

BRAKEMAN'S RAG

Series II, Vol. 3, No 3

First Division, Pacific Northwest Region, NMRA

September 2015

First Division Mini-Meet

October 17, 2015 - Eugene

First Division's Fall 2015 Mini-Meet will be held on **Saturday, October 17** in Eugene, at the Gainsborough club house, 2555 Lansdown Rd. Lansdown Rd. is off Irving between River Rd and Northwest Expressway. It is just north of the Randy Pape Beltline. Gainsborough is a gated community; the gate will open at 8 AM. Refreshments and lunches will be available at the meeting, and the program will begin at 9 AM.

A model contest will be held, and you are encouraged to bring models for AP Merit Award evaluation. **For AP evaluation, contact Glenn Edmison.** Several interesting clinics will be presented, and an opportunity to form a division Free-Mo group will be presented. Local layouts will be open for participants to visit.

For more information, contact Rich Pitter at 541-636-3833. Mark the date on your calendar and plan to attend.

NMRA National Convention

August 23-30, 2015. Portland, Oregon

This year's National Convention, PDX2015, was held at the DoubleTree Hilton Hotel in Portland. The Pacific Northwest Region (PNR) did not hold a Regional Convention, since Second Division and the Columbia Gorge Model Railroad Club hosted the National Convention. The location provided our members with an opportunity to attend the convention and/or the National Train Show without a considerable amount of travel. Several members of First Division participated in the convention. Some of their stories are presented here.

Layout Tour and Operating Session

By Gene Neville

Three separate convention activities were scheduled at my home layout, all on Wednesday of the convention. There was a bus tour that visited two layouts in Dallas, one in Rickreal, CSME, and mine. This tour had about 45 people on it and they were split in two groups so only half were at a layout at one time. They spent about 45 minutes at each layout.

The NMRA Layout Design Special Interest Group tour also visited that day. They came in their own vehicles, with 3 to 5 people here at a time. There were probably about 40 visitors from this group, and they came until 5:30 when I was scheduled to close. That evening, I hosted an Operating Session for 12 members of the NMRA Operations Special Interest Group (OPSIG). They operated and dispatched the entire railroad except for the staging area. I had several local operators who acted as guides.

I had the option to choose which day I wanted to host the OPSIG function, but the other two events were scheduled by the convention committee. I chose to have

the operating session on the same night to give me more time at the convention and keep my trips to Portland to a minimum.

I thought all the activities went off well. There were a few glitches during the operating session and, with some experience now, I would do some things a little different. Close to 100 visitors and volunteers were here that day, from 10:30 in the morning to 11:30 at night.

My guest register has entries from all geographic areas of this country, and Canada, United Kingdom, Germany, Australia, and New Zealand.

All in all, I thought it was a successful day and would do it again, but not for a while.

This issue benefits from contributions by **Gene Neville** (page 1), **Ed Schaezner, MMR** (page 2), **Charlie Hutto** (page 3), and **Christopher Jones** (page 4), who expressed their observations on the recent NMRA National Convention and National Train Show, and to **Glenn Edmison** (page 8), our AP Chair, for his article on the NMRA Achievement Program's Model Railroad Engineer--Chief Dispatcher.

Articles and photos are always welcome.

The 2015 NMRA National Convention

By Ed Schaezner, MMR

It's been two weeks since I sat down with my wife at the Saturday night banquet that wrapped up the 2015 NMRA Convention in Portland. The salmon on a cedar plank dinner, minus the plank, was excellent, but horribly overpriced. **Charlie Getz**, NMRA President, gave his usual informative and entertaining motivational speech. The guest speaker was probably the low point of the entire eight-day convention, partly because I was deep into a nasty cold that I came down with on the last few days of the convention, and partly because the speaker's subject matter was dry and his presentation was even dryer.

My favorite event in any model railroad get-together is the model contest. It doesn't matter whether it's at a local mini-meet or a large national convention. I spent considerable time in the 2015 contest room.

Monday morning I entered my models. I was lucky and the registration line was short. I had also completed most of the paper work ahead of time. So it didn't take me too long to enter my three black-and-white photographs and three colored photographs of models in the judged photography contest. Getting my two-foot by two-foot by three-foot box holding my diorama from the second floor of the parking garage to the contest room went easier than I thought, once I was able to get one of the four hotel luggage carts. I entered my Sawmill complex in the judged kit-built display category. Finally, I entered an On30 logging work train consisting of a three-truck climax pulling eight assorted MOW cars into the favorite train popular vote contest.

