on 19 August. Once there we formed into work groups, DC and DCC, and set up two massive layouts to ruN traiNs. RANTrak did a great job of unloading participant's MTVs (Module Transportation Vehicles for those that are "acronymically challenged") and getting us in to the approximate location of each layout. From there we set up, hooked up and after the obligatory debugging process, we ran traiNs for two and half days!

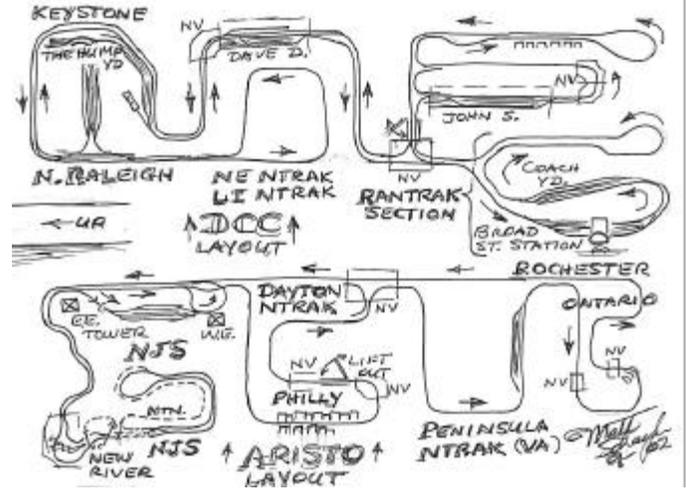
Both Gil Brauch and I ran new modules. Gil unveiled his new "Hickory Junction", and I ran "Neil's Creek," at its first big show after its unveiling at Culpeper and the Fairfax Museum the previous weekend. The venue at the station was the old passenger loading platforms to the right rear of the station. The Museum has erected tents to cover the openings and provided indoor-outdoor carpet on the floor. Aside from the heat and humidity, conditions were quite good. I will add that swamp coolers are only half right, they produce swamp like humidity, but don't really cool things much. They are also good at creating artificial hurricanes that knock over trains!

As I mentioned earlier, we erected two large layouts. The DC section had a Red Line route that covered twenty electronic blocks and two Aristo frequencies. It worked! One of the heavy contributors to this success was New Jersey Southern.



NJS has built an inside yard for setting up trains and a dog-bone loop that provided a shake-down cruise before launching in the wild unknown of the distant other three loops that the Red Line traversed. At any one time we had up to six trains running the red line with potential for more. Just watch out for stalled trains! We had some close calls.

The DCC layout was equally large. I ran it only once but it operated well and was notable for the new modular Broad Street Station addition built by RANTrak. This series of modules is a work of art from the modeling aspect, bench



Sketch of the two layouts by Matt Schaefer.

work, design and electronics. One innovation we may see more of in the future was their unique hook-up system that discards under the table power feed and track connectors. Without doing some serious diagrams, they have designed a way to make the tables come together, link track, and electronic connections by using cabinet quality wood working and telephone type circuit boards. It works! Of course, production does require hole boring jigs and other sophisticated techniques.

Another impressive module was in the DC layout. A bridge unit that swings up and away to allow entry into the pit without having to crawl under the modules. The design was simple and it worked every time! When the bridge is up, power in that block is cut off so we had no spectacular piles of trains at the entry way. We've got to build one of these! I measured and diagramed the wood work, and Steve Jackson demystified the

Convention floor as seen from the stage. DCC layout in the foreground. (Davies)

electronics. He says it's really a neat system and simple too! Do I smell another project for the builders in the club?

Lastly, it was a great experience, RANTrak was a great host and I am now a full convert to setting up a spine with Red Line loops. It's a blast! Now let's get busy preparing for 2004, we have a reputation to up-hold.

NVNTRAK invades Rhode Island!

