

# Susquehanna Sidetracks

Official Newsletter of the Susquehanna Division  
Mid-Eastern Region, National Model Railroad  
Association

July, 2013

Volume 21 Number 4

## From the Superintendent's Desk

Greetings!

Summer has arrived which means many of us are or soon will be taking vacations which is the case for my wife Sue and I. As of this writing on June 21, we are enroute between Sacramento CA and Seattle WA; riding on Amtrak Train 14 - the Coast Starlight. We are celebrating our 50th anniversary on a 32-day planes, trains, automobiles, bus, and ship sojourn to CA, OR, WA, Canada, and Alaska. To our surprise we were only 15-minutes late departing Sacramento at 00:15 this morning. However, at about 2:30AM, disaster struck. From a sound sleep we were awakened by an emergency stop application – a true gripper if you have never experienced such an event.

Sadly, we found out 3-hours later when the train began moving north again that our engine had struck a trespasser on the tracks - the crew speculated it was a successful suicide. During a conversation with our replacement conductor he said a 30-year engineer can expect to hit a vehicle/person at least 3 times in that career - what a terrible statistic! However, it has been a beautiful trip since that accident as evidenced by the photo

of Mt Shasta from our glass-ceiling observation car. The remainder of our trip will include several other interesting train rides: Anchorage to Denali National Park and Denali to Fairbanks AK on the Alaska Railroad. Also the narrow gauge White Pass and Yukon Ry from Whitehorse Canada to Skagway AK, and finally the Amtrak Cascades to Portland OR. Well, that's enough about our travels – let's now focus on Susquehanna division happenings.

First let me commend the members of the Altoona Association of Model Railroaders (AAMR) and their President, Jack Morgan - on May 19 they presented a great day of model railroading that included two Division firsts hosting our first joint event with the Keystone Division of the Mid-Central Region (MER) which borders our Division to the west, and bringing together many modelers from our far-western counties. Forty-four attendees enjoyed two excellent morning clinics by Jerry Harten and Michael Stolter in the spacious AAMR basement meeting room. Just before moving upstairs to view their large scale

See **Super's Desk** on page 2

## Schedules

### NMRA National Convention

Atlanta, GA

July 14<sup>th</sup> to July 20<sup>th</sup>, 2013

### LSOP-5

October 4<sup>th</sup> to October 5<sup>th</sup>, 2013

### MER Convention

Rockville, MD

October 10<sup>th</sup> to October 13<sup>th</sup>, 2013

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Banner photo courtesy of Christopher Muller,  
<http://www.steamphotos.com/>

# Susquehanna Sidetracks

Official Newsletter of the Susquehanna Division  
Mid-Eastern Region, NMRA  
467 Lovell Court  
Hummelstown, PA 17036

## Contributing to Susquehanna Sidetracks

Sidetracks welcomes contributions from Division membership. Letters, articles, photos and other items may be mailed or emailed to the Superintendent at the address listed above. Please include return postage if you would like materials returned. Deadline for submission for the next issue is 6-24-13

### Board of Directors 2012-2013

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### Membership Information

Online newsletter is always available at Susquehanna Division website.

[www.susquehannanmra.org](http://www.susquehannanmra.org)

National Model Railroad Association  
4121 Cromwell Road  
Chattanooga, TN 37421-2119

[www.nmra.org](http://www.nmra.org)

(HO and O) layout we stepped outside to witness the passing of steam locomotive Nr 765 as it hustled an excursion consist up to Horseshoe Curve. The AAMR building is a great railfanning location for observing heavy NS operations - that mainline is just a short walk from their building. Two different scales running on a layout may raise your eyebrows, but having O-scale operations in the foreground and HO-scale running in the background is a very realistic and convincing concept. After an enjoyable lunch our AAMR hosts arranged discount tickets at the Altoona Railroaders Museum followed by a visit to an amazing home layout - Paul Geigermeir's Shadow Mountain empire. See Ron Parisi's article starting on page 5 that presents a pictorial tour of the May 19 festivities.