Security was a concern in the contest room because most of the 90 plus models are quite valuable. My wife, Alice, and I volunteered to check bags, purses and other containers before convention goers could enter the contest room. This took a couple of hours on Tuesday

morning and two more hours in the afternoon. That was followed by a one-hour clinic given by **Bob Hamm**, NMRA national contest chairman, for the people who were model contest judges.

Wednesday morning I reported to the contest room at 8:00 AM and was teamed up with two members of Bob Hamm's judging team. We were assigned the job of judging the scratch-built category for all 90 plus models. I was lucky because that is the "easiest" of the five categories to judge. My team was done shortly before 1:00 PM and went to lunch, compliments of the NMRA. (We were compensated for our time spent judging with \$11.00 for a meal at the Lloyd Center food court.)

Christopher Jones was not so lucky. He was assigned to a team of four judges who evaluated the construction category. Because of its complexity, this category is the most difficult to judge, and Christopher's team didn't get done until well after 5:00 PM. Christopher also donated time checking baggage at the silent auction room.

Thursday afternoon I attended the Awards Ceremony in the contest room. One of my black-and-white model photographs took second place in that category. My Sawmill diorama was awarded first place in the kit-built display category. My On30 Logging MOW train took first place in the favorite train category. It also took the Iowata award for the most realistically finished rolling stock.

Friday morning I packed up all my models and photographs, check them out of the contest room and haul them back to my car.

The rest of the time, I spent attending clinics, eateries, the train show, and visiting with old and new friends. It was a great convention and I am looking forward to attending the 2016 PNR Convention in Salmon Arm, British Columbia, with my wife, **Alice**.

First Division Elections

First Division held its elections for officers by mail ballot recently. The votes were tallied by **Charlie Hutto**.

Rich Pitter ran unopposed and was elected First Division Superintendent.

Seven candidates ran for six positions on the First Division Board of Directors. Incumbents **Gene Edmison**, **Gene Neville**, **Dirk Kruysman**, **Nick Lehrbach**, and **Bruce McGarvey** were re-elected.

Christopher Jones was also elected to round out the Board of Directors for the 2015-17 term.

Jim Van Delden also ran for a Board position. We are fortunate in First Division to have competition during an election.

Elaine Crueger, who served on the Board of Directors from 2013 to 2015, and who also served as our Assistant Superintendent during that time, did not run for office.

Portland National Convention

By Charlie Hutto

In August, I attended the NMRA National Convention in Portland. I had been looking forward to attending for many months. One of my main goals was to meet and hear from those whom I consider to be the “superstars” of model railroading. These are individuals that I respect after reading their articles, hearing them on podcasts, and seeing their work on the Internet. I was not disappointed.

Craig Bisgeier I know more about truss bridges that I ever knew before. I learned there are many kinds of truss bridges, the technical terms associated with truss bridges and their design, and several tips to ensure that models are more realistic.

Tony Koester talked about several of the kit-bashed structures on his layout, including his thought processes in determining what and how to model. What interested me was his passion for the hobby; he talked of building an entire structure as a one-evening project for him. While I am not at that level of model railroading, it was refreshing to see his thorough enjoyment of the hobby.

Jimmy Simmons his clinic talked about tips that he uses for scratch-building brick and stone structures. His company (Monster Modelworks) produces kits and supplies with laser-engraved wood sheets.



A city view on **Hank Schmidt's** (on the left) N-scale layout. Photo by Charlie Hutto.

I went on a layout tour in the Milwaukie/Oregon City area. I saw several excellent layouts in a variety of scales On3, N, and HO. But what impressed me the most was a garden layout the entire backyard was a model railroad layout at 1:20 scale. I jokingly remarked to the owner that the water looked so realistic, because it was real water! It truly is commitment to the model



A truly realistic waterfall on **Tom & Betty Gaps's** 1:20 scale garden layout. Photo by Charlie Hutto. railroad hobby to devote your entire backyard to a layout.



An impressive trestle on **Jim Reardon's** On3 layout. Photo by Charlie Hutto.