Jim LaBaugh

Yes NVNTRAKers, your Narrow Gauge Division took its show on the road to the big dance, the 22nd National Narrow Gauge Convention in Warwick, Rhode Island, September 4 to 7, 2002. This annual gathering of narrow-minded individuals in all scales was treated to 3 Nn3 layouts: a pizza-sized layout of an English country scene by Mark Fielder, that traveled across the Atlantic Ocean from Mark's home in Britain; Mark Sisk's "Crash Cart" layout, that some of you may have seen at a backshop or Fairfax Hospital, and a 30' x 5' layout, featuring the principal components of modern N-Scale modular railroading-NTRAK and oNeTRAK modules.

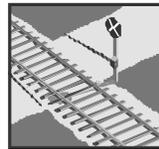
The NTRAK portion of the layout used the Gil Brauch-inspired detachable scenery – both front, back, and middle. The front NTRAK mains were hidden under scenery containing a single Nn3 track. The middle of each NTRAK module held Highline scenery and track by Noll Horan and Jim LaBaugh: including Noll's timber trestle and logging camp modules, as well as Jim's wye and Whiplash curve modules. A 6" x 4' module clamped to the NTRAK modules held the rock face that covered the backs of the NTRAK scenes, since viewing by the attendees was all-around.

Coming off the 4% grades from Whiplash curves, the layout continued onto the Nn3 oNeTRAK loop at 42.5" off the floor. Modules in the oNeTRAK loop included: a pair that arrived as carry on baggage from California with owners Tom Knapp and Bruce Hunt, with a nice desert town scene circa 1920; a Bar Mills trestle one foot bridge module by Noll, Pat Turner's Stamp Mill corner module, Steve Zutter's incredibly detailed Farmhouse corner, Ted McCormack's Surrey, Southampton and Sussex logging scene, and Marc Sisk's Thompson Valley high-country riverfront scene-with one of the best detailed boats you will see in any scale. The journey from Marc's module descended a 4% grade on the track covering the NTRAK mains back to an engine house to the side of and below Noll's trestle, that greeted visitor's to the display layout, along with Bill Williams three foot square logo that also was seen on the New Haven scarlet and white Nn3 shirts worn by the 25 Nn3ers in attendance. All in all just shy of 3 scale miles of track.

The show featured morning sessions of clinics and running trains, afternoons visiting nearby layouts including George Sellios' incredible museum-quality HO extravaganza, and evenings of more clinics, running trains, and the contest room. A fair number of the Nn3 faithful from all over put motive power and rolling stock, dioramas and the "pizza" and "crash cart" layouts in the main contest. Noll captured second place for his HOn3 East Broad Top diorama.

Ted Brandon took two thirds for steam (Nn3 Mallet and Next sighting of the regular NTRAK part of the Nn3 layout should be Chantilly in December, and in the railroad press early next year Doodlebug). Tom Knapp took third in M.O.W. with a flanger. Outside of the contest room the 30' x 5' Nn3 layout took third among the 7 Display layouts, behind the spectacular Sn3 Silverton Central and the On30 Down East layouts.

We ran using the Aristo's and DCC. Steam sounds emanated from motive power gobbling up electrons in both versions. The Aspen Model folks let us run their new K-28 and passenger consist and also showed off the prototype for their new K-36 Nn3 offering. Banta released their Silverton Depot N-Scale laser cut wood kit and noted the Ridgway Water Tank is next – which can provide water to even standard-gauge N-Scale Steam :-)! Garth Hamilton, visiting from Ontario, showed off his Canadian White Pass extension Nn3 diesel. Mark Fielder ran all kinds of British meter gauge motive power and consists. And of course, Steve Zutter had his Moguls out, which at the beginning of the show attracted the attention of one of Warwick's women in blue – Sgt. Mary Ellen who pronounced them "cute" and told the whole precinct about us, so security at the layout was never in doubt the entire convention.



This Side of the Tracks

Dave Davies, editor

uNcoNveNtioN 2002 is over and time to look at what we have learned with DCC operations on a large layout.

With uNcoNveNtioN 1999, we learned that you have to run with only one boss (DCC Chief power pack-at one time there were at least three packs thinking they were in charge :-)

In New Jersey, we learned that you have to have enough DCC boosters. In NJ there were only 6 to support a huge layout.

