



# NMRA BULLETIN

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## BOD MEETING

### Cooperation and compromise central themes of mid-year BOD meeting

**T**he Officers, Board of Directors, Department Heads, and Headquarters Staff met in chilly and snowy Atlanta, Georgia, on January 16–18, 2008, for the annual mid-year Board of Directors meeting. Missing was President Mike Brestel, who was resting at home following successful heart-valve replacement surgery and doing extremely well. Mike expects to be back up to speed in time to attend the Anaheim National Convention and Train Show. In the interim, former president Allen Pollock is ably handling both presidential and vice presidential duties.

*Below: The MYRR was one of many beautiful layouts that was on tour for the Board of Directors to see. This layout features a beautifully crafted wood base and dozens of intricately detailed structures and scenes. It is the work of Cliff Springmeier, who donated it to the NMRA.*

A visit to NMRA headquarters in Chattanooga, Tennessee, allowed the leadership team to see first-hand the excellent work being done by office manager Jenny Hendricks, her staff, and Kalmbach Memorial Library manager Brent Lambert. The BOD also inspected the exhibits and models stored in the basement that will form the core of the Howell Day Model Railroad Museum, which is managed by former President John Roberts.

Moving our museum and perhaps the library (but not the headquarters office or staff) to the California State Railroad Museum in Sacramento, California, remains a major goal of your Officers and Directors. The Sacramento museum is one of the West Coast's top tourist destinations operated by a professional staff. At-large Director, U.S., Charlie Getz, an assistant attorney general for the state of California who is directly involved with museum business, continues to work this issue on behalf of the NMRA. A progress report will be issued following the annual BOD meeting in Anaheim this summer. The officers and

directors remain hopeful that the Howell Day Museum will be initially set up as a gallery exhibit in the California State Railroad Museum by 2009.

### SCALE RAILS and nmra.org

It's obvious that *SCALE RAILS* has come a long way since publisher Larry DeYoung turned over the reins to White River Productions and Editor Stephen M. Priest. Feedback from members who subscribe to *SCALE RAILS* (which remains a bargain at \$15 per year), as well as from members who had not subscribed but saw the improvements when they received the issue containing the ballot, has been extremely positive.

At-large Director, Worldwide, Tony Koester reported that considerable progress has at last been made toward issuing new and upgraded Data Sheets. These will first appear in the pages of *SCALE RAILS* and then migrate to a members-only section of nmra.org, our Web site. Ongoing improvements to the Web site orchestrated by Tim Klevar are moving ahead in tune with those in *SCALE RAILS*.







The Board asked that the NMRA's recently adopted mission statement appear in all future issues of *SCALE RAILS*.

### Finding a common ground

Counsel Bob Amsler, former President John Roberts, who manages our insurance program, and Director Tony Koester have drafted a form for use by special-interest groups affiliated with the NMRA to apply for liability coverage for NMRA-sanctioned events. Requirements include having the event hosts and owners of any layouts on tour during the event be NMRA members, and that NMRA co-sponsorship be noted in all promotional efforts. The form is available from headquarters.

This effort to provide value to special-interest groups affiliated with the NMRA is part of a larger effort to position the NMRA as a supporter of any organizations that are interested in railroading in miniature, regardless of scale or gauge. The Officers and Board recognize that the hobby is undergoing balkanization, where each special interest from a specific railroad to a specific scale and gauge has its own formal or informal organization and often convention. But the hobby will greatly benefit if these groups all speak with one voice where standards and other common interests are at stake, and the NMRA intends to maintain its position as that central clearinghouse.

The leadership team further recognizes that the NMRA is not in a position to dic-

tate standards and conformance, if indeed we ever were. The goal is therefore to act as a catalyst and facilitator among stakeholders in the model railroad industry, working with and encouraging them to come to agreements on key areas of interoperability, which is our primary concern.

### Convention planning

More than a thousand members are expected to have a great time at the NMRA's 2008 Convention and National Train Show near Disneyland in Anaheim, California, on July 13–20. The Officers and Board members look forward to meeting many of you personally during what will be a busy, action-packed week in one of North America's premier vacation destinations. Planning is well underway for the 2009 convention in Hartford, Connecticut, convention July 5–12, 2009, an event that will afford attendees and their families a chance to vacation in spectacular and compact New England before or after the convention and train show.