The National Train Show was a great experience. I was at the Portland Expo Center when it opened on Saturday morning, and several proprietors were able to separate me from my money. I enjoyed chatting with major manufacturers, as well as several First Division members who were present. In addition to the usual tools and scenery materials that I like to buy at these events, I purchased a kit from Monster Modelworks look for it at a future First Division Mini Meet.

I am looking forward to my next National NMRA Convention.

Summer Activities

By Christopher Jones

Coos County Fair

We had a good run during the Coos County Fair. We had guest operators on the layout each day, including **Peter** from Coos Bay, **Bill Manning** from Coquille and **Jim and Elaine Crueger** from Monroe. It was a good fair. Thank you to all participants!

NMRA National Convention

Half of my convention experience was dulled due to catching a miserable cold. That being said, I met many other railroaders from out of our area, including from England and New Zealand.

I brought three items to the silent auction and all three sold. Hooray! I served as a volunteer to check bags for the Contest Room on Tuesday (earning AP points).

NMRA NATIONAL CONVENTION Portland, OR. August 23-30, 2015

By Rich Pitter

This was my first National Convention, so I have nothing except a few PNR Regional Conventions for comparison. The National Convention, like Regional Conventions, had clinics, layout tours, general tours, prototype tours, and a non-rail program, but the National Convention had more days and more (five or six clinics rooms and up to six simultaneous tours) decisions for attendees to make. PDX2015 also had a SIG room, a Company Store, and a Silent Auction.

NMRA Conventions, whether Regional or National, are a great way to recharge your interest in model railroading. In Portland, I got an opportunity to talk with several First Division members, meet several friends from back east, and make some new friends among the conference-goers. My focus was on clinics: to learn about as many new things as possible. A few examples follow.

Many of us have purchased laser-cut kits for structures. The technology permits a manufacturer to design and produce quality models at a fraction of the development cost and with exceptional quality control of the laser cuts on materials, which is a boon to the hobby. **Craig Bisgeier** talked about how he designed freight cars for his layout and had laser-cut parts produced by a third party. If you model a small regional or old-time railroad and want a roster of a dozen or so freight cars that are not mass-produced, then this may be an option. It is on my list of things to try.

My best moments took place in the model contest room. The level of modeling skill was amazing. 3D printing in Nn3 scale? I had to see it to believe it. The scratch building on models needed to be seen in person to believe. I was lucky to be included on a judging team. What an experience!

Ed Schaenzer, MMR of First Division entered his freshly finished On30 logging mill, an On30 work train and photos. He won:

2nd - black and white photo

1st - People's Choice - Work Train

Iwata award - Work Train

1st - Saw Mill

The clinics I attended were interesting and informative. **Charlie Comstock** did a bang-up job as clinic coordinator.

I made it to the train show and again met with multiple vendors. I saw some beautiful models.

Linda and I look forward to next summer's PNR Convention at Salmon Arm, British Columbia.

Jack Burgess, MMR talked about how he developed specialty details for his structures and freight cars. His example included the design of a custom size window frame using SketchUp, which is available free for PC's or Macs. He developed a 3-D computer model of the part and emailed the file to a company, which produced the plastic windows for him using 3-D Printing. His cost for about two dozen custom sized windows was 55 cents per window, which is comparable to commercial plastic window castings. This, too, is on my list to try.

DCC is a fascinating way to power model trains, but some of us were raised in the DC-era of track blocks, cab selectors and, later, the use of pulse throttles to run trains at slow speeds. Now, DCC permits multiple operators on a layout more naturally, with each operator controlling his locomotive with a throttle. Coded instructions (i.e., speed up, slow down, stop) are sent through the rails and decoded on the locomotive, which responds to the commands. Going from DC to DCC shouldn't be that difficult, perhaps, but what changes in track wiring are necessary, how do you install a decoder in your locomotive, and how do you program the decoder to respond to a specific locomotive address? Several clinics covered these topics. I'm building a new layout with DCC, so it was helpful for me to attend DCC clinics by **Mark Gurries**.

Did I say this before? Attending a live clinic on a topic is much more helpful than reading an instruction manual or an article in a model railroad magazine.

How can we get people to focus on small scenes on our layouts that we work so hard to produce? **Greg**

Wright showed how to focus a viewer's attention on a small area and to tease the viewer into thinking that the scene is taken from a larger, much larger, railroad. Several clinics by **Geoff Bunza** focused on layout animation, including motion, light, and sound. Motion can often be circular, such as a rotating sign, but other types of motion are possible. Back-and-forth motion, such as a crossing guard briefly emerging from a shanty, can be achieved by driving a servo. He also showed how he animated a blacksmith's arm to hammer on an anvil. Synchronization of sound with the hammer strikes made that animation come to life.