This Sidetracks issue introduces a new feature called Hobby Shop of the Month. The goal of this new column is to highlight one local hobby shop in our territory in every issue. The first article, written by Ron Parisi, features the very well known THE STATION in New Cumberland. Not only have they been our longest running advertiser both Doris and Dick Wildman and their staff are great friends of the hobby. Next time you are looking for that hard to find item, want to browse their large inventory, or just want to say hi to Doris and Dick, stop by and thank them for their many years of service to the hobby. And always check their Sidetracks ad for possible extra discounts. Member Bill Weiss, a long time NMRA and Ephrata Short Line Model Railroad Club member, has graciously volunteered to lead this

project. If you have a favorite hobby shop in your area and would like to see them featured in Sidetracks contact Bill at: [wmrweiss@aol.com](mailto:wmrweiss@aol.com). Thanks Bill for taking on what I'm sure will become a very popular Sidetracks column.

Sep 21-22, we and Mainline Hobby Supply of Blue Ridge Summit, will sponsor several weekend layout open houses and special shopping opportunities at their hobby shop. If you are interested in opening your layout on both or just one of those weekend days kindly contact one of the following folks by **August 10** so we can include your layout particulars in our advertising program:

Barry Schmitt:

[bschmitt@susquehannanmra.org](mailto:bschmitt@susquehannanmra.org)

Ron Smith:

[rsmith@susquehannanmra.org](mailto:rsmith@susquehannanmra.org)

Mainline Hobby Supply owners, Bonnie or Brian Wolfe:

[sales@mainlinehobby.com](mailto:sales@mainlinehobby.com)

Be sure to review Wayne Betty's update on the Oct 4-5 LSOP5 Operate-Till-You-Drop event. There are just five openings for the Susquehanna Valley operations and only two remaining for the Lehigh Valley event. If you enjoy operations or have heard about it but never gave it a try here's your chance to experience this great facet of the hobby. I thoroughly enjoy operating sessions because

See **Super's Desk** on page 3

From **Super's Desk** page 2

I get to work and mingle with a great bunch of fellow modelers, learn from the masters, observe exacting layout details that often spark an idea for use on my future layout or demonstrate how to tackle what seemed to be an insurmountable problem, and most importantly to me - it's fun! I've signed up for the Three Susquehanna Valley area layouts and encourage you to take advantage of this great model railroading opportunity.

Don't forget to mark your calendars for two great model railroading conventions coming our way this summer. As luck would have it, both are reasonably close to all members of our Division. First is the grand-daddy of all model railroad gatherings - the July 15-21 NMRA National Convention down the road in Atlanta GA. Between the large number of clinics and layout tours even the masters in our hobby can't help but learn something new. And what a great location to stop by either going to or from a southern vacation destination. Then, over the October 11-13 Columbus Day weekend, our own Mid-East Region is sponsoring their annual convention in Rockville MD - less than a half day drive from our most distant member. My wife and I will be there all three days, and for those of you who plan to attend the banquet Saturday evening let me know and we will reserve a seat for you and others traveling with you at our Susquehanna Division table.

Next, remember to also mark your calendar and volunteer your layout in our November National Model Railroad Month Division-wide layout open house extravaganza that is being orchestrated by Director Jerry Britton. For

those still undecided about listing your layout in this great event or have questions contact Jerry for all the details. Jerry has organized this program into four geographical areas to make it easy for an individual, family, or group of modelers to effectively plan an enjoyable visitation schedule.

And last but certainly not least on behalf of all our members I offer a special welcome to our new Division Board of Directors - returning members Howard Oakes and Ron Parisi and a new member to both the NMRA and our BOD - David Collison. Please welcome David to your leadership team. And never hesitate to contact any BOD member about your concerns, suggestions, or ideas for future Division events and clinics. Speaking of future events, this is my last call for volunteers to join our 2014 event planning project. Here's a great opportunity to help shape our future events, locations, and clinics. I often hear members say I live too far away from central PA to attend meetings or work on committees. Nothing could be farther from the truth - if you cannot attend any of the 2 or 3 meetings between August and November associated with the 2014 planning project we can handle communications via email and/or phone. So don't assume it can't be done - we all know that word 'assume' too often prevents good and enthusiastic people from being part of positive change and/or developing new programs. So toss your name in the hat and help us develop a quality 2014 Division program. We already have one new Division volunteer and would gladly welcome you to join our planning team - all it takes is an email or phone call to Wayne Betty or me.