The Officers and BOD are looking for creative ways to support the hosts of the NMRA's 75th (diamond) anniversary in Milwaukee, Wisconsin (July 10–18, 2010), where it all began back in 1935. Following Milwaukee will be Sacramento, California, home of one of the best and most-visited railroad museums in the world. With NMRA membership edging upwards again, *Scale Rails* dramatically improved,

and plans to move the Howell Day Model Railroad Museum to a venue visited by a million people each year being finalized, we should have a lot to celebrate in Milwaukee and Sacramento.

Grand Rapids, Michigan (2012), is hard at work ensuring that this small city rewards both modelers and family members with a big-time experience. And an enthusiastic group of NMRA members in Atlanta has informed the BOD that they'd like to host the 2013 convention, a goal shared by Pittsburgh and perhaps one other eastern city.

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### Online registration and member enrollment

Model railroaders have made it abundantly clear that they want to be able to join the NMRA and register for the National Convention online. During the visit to HQ in Chattanooga, the BOD saw a demonstration of the software that will support this effort.

The Board believes this software is adequate to handle current needs, but they believe the NMRA should outsource these functions in the long term. Doing so will relieve headquarters staff of a heavy burden while ensuring that we have access to the latest convention-registration and membership enrollment software.

### Curtailing costs

Although the leadership team believes our annual conventions continue to be a good value, they are also investigating ways to control and reduce costs without affecting the quality of the experience. It's a Catch 22 situation: Attendees tell the Officers and Board that they want to retain the heavy schedule of clinics, layout tours, and booths at the National Train Show, but they would like to do this as economically as possible. But a large train show and heavy clinic program requires a major convention facility, and those don't come cheap, as they're typically located only in the larger cities.

Nevertheless, the board is working with the national convention committee and local host committees for future conventions to find ways to curtail costs. For example, many attendees make it clear that they prefer to ride buses to visit home and club layouts, and tour fees provide the major revenue stream that supports the entire convention. Others want to enjoy the flexibility of self-guided tours like those usually available during region conventions and division meets. And in some cases, local roads or layout-room size cannot accommodate motor coaches. Both Anaheim and Hartford host committees are therefore exploring ways to offer a limited number of self-guided tours to see how well that works.

Anaheim, Hartford, Milwaukee, Sacramento, and Grand Rapids will pro-

vide data and feedback regarding the cost, convenience, and overall attractiveness of conventions held in smaller venues. Despite intense and ongoing discussions of the current convention format and declining attendance in recent years, the Officers and Board have not identified any magic bullets. Drastic changes in the current format – shorter conventions, cheaper hotels, or no train show (which would allow use of hotels not near exhibition halls), for example – may discourage those who have regularly attended past conventions with no guarantees those who have been vocal about their dislike for the current format will actually attend under any circumstances.

### "Commercial" clinics

The quantity and variety of clinics available to attendees of our annual National Convention is not available elsewhere, and Education Department head John Lowrance and Clinic Chairman Doug Auburg continue to work with the local host committees to ensure even better programs at future nationals.

One issue that has come up is the desire by some clinicians to be able to sell the products that they use as demonstrations in their clinics. The Board's concern is that selling products in or near the clinic room would interfere with clearing the room for the next clinic. Instead, the clinician may sell his or her products in the Clinic Office, where

a table (but not staffing) will be supplied upon request. A \$25 fee per clinic topic (regardless of how many times it is given) will be charged for this service.

This policy does not apply to "make and take" clinics, where the fees charged to attendees are limited to the cost of supplied materials and kits supplied by the clinician.

### Standards & Conformance

Di Voss, who heads the Standards & Conformance Department, reported on progress his team has made in coming up with a practical way to handle product testing and conformance using a volunteer staff. Di's reports have appeared regularly in *Scale Rails* so that members and other interested parties can keep up to date with these efforts.