Light emitting diodes (LED's) have distinct advantages to incandescent lights. If you convert a locomotive to DCC, you need to do something to prevent incandescent bulb headlights from overheating and possibly damaging your locomotives. One option is to swap out the headlights with LED's. Small (1 mm x 2 mm) LEDs also open new possibilities of adding lighting to your scenes.

Dan Lewis presented a clinic that covered an interesting way to get colorful textures on structures, including DPM and similar plastic structures that many of us have. He calls the idea "wet on wet." That means to use rattle-can paints of two colors to achieve an effect. The spray cans need not be expensive paints from your hobby shop, but may be larger spray cans from hardware stores or paint shops. For example, spraying a building with brown, then following with orange while the brown is still wet, produces a brick color with enough variation to resemble prototype aging processes. If you do this, mask doors and windows before spraying, of course. Stucco or stone may similarly be produced by white, followed with a black mist (where the can is held further from the model). I have several old plastic buildings that I'll use to test this method.

Although new technologies and interesting new techniques (to me, at least) predominated, I attended a clinic by **Mike Chandler** that covered techniques on how to use Strathmore paper products to scratch-build structures. Strathmore, which decades ago was the go-to method of modelers for building structures, has lately lost some of its glamor to laser-cut and plastic building techniques. Mike suggested using 1-ply, 2-ply, and 4-ply Strathmore for buildings, the latter for walls and the two thinner for details (trim boards, etc.). Each ply is 0.007 to 0.008" thick. Use the smooth (vellum finish) products. Walls can be readily scribed with a hobby knife (I suggest using a drafting table with T-square and triangles for precision). Strathmore is well-suited for coloring using oil paints and construction using white

glue. This, too, is on my list of projects; I will do this for background buildings.

I attended a clinic by **Jeff Johnston** which covered the basics of making urethane castings of model details. RTV (room temperature vulcanizing) silicone can be purchased from hobby stores and Micro Mark. Care should be made when you produce the master--the part you want all the castings to look like. The RTV silicone takes about a day to cure, then the mold can be used to cast multiple times. Urethane casting material is mixed and poured into the mold, then may be removed a minute or two later. If you need a dozen or more castings of a specific part, this may be the way to go. I've done this in the past, for bridge abutments, and when I attended the clinic, I thought of other things I want to produce in this way.

I attended one of the two clinics which introduced NMRA LCC, or Layout Command Control (formerly called NMRA Net), which is a separate system from DCC. LCC will enable a large layout with stationary decoders (turnouts, layout lighting, and anything else that does not need the rails for signal transmission) to offload those from the DCC bus. DCC has grown so rapidly that the bus can become saturated on large layouts. By moving stationary decoders to LCC, the trains respond more quickly to cab commands. LCC does not require DCC; it can also work with DC power to the rails. LCC can also enhance the DCC experience, because offers the ability to not only use any decoder with any DCC power system (as we do at present), but to also mix and match cabs with power systems, such as using a Lenz cab with a Digitrax command system. LCC has been tested on real layouts using hand-built, breadboard systems and software designed and coded by the NMRA LCC development team members. Manufacturers are already developing products for LCC, and I expect we will see those announcements before the end of this year. For readers with Internet access, check out the Yahoo Group at <https://groups.yahoo.com/LayoutCommandControl>.

The National Train Show was held at the Portland Expo Center. It was nice to see several First Division members who did not attend the Convention, at the Train Show. The Train Show featured several LEGO train layouts and a dozen or more modular layouts covering scales from N to O. Most of the layouts were Free-Mo.

There was much for me to learn at the Convention. You might attend a Regional or National Convention for a first-hand opportunity to learn new things and to recharge your model railroading battery.

MY OBSERVATIONS OF LCC

By Rich Pitter

NMRA Magazine has lately heralded the arrival of LCC on the modeling scene. It announced that LCC would be presented to modelers at the NMRA National Convention in Portland last month. It was announced, as advertized, but it is not yet something that modelers can purchase for their layouts. NMRA President **Charlie Getz** did everything but don a short pleated skirt and pom-pons to cheer for LCC. He and the NMRA LCC development team presented a lot of information, and gave many of the audience good reasons to be optimistic about the new technology, but he missed some important points.

