Cooperation and compromise: Themes of mid-year BOD meeting

A visit to NMRA headquarters in Chartanooga, 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 Gatz, an assistant attorney general for the state of California who is directly involved with museum business, continues to work on 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.

If 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 improvement 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 developments to the Web site orchestrated by Tim Klevar are moving ahead in tune with those in Scale Rails.

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 Springer, who donated it to the NMRA.
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 railroad modeling, regardless of scale or gauge. The Officers and Board recognize that the hobby is undergoing balkanization, where each special interest group is its own formal or informal organization. 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.

Anthem, Hartford, Milwaukee, Sacramento, and Grand Rapids will provide 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 that those who have been vocal about their dislike for the current format will actually attend in future 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 supplying 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 on 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 the NMRA 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 short-term insurance coverage for their organization, and in some cases even the officers are not NMRA members.

Such subterfuge could result in unfavorable judgments by liability insurance carriers in the event of an accident that occurred during a clinic. Many NMRA groups have come to the Board with similar concerns, where this may not be practical, at least in the short term.
**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.”

“Hey, Hey! What’s ‘new’ about you, 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 simple isn’t a major commitment on your part, even if you’re 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 model railroad 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 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.

**MEMBER EARNED**

**NMRA CERTIFICATE REPORT**

*Indicates first Certificate of Achievement

**December 2007**

**Golden Spike**

Mid Eastern Region
Gary Holly, Apex, North Carolina

Northeastern Region
Bruce DeYoung, West Milford, New Jersey

Pacific Northwest Region
Ernie Carlson, Zig Zag, Oregon
Philip Garlock, Boise, Idaho
Robert Pattish, Boise, Idaho

Southeastern Region
Terry Cox, Collierville, Tennessee

**Master Builder — Cars**

Mid-Central Region
Charles Atkinson, Indian Springs, Ohio

**Master Builder — Structure**

Lone Star Region
Steven Barkley, Beaumont, Texas

**Associate Volunteer**

Mid-Central Region
Robert Adams, Union, Kentucky

Southeastern Region
Revis Butler, Jr., Atlanta, Georgia
Scott Pavlot, Alpharetta, Georgia

**Model Railroad Author**

Lone Star Region
Charles Romig, Plano, Texas

Northeastern Region
Richard Martin, Solvay, New York

Mid-Central Region
Robert Adams, Union, Kentucky

Southeastern Region
Revis Butler, Jr., Atlanta, Georgia
Scott Pavlot, Alpharetta, Georgia

**Model Railroad Engineer — Electrical**

Midwest Region
Jim McQueen, Rockford, Illinois

Northeastern Region
Murray Michael White, Owings, Maryland

**Model Railroad Engineer — Structures**

Mid Eastern Region
Gary Holly, Apex, North Carolina

Northeastern Region
Bruce DeYoung, West Milford, New Jersey

Southeastern Region
Richard Martin, Solvay, New York

**Association Volunteer**

Mid-Central Region
Richard Martin, Solvay, New York

Southeastern Region
Revis Butler, Jr., Atlanta, Georgia
Scott Pavlot, Alpharetta, Georgia

**Model Railroad Author**

Lone Star Region
Steven Barkley, Beaumont, Texas

Southeastern Region
Clinton Smoke, Jr., Arden, North Carolina

In the late 1930s, while doing his job, a hit-and-run driver ignored his stop sign and whistled 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 I bought my first HO car kit, an Athearn round roof boxcar, which I still have. College slowed my model railroading down, and after I got my first job, I began buying HO stuff. My first locomotive was a Varney F7 quickly followed by a Manuta 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-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 chair 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 that 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. Our 26x39-foot basement soon had benchmark up and the beginnings of the Hocking Valley Railroad. The last layout had about 90 percent hand laid Code 83 and 70 rail with most of the switches hand-bolted 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 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 Certificate 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