In the not too distant future, many knowledgeable modelers believe, even small-scale indoor locomotives will contain batteries that are continuously recharged by track power and thus be unaffected by dirty track. Di's team is therefore working with various stakeholders to determine what standards may be needed to ensure compatibility with current DCC Standards and Recommended Practices.

### Defining a "division"

NMRA regulations are less than specific about what a division really is, other than to observe that regions may have one or more divisions. This ambiguity has become a legal concern as reports have come in documenting that some divisions are actually affiliates of the regional and national organizations in name only. It is now apparent that some divisions exist solely to provide liability insurance coverage for their organization, and in some cases even the officers are not NMRA members.

Such subterfuge could result in unfavorable judgments by our liability insurance carrier in the event of an accident during what was incorrectly positioned as an "NMRA event." Region presidents have therefore been charged by President Mike Brestel with ascertaining the membership status of all region and division officers to ensure they are indeed current and dues paying NMRA members. The Board recommends that each division have at least three officers who are NMRA members, but it recognizes that there are instances where this may not be practical, at least in the short term.



Above: Office Manager Jenny Hendricks poses at her desk. Jenny handles and coordinates many of the tasks that are related to the daily operation of the headquarters building.



## MEMBERSHIP SERVICES

### IT'S EASY TO TURN A VISITOR INTO A NEW MEMBER

By: Gerry Leone, MMR

"Hey, Bob. Who's that sitting at the end of the row?"

"I dunno, Fred. Must be a new guy; I've never seen him before."

"New guy, huh? Wanna go take a look at the model contest?"

There's no better way to get a visitor at your meet to never return than to ignore him. On the other hand, there's no better way to get a new member than to make that person feel welcome and at home.

It's surprising the number of times visitors go home feeling disappointed by their experience at a meet. Maybe the clinics were great and the models were top-notch, but if no one took the time to make that visitor feel comfortable, he may just go home and stay there.

Here are a few things to think about next time you have a meet:

Say "hi." Doing something this simple isn't a major commitment on your part, even if you're a shy, like it seems most model railroaders are. One little word (or more if you go out on a limb and ask "How are you doing?" or say, "Welcome aboard!") can make all the difference in the world. Multiply that one word by 10 or 15 members, and suddenly that stranger won't feel so strange.

Publicly welcome new members if your meet has a general membership meeting, have your Super ask if there are any new members in the crowd. When they raise their hands, have the Super ask their first name and perhaps what city they live in. And before the meeting moves on, make sure the Super says something like "We're glad to have you here. Thanks for coming."

Just that little bit of recognition will make the new people feel like they're on their way to becoming accepted members of the group.

Don't overwhelm the new person, though. The opposite side of the coin is to completely drown the new member with attention. Don't forget, that member wants to see what your meets are like by observing, not necessarily participating. So if you make him feel like he's wearing a scarlet "N" (for "newbie"), that new person may feel singled-out and self-conscious.

Make sure an officer greets the new person. To the newcomer, your meet is just a sea of unfamiliar faces. Have one of your Officers – usually the Public Relations Director – personally greet the visitor after the meeting and introduce himself by name. This gives the new person a point of contact. Even better if the officer gives the visitor a business card with a phone number and email address on it and offers to answer any questions that might come up later.

The bottom line is: Everyone's new at some point. But the earlier you can make a visitor feel welcome, the more apt you are to pick up new members. And hopefully make some new friends along the way!

## HEADQUARTERS

### ADDRESS CHANGE? BACK ISSUES OR REPLACEMENT ISSUES OF SCALE RAILS?

Members needing to make address changes, request back issues, or replacement issues of *SCALE RAILS* should contact the staff at the national headquarters office in Chattanooga, Tennessee, at (423) 892-2846 or by email at nmrahq@aol.com.