Model railroaders who are also involved with digital communications have bread-boarded the components that make up LCC. They have proved beyond a doubt that the design is both feasible and robust. The components they have worked with are mass-produced for the automotive industry, and will not require new costs to produce for the model railroading hobby. The underlying concept is a single, unbranched, LCC bus that may connect with a computer, which is used once to program the system, and daisy-chained from device to device throughout the layout. The devices (think, for example, crossing gate, automated turnout motor, or block signal), all plug in to the LCC bus with connectors that look like your telephone plugs and, with programming using either a computer or a simple device, each output device will know which detectors to react to. The layout can have multiple inputs (track occupancy detectors) and outputs (crossing gates, etc.). Those of us with block signals, who want distant block protection, can easily set each target of each signal to respond appropriately to input from specific occupancy detectors. All of this, and more, represents examples of how LCC can enhance model railroading.

As I said above, Charlie missed a point. He said that vendors are developing products that use LCC (they are), and that NMRA controls LCC (it does; if it says LCC, it must adhere to NMRA standards), but he also said that LCC at present is a only theoretical set of standards and protocols that make it work, since there are no products on the market.

LCC is more than theoretical: LCC has been bread-boarded (hobbyist talk for turning schematics into real-world circuits) and both hardware and software have been well-tested for robustness. Who will market LCC products, and what they will cost, will depend on how

much the hobby demands them.

After the clinic, I talked to one of the LCC designers and posed some specific applications. My first application involved something I want to do on my layout. I have a stretch of single-track mainline between two passing sidings where an operator at either siding cannot see whether the mainline is clear to proceed. I want trackside signals (semaphores) at both sidings to be triggered by an occupancy detector on the mainline between the two. LCC will do that, but he said it would be an overkill (that is, more expensive than a simpler system) if that's all the occupancy detector is used for. For my second application, I want to develop automatic scheduling of trains from a staging yard. That means, at scheduled times, to check for a clear track, throw the staging yard turnouts, and start the train. For that application, LCC will not only do the job, but also permit changes in departure times. I'll use a computer and software to accomplish that. The part about checking for a clear track means that the occupancy detector and signals (the first application I mentioned) will be on LCC. This is an application where integration of components can better serve the modeler.

I talked with some of my friends from the Boston, MA, region, who are part of North Eastern Region's HUB Division. The Division has an excellent modular HO scale layout. The layout is not Free-Mo, but the Division's standards are well developed. NMRA members in Divisions from other Regions have developed modules to those standards and they joint-Division modular layouts have run at National Conventions. The HUB Division's layout runs on Lenz DCC and many modules have signal masts and block occupancy detectors. Since the modules may be set up in any order at a specific show (and the layout configuration at times is more complicated than a double-track oval; it has been operated with branch lines that have crossings and connecting tracks). The problem with operating, realistic signaling has been that, when the layout is set up ready to run, each signal on the layout needs to be independently programmed. With LCC, the setup at each show will be faster and easier to perform.

For those of us with 4' x 8' HO scale layouts, it may be an overkill to use LCC, but as I mentioned above, the layout I am building will have an application for LCC that will enhance my operations. It may take a year or more for me to get my layout to the point where I can implement scheduling of staged trains, but I can prepare before then by installing DCC-controlled turnouts and occupancy detection.

EDITORIAL: FIRST DIVISION FREE-MO?

By Rich Pitter

By my understanding, a group of Free-Mo modelers from the Umpqua Valley Model Railroad Club in Roseburg were initially invited to the National Train Show, then not only forgotten, but ignored when they requested updates. It's a pity, because the group worked hard to prepare a top-class Free-Mo layout for the National Train Show. It is more the pity because the Expo Center had, by my estimation, nearly half an acre of unused floor space, so available space was not an issue.

I believe that the formation of a First Division Free-Mo group, made up of a confederation of Free-Mo modelers in several local groups, is a way to overcome this type of heartbreak into the future. By presenting the group as a NMRA group, we should be able to command the attention and respect of NMRA-sponsored train shows in the future.

Throughout the geographical boundaries of First Division, there are several local Free-Mo groups; some well established and others still developing. Some of these groups are not composed 100% of NMRA members, but at least one is.

