May 2009 53

NMRA BULLETIN

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2009 NMRA National Convention Dates and National Train Show Reservations:
Train Show Booth Reservations—Debbie Draper, HLM, Registrar • 10837 N. 34th Place, Phoenix, AZ 85028-3310 • (602) 569-9072 • natltrainshow@aol.com
2010—Milwaukee, WI • 2011—Sacramento, CA • 2012—Grand Rapids, MI • 2013—Atlanta, GA
Cost control is focus of mid-year BOD meeting

The Officers, Board of Directors, Department Heads, and Headquarters management met in Orlando, Florida, on February 20–21 for the annual mid-year BOD meeting. Despite ongoing, serious concerns about reducing costs at a time when the economy is uppermost in everyone’s mind, the leadership team identified innovative ways to increase the value of NMRA membership while enhancing the effectiveness and relevance of the organization.

Curtailing costs

One of the most challenging concerns is to reduce the cost of attending our National Conventions in the near term. This is a classic case of nothing being as easy as it first appears.

The best rates for hotel rooms and convention centers are available to organizations that sign contracts many years in advance. The Fourth of July weekend is also a relatively inexpensive time in most locations. To take advantage of the reduced costs, we have signed contracts for hotel rooms and convention centers through 2013 (Atlanta).

But times have changed. Some members tell us they can no longer afford a weekend convention. Others feel the July Fourth holiday should be reserved for family get-togethers. Yet a shortened convention, or one where many attendees stay in several outlying and hence more economical hotels, means that fewer room-nights are sold in the main hotel, which dramatically affects the cost of clinic and display rooms, and hence registration fees.

The convention department is therefore going to work with host groups to see whether we can create a “core” convention format that starts Wednesday morning and ends on Friday or Saturday. For those who have more time and funds, there will be early-bird events such as fan trips and industrial tours as well as extra-fare programs such as Modeling With The Masters. Following the core convention will be the National Train Show.

There is also a sense that National Conventions have become too predictable. Innovation is the province of the entrepreneur, not a governing body. The leadership team therefore sees advantages accruing from returning more control of convention events to the local host group. Clinic “tracks” embracing a central theme such as layout design or structure scratchbuilding or DCC would receive more emphasis, but they would be scheduled so that attendees could still enjoy layout or prototype tours on any given day. We are also working with other rail groups in an effort to arrange joint conventions, even if this means shifting our convention away from a mid-summer time frame.

We are investigating the adoption of highly popular features of prototype modeling meets such as model displays in lieu of or in addition to judged contests; modelers would be able to sit with their models to discuss them with interested onlookers. Highly trained judges would be available for those desiring points toward Achievement Program certificates.

Special Interest Groups

A post-Anaheim-convention survey garnering more than 1,800 responses indicates that many members attend our National Convention to participate in Special Interest Group (SIG) activities such as those of the Layout Design and Operations SIGs. It’s also clear that we need to work more closely with such groups to ensure that they are able to attract SIG members to our National Convention and, at the same time, demonstrate to convention attendees the value they offer to the average modeler.

We are therefore working with SIG coordinator Marlin MacLaughlin to rewrite the SIG section of our nmra.org Web site. Our goal is to make it more welcoming to Special Interest Group leaders who may find value in partnering with the NMRA on national and regional conventions. Free liability insurance for joint SIG–NMRA meets is one obvious advantage.

Standards & Conformance

The Standards & Conformance Department is taking a different direction on checking products for conformance to NMRA Standards and Recommended Practices. Rather than depending on whatever sample products happen to be sent in for testing, the department is planning to purchase products through normal retail channels to ensure random samples that can be checked in a timely manner. These tests have two purposes: to provide feedback and guidance to manufacturers and importers on how their products match up to applicable Standards and RPs and therefore how they can be improved; and to share this information with NMRA members as purchasers and users of these products.