It's now time to close my comments and get back to observing the absolutely beautiful Oregon countryside - we are about 30-minutes south of Eugene-Springfield OR. The magnificent scenery along our route rivals the California Zephyr through the Rockies between Provo UT and Denver CO and much of the picturesque areas of Europe. I hope you and your family get the opportunity to see and enjoy this area or any other region of our wonderful country by rail- it certainly beats the hassles and cramped cattle-car style seating found in today's airliners! Have a great summer and happy modeling to all!



## From the Editor's Desk

Ron Smith

Hello everyone,

Summer is here! This is the time of year when many of us slow down on our modeling activities as more pressing matters – family vacations, yard and garden work, golf, etc. – take priority over other hobbies such as model railroading. There are certainly a lot other pastimes to choose from. Especially if you are a Civil War buff, the anniversary events in Gettysburg this year will certainly hold your attention.

In a few short months, we will return to “Open House” season, with an event September 21-22 and another one each weekend in November. Please be sure to read about these events elsewhere in this issue and mark your calendars. I know I will be spending time this summer working on my layout, as I will be participating in at least one of these Open House tours. Also, our MER Fall Convention will be in October, and is shaping up to be a fine event. In between two mini-vacations, a planned weekend railfan trip in July and the normal summertime family fun, September will be here before I know it!

As you read in Barry's column, we had a great Division Meet in Altoona on May 19th. There were 40 Division member and guests in attendance and the reports I've seen indicate it was a wonderful success. I thank the organizers and clinicians for volunteering their time for the good of the group.

As always, I am looking for feedback on *Sidetracks* and our mini-version, *The Express*. We'd like you to tell us about your layout too. Please send in your photos of op sessions you've attended, modeling projects you've been working on, and your tips and techniques. Please submit any items for the September Sidetracks to me by **August 20<sup>th</sup>**.

Also, if your club or group has an event planned, please let us know so we can include it in our Upcoming Events column.

My contact information is

[rsmith@susquehannamra.org](mailto:rsmith@susquehannamra.org)

I'm looking forward to hearing from you.

Ron

### **Free Railpass Trial Membership Sponsored by the MER**

Do you know a modeler who needs a nudge to take the next step to become more involved in this wonderful hobby? The trial membership program may be just what is needed to further a modeler's development, skills and interest.

The NMRA began a 6 month 'Railpass' trial membership program which costs the applicant \$9.95. The Mid-Eastern Region (MER) has built on this program by paying the \$9.95 Railpass fee for applicants residing in the MER. In other words, the MER is furnishing a free 6 month NMRA membership to encourage the recruitment of new members.

Railpass applicants will receive 6 issues of the NMRA Magazine, 3 issues of the Local, eligibility to attend conventions and meets and to participate in contests. Railpass applicants cannot vote or hold office, and will not receive the New Member Pak from national. Anyone living within the MER who has not been an NMRA member during the past 2 years can use this program.

The prospective member fills out the free MER Railpass membership application form shown on page 16 of this issue (not the standard NMRA Railpass form), includes a sponsor signature, and it is forwarded to Bob Price at the address listed on the form. Do not send this to the NMRA headquarters in Chattanooga, TN; the MER will forward the application to the NMRA with the payment.

## May 19<sup>th</sup> Division Meet

Article and Photos by Ron Parisi

Sunday, May 19th was a red letter day for the Susquehanna Division. The first in our new Super's dreams of uniting the geographically far flung division with joint meets occurred. After an early morning rendezvous at Barry's house, the four of us braved the mists and fog before the sun came up for our dash west. It would turn out to be a great day of model railroading with great hosts, the Altoona Association of Model Railroaders (AAMR) in their expansive club house; the unexpected run-by of steam loco 765, discounted visits to the Altoona Railroaders Museum and finally a visit to a memorable 'home' layout on steroids.