Without encroaching on each existing Free-Mo group's leadership and membership, it is possible to establish a First Division Free-Mo group, consisting of First Division (hence NMRA) members who have, or are interested in developing, Free-Mo modules. First Division members would then maintain membership both in their local group and in First Division's group. By forming liaisons with existing Free-Mo groups, we would enable First Division Free-Mo modelers to set up with existing Free-Mo groups at shows and other public exhibits. The liaisons would enable First Division members to be aware of and to participate in these exhibits, and also help local groups to plan for more modules at shows.

By becoming an optional activity for all First Division members, the First Division Free-Mo group would have both "100% NMRA" and "First Division PNR" status, and that should get it into any National or Regional train show. Additionally, public appearances by local Free-Mo groups throughout Oregon will excite the public towards model railroading on a scale that most modelers and their families could actively participate in. By providing NMRA promotional literature at these public shows, First Division is likely to gain new members.

Questions remain. Should the modules have single track or double track? Should the module be HO or

On30, or perhaps N scale? By leaving this question to the local Free-Mo groups, we enable First Division Free-Mo modelers to participate in the scale they prefer.

Many members without space for a home layout have space to build and store a Free-Mo module. An HO double-track mainline module is 26 inches wide and whatever length the builder chooses. The end plates, which are connected together, the electrical connectors, and the legs all have standards so the layout can be set up quickly and reliably and operated without problems. A Free-Mo group might also have active participants who do not have modules (or, at least, not yet), but who help at module work sessions and who run trains at shows.

In summary, I believe that establishment of a First Division Free-Mo group and formation of liaisons with existing Free-Mo groups throughout the boundaries of First Division would be beneficial to all parties. A First Division member in, say, Albany, can participate in, say, N scale Free-Mo events with a group from, say, Medford. The Medford group gains modules for the event provided by First Division members from outside their local area, the NMRA members gain modeling and operation opportunities, and First Division, through the NMRA promotional literature, gains public exposure and potential new members.

What is required for this to happen? The Board of Directors needs to adopt a Resolution to form a Free-Mo group, and at least one First Division member needs to volunteer to serve as Free-Mo Liaison. Also, local Free-Mo groups need to accept the concept of adding First Division modules to their layouts at public exhibitions, and to permit the display of NMRA promotional literature.

Of course, questions still exist. These questions can be addressed and resolved through communications with the various local Free-Mo groups.

Are you interested in participating? If so, contact me or someone on the Board of Directors (see page 11) and express your interest. Also, would you be willing to volunteer as the First Division Free-Mo Liaison? I have contacts for several Free-Mo groups, and I suspect that other Free-Mo groups exist or are on the cusp of existence throughout First Division.

For existing Free-Mo groups: I seek cooperation so your groups can obtain additional modules for public shows. I am not asking non-NMRA members to become NMRA members, and display of NMRA promotional literature at public exhibitions does not prevent local groups from recruiting non-NMRA members.

Who wants this to happen?

Tricks and Treats

Modeling Thoughts by First Division Members

[Editor's Note] The Brakeman's Rag does not pull its content out of the void. Everything presented has been either generated by the Editor or has been sent to him by mail or email. Although we appreciate short articles, such as model construction or a tour of your layout, we also accept shorter contributions, either in the form of photographs (with captions) of your layout or models, or "pointers" to websites with interesting modeling content (along with your paragraph or two to explain what the website is about), or short (150 words, more or less) description of modeling tips. We publish four times a year, 12 pages per issue. We are avidly looking for your contributions. Acceptance and publication of your article counts toward the requirements of the Author Achievement Certificate. We'd like to hear from you!

Lighting Those Cars

Contributed by Glenn Edmison

I model in both N and HO scale. Among my collection of new and used cars are several that I would like to have lighted. These include passenger cars, cabooses, and specialty cars of several different brands. I have been frustrated by not being able to find a way to accomplish this using track power. The ideal solution would be an adaption of the trucks to pick up track power through metal wheels and axle wipers, which could be wired to the lights or other devices in the cars. I have checked local hobby shops and online at Walthers. They either do not seem to carry these, or they do so at a considerable price.

Recently, through an on-line forum, I heard about a source that carries a variety of track pickup systems for both scales and for a variety of car manufacturers. You may want to look on <http://www.sbs4dcc.com/>. One nice feature that is included on the website are several videos on how to install power pickup devices.

Happier modeling!