At Richmond 2002, the DCC was run like the Aristo Red Line Route. The result was that the red and the blue lines on a module were powered by different power packs (boosters), and out of phase with each other (although DCC is AC voltage, there can be phase problems, which short out engines, or every Kato passenger car crossing the boundary). There were 2 or 3 phase problems at Richmond that were never fixed.

For 2004 DCC, we must power all tracks on a module from the same booster, allowing movement between the various lines for passing, switching, etc. More later.

OCTOBER PHOTO ALBUM

Photos from the Richmond uNcoNveNtioN — Dave Davies



Bethesda-Chevy Chase Rescue Squad Show

by Dave Freshwater

Each year, the *Bethesda-Chevy Chase Rescue Squad* runs an open hours, normally in conjunction with the *Taste of Bethesda*. A variety of safety groups are invited to display in the upstairs banquet room at the station. For the past several years, **NVNTRAK**, with its *Operation Lifesaver* message, as been invited to run trains as well.

This year is no different. On October 5th, we've been invited to set-up again. We've got room for about 10 POFFs in the layout space and the Maryland members are already starting to fill those slots. (*4 of the 10 slots are already spoken for as of this writing.*) Besides being close to home, they know that this is a great layout for kids. Last year, it seemed like the kids were constantly 6 deep around the layout. That's pretty amazing when you consider that the *Rescue Squad* demonstrates the Jaws of Life at one point and a medivac helicopter arrives at some point. You have to be careful about the items that aren't permanently attached to the modules. Kids sometimes get the idea that they are part of the free stuff that is being given away.

The *Rescue Squad* are great hosts. If you don't go with the Chibarras to the *Taste of Bethesda*, the *Rescue Squad* provides sodas, hot dogs and popcorn for everyone. Which explains why some folks were still finding popcorn in the train boxes months later. Kids do tend to spill things and there was a lot of popcorn around last year.

There are a couple of tricks to this set-up. The layout is on the second floor, but there is an elevator to haul modules and boxes upstairs. Because of the activities in the parking lot of the station throughout the day, we have to unload the MTVs and move them to another location. The *Rescue Squad* had provided a shuttle to this lot in the past. But, if you come late to run trains, you are going to have to park nearby and haul your stuff in. (So, just bring a few trains, not all of them.)

The show runs from 11-4 on Saturday, October 5th. Set-up starts at 8; clampdown is at 9:30 so we make sure that we are operating when the first wave of kids arrive. *The B-CC Rescue Squad Station* is on the East side of *Old Georgetown Road* inside the Beltway.

I'm the set-up coordinator for this show. If you want to bring a module, e-mail me or call me at 301-717-6501. As I said, spots for modules are going fast. If you don't head to the MER convention, or Altoona or *East Broad Top* and want to run some trains for an enthralled audience, come out to the *Bethesda-Chevy Chase Rescue Squad* show.

Congratulations

I have been out of the loop for a while, but don't think I didn't like you guys any more. When I showed up with my module at FFX station last weekend, I discovered that I never sent a note to the call board, only on the e-mail list. (Insert sound of hand being slapped here.)

Karen was at home on bedrest because we were expecting our second baby. On July 10, 2002, Emma Katherine was born. Big brother Ben (2½) has already begun to master the Aristo throttles, but Emma will take some more work. Right now, she is using some "I can't hold my head up yet"-kind of excuse. Everyone it home and doing well. Ben and I hope to be a little more active with the club over the next few months.

Steve Jackson



WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

Northern Virginia NTRAK extends a hearty welcome to **Phil La Perla** our newest member, who joined within the last few months.

Welcome to the club. We look forward to getting to know you better in the coming

**Book Review –
Nothing Like It in the World**

*By Dr. Stephen E. Ambrose
(Simon & Schuster: 2000. 431 pages)
Reviewed by Dave Freshwater*

Dr. Stephen Ambrose is best known as a historian of World War II. He is one of the driving forces behind the National D-Day Museum in New Orleans. His best-known book is probably Band of Brothers, which was the basis for last year's HBO mini-series of the same name.