First stop in Altoona at the Altoona Association of Model Railroaders large club house - that's our own Alan Frame holding up the left column.



Inside, our Superintendent Barry chats with former Superintendent of the Keystone Division, Jerry Kyslinger, who now manages the Keystone Div's Company store.



The club's well-equipped basement meeting room...



Mike Stotler gave a clinic on converting an Atlas locomotive to DCC operation right before our eyes. Moments before Jerry Harten showed us how to populate our layout's forests with sedum trees. How were folks in the back of the room able to see such delicate work? The AAMR club used a close-in TV camera and projected it on a very large flat screen that all could easily see from any seat in the room - a great idea we'd like to use in future clinics throughout the Division.



An unannounced treat (following page): Nickel Plate 765 roars by the club on a Norfolk Southern excursion! The NS mainline between Altoona and the Horseshoe Curve runs less than 150 yards from their building.

# May 19<sup>th</sup> Division Meet

Article and Photos by Ron Parisi



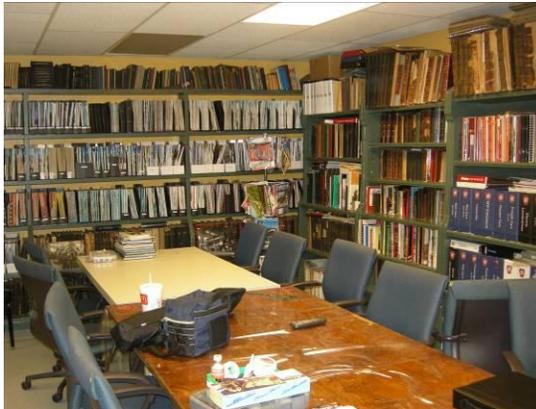
After clinics, we went upstairs to the club's unique, dual-gage (HO & O) layout. The layout room is also well populated with railroad memorabilia. The AAMR Club holds one of the largest PRR Engine Builders Plates and Locomotive Number Plates collections in the country.



Quite a line up! from left to right: Jack Morgan, AAMR's President, John Wissinger MMR # 99 who recently moved into our Division, and Cliff Bastuscheck - an enthusiastic 90 year old member who drove himself to the event from State College.



My favorite part of the layout: a well stocked and organized library.



After lunch we took a trip to the Altoona Railroaders Museum. I never tire of taking detail photos of their well preserved and presented roster including their X-29 boxcar.



Our final visit of the day was to Paul L Gagermeier's expansive Shadow Canyon Scenic Railroad. He has some collection of models, not only domestic but World War II military foreign ones as well! Phew. On the next page, that's Alan Frame again, Alan Mende, Paul Gagermeier, Barry and Forrest Lucas - the project officer for the event, in front of Shadow Canyon's self contained building.

**May 19<sup>th</sup> Division Meet**  
Article and Photos by Ron Parisi

The layout goes from crowded city scenes...



A super treat was Paul's overflowing giant display cases that had at least one of every piece of railroad equipment ever used by any railroad and a super collection of WWII Military Railroad items. A must see layout.



Paul's gracious wife, Pat, co-hosted our visit and answered some of our thousands of questions.

...to well integrated service facilities.



Ron Parisi

## THE STATION – New Cumberland PA Ron Parisi

### 55 Years of Serving the Hobby and Going Strong!

Most of you will recognize the name of the featured hobby store in this issue. THE STATION has been advertising in the Susquehanna Sidetracks since the ad policy was instituted. The revenue from their advertising in our newsletter is just where their service to our hobby begins.

I took my first trip to this chocked-full store to write this story. I was warmly greeted at the door by Dick and Doris Wildman, the longtime owners of THE STATION. I felt as if I was in some kind of pleasant time warp as the walls and shelves around me showcased the history of American railroading in miniature. The walls above the shelves are covered with narrow horizontal display shelves and filled with steam locomotives, electric motors and Diesel electrics as well as every freight or passenger car ever produced by the likes of Lionel, Ives, Marx and American Flyer.