Scratch-Building Short Cuts

Contributed by Rich Pitter

When I build models in HO scale from basswood or balsa wood, I intentionally slightly undersize the dimensions of the wood pieces that I am modeling. Instead of using 1:87, I use 1:96 for the dimensions of boards and timbers. Of course, I cut the pieces to the proper HO scale size. This

simplifies construction without noticeable effect. For example, I use 1/8-inch = 1 foot. A 12"x12" timber is represented by a 1/8-inch square piece of stripwood. If I had an HO-scale inspector with an accurate tape measure, he would say the timber is 10 7/8 inches square instead of 12 inches square, but I am confident that most people who view my models will not object to this simplification, even if I tell them how I do it. For reference, the following table shows several common stripwood sizes and both the 1:96-scale and 1:87-scale sizes.

Stripwood	Inches		I use for (range)
	in 1:96	in 1:87	
1/32"	3	2.7	2 - 4
1/16"	6	5.4	5 - 7
3/32"	9	8.2	8 - 10
1/8"	12	10.9	11 - 13
5/32"	15	13.6	14 - 16
3/16"	18	16.3	17 - 19
1/4"	24	21.8	22 - 26
3/8"	36	32.6	33 - 39
1/2"	48	43.5	44 - 52

When I use my graphics program (Corel Draw) to design buildings and trestles, I use another short cut to easily set the program to HO scale. Graphics programs can "snap to" a grid of either dots or [intersections of] lines. I set the number of dots per inch to 7.25 before I begin drawing buildings. This is exactly 1:87. Why? I ask you: how many feet do you measure when your tape measure shows 87 inches? Your answer is 7 1/4 (or 7.25). One inch on my drawing represents 87 inches in HO scale, or 7.25 feet in HO scale. With grid dots spaced "7.25 per inch," and by snapping to grid, I can readily build rectangles like 12 by 16 feet. If I am working from published plans, I simplify building dimensions to the nearest whole feet, where possible. When I am satisfied with the looks of things, I can print out the building walls and glue-stick them on the back side of styrene or Strathmore. Glue stick doesn't relax the paper, so it retains dimensions. I cut out the wall and go from there.

For windows and doors, I created a file of rectangles that match the dimensions of Grandt Line and other company's doors and windows (see, for example, http://www.grandtline.com/products/arch/ho/ho_scale_small_windows.html/). I label each part. When the wall is ready, I copy and paste the windows and doors into the wall section to visualize the spacing and size of window and door openings.

NMRA Achievement Program Model Railroad Engineer--Chief Dispatcher

By Glenn Edmison

For this issue of *The Brakeman's Rag*, I would like to discuss one of the most available and instructive, yet, I believe, least pursued of the AP Certificates: *Model Railroad Engineer--Chief Dispatcher*. This is an award that can be earned by any member whether or not he/she has a layout. It can be earned on one's own layout; it can be earned on a club layout, it can be earned by just visiting layouts of some other guys or clubs. It is based on learning to model a facet of model railroading that is almost invisible, but never-the-less as real as track and switches, locomotives, cars structures and scenery. It is based on modeling the way real railroads organize to serve customers, whether business, industry or individuals.

Let's take a look at the requirements: All documents relating to this Award can be found at the following internet address: <http://www.nmra.org/dispatcher>.

A large part of the requirements is:

To qualify for the Chief Dispatcher certificate you must:

Have participated in the operation of a model railroad, either home or club, for not less than fifty hours. A minimum of ten hours each must have been served in three of the five categories listed below, one of which must be #5, Dispatcher:

- #1 Engineer (mainline freight, passenger, or wayfreight)
- #2 Yardmaster (or station master)
- #3 Hostler (or power desk)
- #4 Towerman (or traffic manager, or road master)
- #5 Dispatcher

This experience shall be accumulated on one or more model railroads having at least two mainline trains plus yard switching in simultaneous operation. Some system of freight and passenger car movements, including road switching, shall be used for controlling train activity.

The on-line description continues to describe the duties of the various roles listed above. One must document having served in a variety of those roles typical of railroad operations. This could be done in as few as 16 to 20 operating sessions and involve simply just showing up and running trains on some occasions,

and, on other occasions, for planning the run sessions to serve the various customers on a pre-planned schedule, as you assume others of the roles listed. One should have the recording form for the hours involved in the various activities signed off by the host/superintendent of the layout for each session. It is amazing how fast the hours add up.