## MMR EARNED

### NMRA AP CERTIFICATE REPORT

\*Indicates first Certificate of Achievement

DECEMBER 2007

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Jack Ward, Waynesboro, Virginia

#### Northeastern Region

Bruce DeYoung, West Milford, New Jersey

#### Pacific Northwest Region

Ernie Carlson, Zig Zag, Oregon

Phillip Garlock, Boise, Idaho

Robert Parrish, Boise, Idaho

#### Southeastern Region

Terry Cox, Colliersville, Tennessee

### MASTER BUILDER — CARS

#### Mid-Central Region

Charles Atkinson, Indian Springs, Ohio

### MASTER BUILDER — STRUCTURES

#### Lone Star Region

Charles Romig, Plano, Texas

### MASTER BUILDER — SCENERY

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#### Rocky Mountain Region

Al Badham, Salt Lake City, Utah

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### CHIEF DISPATCHER

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#### Northeastern Region

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### MODEL RAILROAD AUTHOR

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Clinton Smoke, Jr.,\* Arden, North Carolina



## NMRA

### Future convention dates

(Note: Convention dates are from Sunday to Saturday - Last date of NTS is one day later)

Hartford July 5 - July 11, 2009

Milwaukee July 11 - July 17, 2010

Sacramento July 3 - July 9, 2011

Grand Rapids July 29 - Aug 4, 2012

## MMR EARNED



CHARLIE ATKINSON EARNS MMR #404

I started with model railroads like most at the age of six when my father and grandfather gave me a Lionel train set for Christmas. Both of my grandfathers worked on the railroad, beginning with the Hocking Valley in Ohio. When C&O purchased HV in 1930, both became C&O employees. One grandfather was a station agent and retired in 1940, and the other began with a construction crew and worked on many bridges and trestles in southern Ohio. After he could no longer do the heavy labor, the C&O transferred him to Marion, Ohio, where he worked as a crossing guard.

In the late 1930s, while doing his job, a hit-and-run driver ignored his stop sign and whistle and hit him. He never regained consciousness.

It could be said that railroading is in my blood. I continued collecting Lionel equipment through high school. When I was a sophomore bought my first HO car kit, an Athearn round roof boxcar, which I still have. College slowed my railroad modeling down, and after I got my first job, I began buying HO stuff. My first locomotive was a Varney F7 quickly followed by a Mantua 2-8-2, which I also still have.

The next modeling slow down was with the Army and graduate school. After I landed my second job, I built my first layout based on the article "A Layout in a Fortnight" featured in *Model Railroader*. When I moved to Cincinnati for my third job, I took the layout with me and expanded it in my new basement area. A new house was built, and I had the entire basement for a model railroad. I had just joined the NMRA, met many model railroaders in Division 7 of the MCR, and went to the 1966 NMRA Convention held in Cincinnati. I got so involved with that convention that I gave a clinic on how to build a turntable using only a sabre saw and a 1/8 inch electric drill.

That convention took its toll on Division 7, and it basically collapsed. Several of us took up the job of reviving it. I became the super of Division 7, and we held meetings in the school where I worked. About that same time, four of us who lived in the northern suburbs of Cincinnati had been driving 45 minutes to an hour each way to

attend the Western Hills Model Railroad Club. We decided that two hours spent in a car each time we went to the club was too much. So we formed the Cincinnati Northern Model Railroad Club closer to our homes. We found a house that had a branch of the library in it with an unused basement. We got permission to use the basement for the price of cleaning it out. Now the CNMRR club had a home that we used for 20 years.

During this time several of us formed a round robin group to work on and build our home layouts. My 26x39-foot basement soon had benchwork up and the beginnings of the Hocking Valley Railway. The layout had about 90 percent hand-laid Code 83 and 70 rail with most of the switches hand-built in place. Unfortunately, that layout was built before modules were thought of therefore, my model railroad was not built with modules. As a result, 30 years later when we downsized and built a new smaller home, the layout had to be dismantled and none of it could be saved as a unit.

I remained active in NMRA and began working on the Achievement Program, earning my first certificate as an Association Volunteer in 1974. I got AP certificates for Model Railroad Engineer-Electrical and Model Railroad Engineer-Civil the next year.

I began working on a PhD. at Miami University (Ohio) in school administration and was also an officer in the U.S. Army Reserves. We had purchased a motor home in 1972, and we got involved with the Family Motor Coach Association. Those

## Membership Thermometer