But history is not confined to the wall displays here. The very building that houses this toy train emporium is itself a piece of railroad history. This station building once stood alongside the tracks of the Philadelphia and Reading RR in Robesonia (near Reading) serving as a station, telegraph office and signal tower. It was abandoned in 1956. Enter Dick's father, Augustus, who wanted to open a hobby shop but lived in New Cumberland. He loved the old station so much that he decided to dismantle it and move it into New Cumberland. By late summer of 1957 the station was re assembled, exterior painted, interior redone to standard hobby shop shelves and displays - and stood ready to receive its first customer. Dick took the store over in 1970 and has added merchandise and display goodies as they became available.

Today there is a preponderance of Lionel, Rail King, Williams, Weaver and Atlas merchandise, both sets and individual locomotives and rolling stock. Plasticville and Woodland Scenics kits and RTR bring up



1 – THE STATION – There is parking right down the alley to the left, in back of the store.

the structure category. G scale products include models from PIKO and LGB. HO offerings are represented by such well-known brands such as Accurail, Athearn,

Bowser, Bachmann and Walthers, both RTR and kits. There are quite a few lines of scratch building supplies represented including paint, glue and Evergreen Styrene. I think that every landscaping product that Woodland Scenics makes is also well displayed. To satisfy the intellectual side of the hobby, there is a rather complete set of Kalmbach's model railroad 'How To' books available. Dick has a repair station in one of the back rooms and indicated that if the problem went beyond his roundhouse skills, he has master mechanics on the call board that could fix anything. He also has a treasure trove of basswood structural shapes and strips tucked away for the diehards amongst us who have not yet succumbed to RTR. As a post script, Dick advises that if he doesn't have something in stock he will special order it for you.

## THE STATION – New Cumberland PA Ron Parisi



2 – Doris and Dick Wildman, the friendly proprietors of THE STATION.



3 – A typical view down one of the store's chock-full aisles.

Doris, Dick's wife and STATION habitué, is his compliment in every way. They make a great team. She is involved in the hobby and delights in learning something new about it every day. It's nice to see a long time couple work together as well as they do.

When heading to THE STATION, be aware that a fence was erected to provide a play area for a neighbor's child that partially blocks the store from view. But not to worry - this American retail tradition sits right there waiting to satisfy your sense of nostalgia or your desire for the newest, most spiffy Diesel General Electric has given permission to be reproduced in miniature.

Ron Parisi

### THE STATION

213 Ninth Street New Cumberland PA

Phone 717 774 7096

Open Tuesday –Friday 10 AM to 5PM, Saturday 10AM to 2PM

Please call for directions

## Upcoming Events – In or Near Our Division

Mark your calendars for these upcoming activities!!

**July 7-14, 2013**  
**NMRA National Convention**  
**“Peachtree Express”**  
**Atlanta GA**

This year’s National should be another great event! Check out all the info on the NMRA website and in *NMRA Magazine*.

**July 6, 2013**  
**50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration**  
**Rockhill Trolley Museum**  
**Rockhill Furnace, PA**

Adult fares are \$7, children 4\$.

[www.rockhilltrolley.org](http://www.rockhilltrolley.org)

**August 8-11, 2013**  
**Steel Mill Modeling Seminar and Workshop**  
**Kent OH**

Seminars, workshops and displays by well-known steel industry modelers.

[www.pyamodelrailroad.com](http://www.pyamodelrailroad.com)

**August 23-25, 2013**  
**N-Scale Weekend**  
**Bedford PA**

A destination for N-Scalers from all over the northeast. N-Trak and T-Trak layouts, dealer tables. \$4 general admission.

[www.n-scaleweekend.com](http://www.n-scaleweekend.com)

**September 21-22, 2013**  
**Mainline Hobby Supply Open House**  
**Blue Ridge Summit, PA**

This 22-year tradition features several Susquehanna and South Mountain Division

layouts on self-guided tours; this years’ event will be co-sponsored by these two MER Divisions.