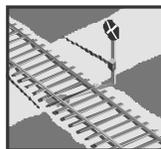
In this book, Dr. Ambrose turns to the story of the construction of the Transcontinental Railroad and the race between the Central Pacific and Union Pacific. The book starts with a meeting in Council Bluffs, Iowa, between Grenville Dodge, a young railroad engineer, and a politician just gaining national prominence, Abraham Lincoln. Dodge, who later became a Civil War Union General and head of the military railway, presents the idea that becomes the *Union Pacific*, heading west along the Platte River.

Dr. Ambrose then shifts the story to California, where engineer/surveyor Theodore Judah is working out the line that will become the *Central Pacific*, east out of Sacramento through the Donner Pass. This establishes the pattern for the book. Each chapter shifts from the *CP* to the *UP* and back again, following the challenges and progress each railroad made during the period.

It's clear that construction of the transcontinental railroad was a crusade to these men, a crusade that took Judah's life before the line was completed. Dr. Ambrose covers the schemes used by the businessmen to build each line and enrich themselves in the process. But Dr. Ambrose also tells the story from the perspective of the men who actually built the railroad, the surveyors, graders, and track gangs. The details of their lives, from the workday to recreation at the end of the tracks – the mobile town of bars, gambling, and other vices are addressed.

The accomplishments of the workers, with hand tools, black powder and nitroglycerine are truly amazing. Then consider that trains still run on this route. And that, with modern surveying equipment and construction equipment, Interstate 80 parallels the original line for much of the way. The engineers and surveyors did a very good job.

Nothing Like It in the World is a balanced tale of the construction of the link that tied the nation together. It's easy to tell the heroes and villains – both of whom were needed to accomplish the feat. Even if you are well versed in the history of what is now completely the *Union Pacific*, you'll still learn some things and likely enjoy yourself reading this book. You should be able to find the book at your local library or bookstore. Or, you can borrow my copy when Bobby Richesin gets done drooling over it.



**This Other Side
of the Tracks**
Chester Freedenthal, past CB editor

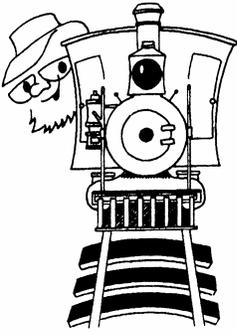
Where to start this month? Hmmm, I haven't done much railroad stuff this month except buy a couple of cars (Hershey and Pepsi) from Granddad's and think of a new module (you don't want to know), so that's out. I wasn't able to attend any set-ups or conventions, so that's out. And I didn't ride a train or rail fan, so that's out. Not much left. So maybe I'll just reminisce about my just completed (1 down, 3 to go) business trip to Mechanicsburg, PA. Well, come to think of it, I did do some railroad stuff! I crossed under, over or across tracks at least 13 times. I saw two commuter trains, a freight train and a coal train. I saw a freight car being unloaded and tank car being filled. I saw lots of cars sitting on spurs and a couple being pushed by a switcher. I saw lots of rail-related graffiti on bridges and cars. I saw two different signs for train rides, one of them for a fall foliage ride. And I saw a railroad-themed license plate from Pennsylvania. Actually I didn't do much railroad stuff, but I saw lots of railroad stuff. Probably a little more than most folks see in a week, but it's amazing how much there is out there. No wonder model railroading is so popular!

Sorry that I didn't make it to Richmond for the convention. From the pictures it looks like a great time. Can't wait to read the write-ups in this month's newsletter. And I hope we have a few set-ups in Oct and Dec that I can make. November is out for me, as I will be getting ready for and then taking a great cruise to the Caribbean (if it's still there after all the storms), to celebrate 25 happy years of marriage with Sally (well, maybe 17 really happy, none consecutive... only kidding dear (wink, wink) – she reads this).

What do you call a train carrying ballet dancers? – A tutu train. Hint for the month. Never wash white underwear with green towels. Mint is such a lovely color! Well, that's it for this month, take care and have a great October!



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All submissions must contain clear text identification of the author to be accepted for publication.

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