The Officers and Directors recognize that such reviews could have an adverse impact on advertising revenue for Scale Rails, but we feel that setting standards and RPs and checking products for conformance to ensure interoperability is the Association’s primary mission.

This department is also looking into the establishment of standards for magnetic knuckle couplers so that there will be a well-defined benchmark for all such couplers to meet to ensure interoperability.

Library and museum

Because of California’s pressing fiscal concerns, there has been little progress in our ongoing efforts to move the Howell Day Model Railroad Museum and Kalmbach Memorial Library (but not the headquarters office or staff) to the California State Railroad Museum in Sacramento, California. That remains a major goal of your Officers and Directors, as NMRA members would gain access to the impressive library adjacent to the railroad museum. Our library would remain intact. Moreover, the proposal being negotiated calls for the Howell Day Museum to be temporarily set up on the mezzanine of the railroad museum, which is one of the West Coast’s top tourist attractions.

Scale Rails

Because of rising costs, especially those associated with distributing Scale Rails, regular issues of the magazine are being held to 64 pages. The Board asked that publisher Larry DeYoung work with contractor White River Productions to investigate and report back on ways, including electronic publication of some issues, to make further cost savings.
reductions while actually enhancing the usability of the periodical to members.

The first two of a series of new and upgraded Data Sheets are almost ready to turn over to the SR staff for production. Most new or revised Data Sheets will first appear in the pages of SR and then migrate to a members-only section of our Web site, nmra.org. Lengthy, more technical Data Sheets will probably appear in SR in summary form, with the complete Data Sheets available on the Web site.

**Future conventions**

Now that we have identified promising ways to reduce the cost of attending a core National Convention, the moratorium on convention bids after Atlanta in 2013 has been lifted. Our rotation schedule for 2014 points to a central North American location, and host groups who would like to bid for 2014 should be prepared to embrace the more economical core-convention concept as well as consider early summer through early fall dates.

(Other bids already accepted for future National Conventions include our 75th anniversary convention in Milwaukee in 2010, Sacramento, California, in 2011, and Grand Rapids, Michigan, in 2012.)

**Treasurer Tom Draper and his son honored**

The meeting was adjourned in honor of Tom Draper, Honorary Life Member, recipient of the Distinguished Service Award, and NMRA Treasurer for 27 years, and in memory of Tom’s son, Brad.

**Bids for the NMRA National Convention**

The NMRA Meetings & Trade Show Department is requesting bids from potential Host Groups for the 2014 NMRA National Convention.

The convention area for 2014 is the central area of North America. The central area is roughly defined as west of a line from the western border of Pennsylvania and the Quebec/Ontario border to states and provinces east of the Rocky Mountains.

If a group desires to host the NMRA National Convention, a letter of intent must be sent to the Meeting & Trade Show Department no later than January 1, 2010.

If interested in hosting the NMRA National Convention, please contact Henry Jordan - 301-598-0175 (E-mail conv@hq.nmra.org) for additional information.

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**ACHIEVEMENT PROGRAM**

**NMRA AP CERTIFICATE REPORT**

*Indicates first Certificate of Achievement

**FEBRUARY 2009**

**GOLDEN SPIKE**

**Lone Star Region**
Roddy Wilder, Georgetown, Texas

**Mid-Eastern Region**
Seth Gartner, Charlotte, North Carolina
David Ward, Mt. Pleasant, North Carolina

**Northeastern Region**
Robert Seckler, Poughquag, New York

**Pacific Northwest Region**
Al Babinsky, Gig Harbor, Washington
William Baker, Port Orchard, Washington
Tom Buckingham, Camano Island, Washington
Scott Buckley, Olympia, Washington
George Carr, Bainbridge Island, Washington
Lawrence Fink, Renton, Washington
Mike McCracken, Seattle, Washington
Wain Miller, Tacoma, Washington
John Morrison, Redmond, Washington
Nicholas Muff, Sedro Woolley, Washington
James Murrie, Lakewood, Washington
Edwin Pennington, Spanaway, Washington
Glenn Shadduck, Lynwood, Washington
William Spaulding, Bothell, Washington
Scott Taylor, Auburn, Washington
Jack Tingstad, Coupeville, Washington
Louis Toppano, Jr, Kent, Washington