[www.mainlinehobby.com](http://www.mainlinehobby.com)

**September 29, 2013**  
**Dieruff Train Show**  
**Allentown PA**

Dieruff High School, 815 N. Irving Street, Allentown, \$5 admission. Sponsored by the Lehigh Valley Chapter NRHS

**October 10-13, 2013**  
**MER Annual Convention**  
**“C&P Junction”**  
**Rockville, MD**

Three days of clinics, layout tours, operating sessions, model contest and more!

<http://home.comcast.net/~CandP2013>

## LSOP5 is coming Oct 5-6.

What is an LSOP5? It is the 5<sup>th</sup> year of a joint cooperative venture between the NMRA Op Sig <http://www.opsig.org/index.shtml> and the Susquehanna Division. This is a two day operation marathon. The Lehigh-Susquehanna Operations weekend number 5 offers the chance to operate on 3 layouts in either the Lehigh (Allentown) area or Susquehanna (Harrisburg) area.

Are you interested in Operations? From Novice to Experienced these layouts will keep you busy and challenged. Never operated? No worries; all the layouts can supply a regular operating crew member to go along for the ride to pilot you. Interested? Please visit the web site

<http://www.susquehannanmra.org/LSOP/LSOP5/default.htm>

for much more information.

You will find information on all of the layouts, links to their web pages and registration information. Did I mention the cost? There is no cost to register or operate! Your sleeping and eating arrangements will be up to you, but we have blocks of rooms available in both locals if you need them.

As of this writing on July 1st, the Lehigh area layouts have only two available slots left. So get your registration in for a tremendous operations weekend!

If you have questions or are looking for more information than what is on the website, please contact me.

Wayne Betty, your Division 11 Assistant Superintendent at  
[wsb@susquehannanmra.net](mailto:wsb@susquehannanmra.net)

# November Model Railroad Open Houses

Jerry Britton

## In Support of National Model Railroad Month

As described in the June *Express*, I was recently approached by our superintendent to serve as Event Planning Chairman for the division. Many of you know me as a Pennsy modeler and the operator of the Keystone Crossings PRR web site.

For the past several years I have also put together a number of model railroad open house tours in south-central Pennsylvania, including in November in support of National Model Railroad Month. These have been organized as the Susquehanna Valley Model Railroaders (SVMR). Barry inquired about the prospect of expanding the tour to include all of the counties covered by the Susquehanna Division, so here we are!

This November will be the first such tour sponsored by your NMRA Susquehanna Division 11. Individuals (and their crews) who open their home or club layout for layout tours in conjunction with NMRA sponsored events earn credit towards the Association Volunteer award in the Achievement Program.

To make the tour more manageable over 33 counties, we have agreed to subdivide the territory into four “sub-divisions,” each holding open houses over consecutive Saturdays during the month. For 2013, the tour schedule is as follows:

**November 2nd -- Southern Sub:** Adams, Cumberland, Dauphin, Lancaster, Lebanon, Perry, and York counties.

**November 9th -- Eastern Sub:** Berks, Carbon, Lehigh, Monroe, Northampton, Pike, and Schuylkill counties.

**November 16th -- Western Sub:** Blair, Cambria, Centre, Clinton, Huntingdon, Juniata, Mifflin, Snyder, and Union counties.

**November 23rd -- Northern Sub:** Columbia, Lackawanna, Luzerne, Lycoming, Montour, Northumberland, Sullivan, Susquehanna, Wayne, and Wyoming counties.

We realize that many layouts in the southeast portion of Pennsylvania already participate in Bruce Friedman's awesome Model Railroad Open House. This open house tour is not intended to replace or compete with Bruce's tour. We encourage “dual listing” with the preference that you open for the dates indicated above, for the benefit of NMRA sponsorship and promotion. You may certainly open for other dates as well, but the above dates are those that the Susquehanna Division will be promoting.