**Rocky Mountain Region**
Robert Charles, Ranchester, Wyoming

**Southeastern Region**
Joseph Norris, Bakersville, North Carolina

**Master Builder — Prototype Models**

Mid-Eastern Region
Samuel Shepherd, Severna Park, Maryland

North Central Region
Bill Moore, Grosse Point, Michigan

Pacific Northwest Region
Doug Bulger, Bellevue, Washington
Allen Evans, Federal Way, Washington
Susan Evans, Federal Way, Washington
Tom Gilchrist, Renton, Washington
Al Lowe, Bellevue, Washington
Jim Merriam, Marysville, Washington
Al Turnbull, Monroe, Washington
Jim Younkins, Olympia, Washington

Southeastern Region
George Butler, Atlanta, Georgia
Joseph Norris, Bakersville, North Carolina

**Model Railroad Engineer — Civil**

Rocky Mountain Region
Richard Briggs, MMR, Grove City, Ohio

Southeastern Region
Howard Goodwin, Acworth, Georgia

**Model Railroad Engineer — Electrical**

Lone Star Region
Chuck Lind, MMR, College Station, Texas

Pacific Northwest Region
Bob Beise, Woodinville, Washington
Doug Bulger, Bellevue, Washington
Al Lowe, Bellevue, Washington
Bruce McCosh, Boise, Idaho
Jim Younkins, Olympia, Washington

Rocky Mountain Region
Irving Johnson, Divide, Colorado

Southeastern Region
Howard Goodwin, Acworth, Georgia
Joseph Norris, Bakersville, North Carolina

**Association Volunteer**

Mid-Central Region
Thomas Beutler, Sandusky, Ohio
My story begins like many of you who enjoy the art of model railroading. My parents gave me a set of Lionel trains in 1955 when I was just three years old. I switched to HO scale in 1964 after discovering a Model Railroader magazine with a John Allen cover at the corner store. I learned a lot about mechanics and electronics by reading Model Railroader over the ensuing years, and I have since collected every issue published. I promised myself that someday my model railroad would be featured within its pages. That promise was filled in the April 1996 issue, and my latest railroad is featured in Great Model Railroads 2009.

After being graduated from Newark (New Jersey) College of Engineering in 1974 with a degree in Mechanical Engineering, I worked for various industrial firms in New Jersey, holding various R&D and managerial positions in all departments. In 1992, I joined Micro-Mark, a manufacturer and distributor of tools and supplies for model builders, and followed a career path that led to the position of president.

Since all the trackwork on my model railroad is complete, my operating crew gathers twice a month to run the railroad. I have reached what many call the “fun stage” of model railroading and can pick and choose the projects I care to work on, anything from building a locomotive to rolling stock to scenery to structures, sound systems, and animation. I also own and operate a 1-inch scale live-steam locomotive, and have had the honor of serving as the president and secretary of The New Jersey Live Steamers. I've taken particular pleasure in the instruction and development of my young son, Joey, as a model steam locomotive engineer.

After 44 years of preparation, I entered the NMRA’s Achievement Program in May 2008 and was pleased to complete the requirements for Master Model Railroader in February 2009. The AP showed me that you can, indeed, show an old dog some new tricks, and I learned plenty during this program. It’s a great way to make new friends, improve your model building abilities, and enjoy some recognition of your accomplishments.

Tom holds the following Achievement Awards: Master Builder – Motive Power, Master Builder – Scenery, Master Builder – Structures, Model Railroad Engineer - Civil, Model Railroad Engineer - Electrical, Chief Dispatcher, and Model Railroad Author.