# November Model Railroad Open Houses

Jerry Britton

If you would like to participate in the SVMR open house tour, please contact the sub division coordinator as indicated below:

**Southern Sub:** Jerry Britton, [jerry@penssyr.com](mailto:jerry@penssyr.com)

**Eastern Sub:** Charles Kadyk, [twinvalleyfiddler@dejazzd.com](mailto:twinvalleyfiddler@dejazzd.com)

**Western Sub:** Forrest Lucas, [flucas@atlanticbb.net](mailto:flucas@atlanticbb.net)

**Northern Sub:** TBD\*\* Volunteer sought; must have e-mail. Contact Jerry!

Your sub division coordinator will need the following information from you:

- First and Last Name
- Address
- City and Zip Code
- County
- Email Address
- Phone Number
- Affiliations (OpSIG, railroad historical societies, etc.)
- Name of Railroad
- Description (2-3 sentences)
- Scale
- Control (DC vs DCC [and brand]; and if you use JMRI, CMRI, etc.)
- Railroad's Web Site (if any)

Even if you do not wish to participate in this year's tour, I would like to add all model railroad layouts to our database. Please contact the appropriate sub-division coordinator to register.

Thank you,

Jerry Britton  
Events Planning Chairman

# MER Convention, Rockville MD

October 10-13, 2013



*Monroe Stewart's Hooch Junction N Layout on tour*



*Marty McGuirk's Central Vermont (HO) will be the subject of a clinic*



*Howard Zane's HO Layout on tour*

## Travel Plans: Book the C & P Junction Convention in Rockville

If you haven't booked the Crowne Plaza Hotel in Rockville, Maryland, for the C & P Convention on Columbus Day weekend, October 10-13, now's the time! Hotel operators are standing by to give you the special MER room rate, a perk that makes attending any convention easier. If you want, it's time to invite your spouse to join you not only for seeing friends but also for exploring the attractions of regional Washington and Baltimore. C & P Junction delivers clinics, layouts, call boards, contests, white elephant bargains, a Banquet, an Auction and more.

Around Washington from the Metro station close to the hotel you can visit the Smithsonian, the Monuments, Georgetown, the Kennedy Center or Mount Vernon. In Baltimore you can visit the famous Inner Harbor, National Aquarium, Maryland Science Center, Walters Art Museum, or take a water taxi to Fells Point and dine on Chesapeake blue crabs. In-between, you can visit Annapolis or Old Towne Alexandria. Crowne Plaza Hotel ([www.cprockville.com](http://www.cprockville.com)) with a free shuttle to the Metro and other points.

For the latest information and news, please visit our website.

Google:

C & P Junction-Comcast.net

Or

<http://home.comcast.net/~CandP2013/>.

For questions, email  
[CandP2013@comcast.net](mailto:CandP2013@comcast.net).

Marshall Abrams, Co-Chair, C&P Junction

Kurt Thompson, Co-Chair, C&P Junction

# The Saga of an Itinerant Model Railroader

Ron Parisi

## The Travails of a Free-Mo Module Builder

I have been a modular model railroader my whole life. It started 30 years ago in my urban homesteaded loft where I had a lot of 'living room' by New York standards but lacked the requisite basement space for a proper layout. Further I was not (and probably will never be) an operator. What I enjoy is the 'building' side of the hobby. But there were times, when I was buried wrist deep in Kappler stripwood and Grandt windows and doors as I assembled my latest HO masterpiece, that I longed for human, 1:1 company.....

During a trek to an early pre-renovation CNJ Terminal train show many years ago in Jersey City, I came across a gentleman, somewhat of a cross between Yoda and Al Pacino in the movie Devil's Advocate. He had spread before him some very un-presupposing wooden rectangles. I would later learn that they were exactly 24" X 48" X 6" and had end plates that were tolerant to sixty-fourths of an inch. I'm not even sure they had track on them yet or were up on the spindly 2X2 legs they were supposed to sit on. This man, Joe Kavanagh, would turn out to be a life-long friend, but at that time all I cared about was that for \$89 he was promising me model railroading nirvana – complete with an interchangeable, hookup-able, transportable, comradeship- building medium and I could have all this in the confines of my crowded loft. Well I whipped out my check book (he

didn't take credit cards) and started to pen in the amount for three of them. He suddenly put his hand over my pen holding hand and said "Wait a minute, slow down!" He eyed me narrowly and said no check, in fact no money. "I will not sell you these prefabricated kits." I was taken aback. I would eventually understand that Joe was the author of the parable that if you give a man a fish you feed him for a day but if you make him build his own module you can create a fanatic model railroader for life. But that day I was just enthused and sat for hours with him as he spun his modular tales of scores of modules coursing through shopping centers, church basements and schools with grown men dressed in bib overalls, or railroad logo festooned vests, blowing wooden train whistles delighting men of all ages.



Figure 1 West Side Freight Line Module Number 1

I was hooked. Joe and another friend from the Sunrise Trail Division launched me on a journey that would last 15 years during which I built my well-traveled and noticed New York Central West Side Freight Line modules.



Figure 2 West Side Freight Line Module Number 2

Enough history for now, as this series of articles is supposed to be of the present. I don't take the West Side Freight Line modules around anymore as they weigh close to two hundred pounds each and further, in this Division there is not a HO-track club. At some railroad venue a few years ago I hear the words "Free-Mo". I go to the web and do some research. The term is also percolating up in some railroad magazines. I begin to understand why all the newer train layouts at all the major train shows don't just go around in nice circles and ovals: Free -Mo is linear! It

# The Saga of an Itinerant Model Railroader

Ron Parisi

strives for more realistic operation: the OPSIG guys have their influence. Free-Mo is FREE of the constraints of round and round the Christmas tree thinking. Destination, purpose and prototype operation are mandatory concepts here. Slowly I start getting my mind around how the concept can be applied to what I want to do with the rest of my modeling life! I want to model a portion of the New York Central's 60<sup>th</sup> Street Yard in Manhattan. Specifically I want the modules to depict the 69<sup>th</sup> Street Transfer Bridge and the giant Transfer Pier I right next to it. As I am working on the AP program (three and a half certificates down three and a half to go) I finalize a track plan for the Civil AP incorporating not only the Civil requirements but also the FREE – MO template over these rail marine segments I just mentioned.

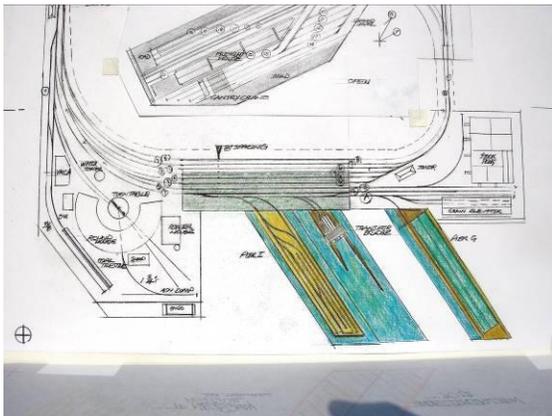


Figure 3 Track plan with the new marine modules in color at bottom

Bob Charles, our AP Chairman quickly blesses the track plan as meeting the Civil AP's requirements and I rush off to the lumber yard. But wait! I am now three hundred years old. My Samson length hair has vacated my head not to mention my depleted strength. My WSFL modules are sitting on their chrome steel shelves, unmoving, as old mothballed battleships. Weight and obsolescence has grounded them. I am immobilized, stymied by the logistics of the situation. I am contemplating six new modules. Though one of the concepts of FREE-MOism is light weight construction I don't look forward to two hours of hand carrying in and out of a show. Besides I don't want to have to buy a used U-Haul box truck to transport the beasts. As I wander the desert of indecision I go by chance to the Railroad Museum of Pennsylvania. There I see the Reading Company Technical and Historical Society's modular club taking down their very large layout. They are using custom made rolling carts and racks that remind me of bakery racks or print drying racks I have seen. The racks, once loaded with their modules, all fit into their fleet of school buses, trailers and vans in a fashion that would have brought envy to the Ringling Brothers or an army general. So I hatch the idea that the castered wheel, 1x3 and 1x4 contraptions might be my transportation solution.



Figure 4 One of the module carrying carts that inspired me - rolling deliciousness

**Coming next installment: Car Theft, Costly Plea Bargaining and the rolling 'Dry Dock'**



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