In addition to the running of the trains, there are some things that have to be shown to justify the way the railroad is attempting to operate according to a plan. This is where the real learning comes in. And all the help and aids are there on the web site to guide you as you progress. There is even a special interest group on operations that you can access through the Members' Only link on the NMRA main web page. Those guys are willing to help and have published information which can help you.

And, here is another idea. Why not get your club or a group of model railroader friends to commit to working together to earn the Dispatcher Certificate? You could help each other. You could take turns at the various roles and pass on what you have learned. You could develop the planning forms together and all claim ownership. The role playing would be more fun, since now you will know why the railroad is operating as it does.

As always, I remind you that the members of the AP Evaluation Team are available and willing to answer questions. They are all listed on the Division 1 web page. To me, this is a natural for every member. Hey! Go for it!

Go to: <http://www.nmra.org/sites/default/files/2006-soq-dispatch.pdf>. Print out the forms so they will provide a reminder. And have a good time doing it.

In my AP articles, I assume that the reader has access to the Internet. The Internet is a marvelous resource for modelers; it also contains the requirements for each of the NMRA achievement certificates and many helpful ideas on how to satisfy those requirements. If you are interested in pursuing an achievement certificate but do not have Internet access or someone who can help you acquire that information then, please, contact me by mail with your questions. I will see that your get answers and hard copies of the requirements you seek. My address is: Glenn Edmison, 1248 NE Williamson Blvd, Bend, OR 97701.

Model Train Shows and Events**September-December 2015**

- Sept 19-20** **Eastern Cascades Club's Annual Open House**, 21520 Modoc Lane, Bend. Take Highway 20 East from Bend to Ward Road; turn right (south) about 3/4 mile to Modoc lane on right. Watch for signs. Contact Glenn Edmison at gedmison@aol.com. <http://www.emcrr.org>.
- Sat., Oct 17** **First Division Fall Mini-Meet**, held in Eugene at the Gainsborough community clubhouse from 9 AM to 3 PM. Program includes clinics, model contests, door prizes, and opportunity for model evaluations for merit awards (Contact Glenn Edmison in advance for merit award registration). Model railroad layouts will be open for visits. Refreshments and lunch available at meeting. Gainsborough is a gated, 55-plus community. Gate opens at 8 AM. Contact Rich Pitter at 541-636-3833 or richpitter@aol.com for more information.
- Sun., Oct 18** **Train Fest 2015**. From 1PM to 5PM. Location: Alpenrose Dairy's Dairyville, 6149 SW Shattuck Rd., Portland. Sponsored by Beaverton Modular RR Club and Portland Area N-Trak. Bring your new or old trains, DC or DCC--HO, HO n3, or N scale to run. Meet staff from Portland area hobby shops: Hobby Smith, Tammies Hobbies, and Whistlestop Trains. Info: beavertonrailroadclub.com.
- Sun., Oct 24** **Western Rural Industrial Congress: Logging, Agriculture, Mining**. Old Willamina High School. Opens 9AM. \$15 admission gets a full day of clinics, vendors, and a first class model contest. Info: www.modelerscongress.com or call 503-857-2800.
- Nov 28-29** **38th Annual Rogue Valley Railroad Show** Sat., 10 AM - 5 PM; Sun., 10 AM - 4 PM. Medford Armory, 1701 South Pacific Ave, Medford, Oregon, 97501. Model railroad displays, historic railroad artifacts, swap meet, door prizes, & more. Proceeds benefit Medford Railroad Park. Web site: <http://rvmrc.net/>. Contact: Bruce McGarvey, Co-chair. 541-890-8145. Email: iwccrr@charter.net.

Local Railroad Clubs

These clubs are not affiliated with NMRA but have members in NMRA and have expressed an interest in hosting First Division members as guests and prospective new club members.

- The **Atlantic & Pacific N-gineers** meet near downtown Junction City. They operate a permanent mobile 50' x 24' L-shaped DCC layout that they display at shows in the region. For meeting information, contact Mike Adams at mdadams006@aol.com or 541-913-5865.
- The **Corvallis Society of Model Engineers** meets every Wednesday at 7 PM. Visitors are welcome. The club is located in an old gas station at 7155 Vandenberg Ave. in Adair Village, about 6 miles north of downtown Corvallis on Highway 99W. For information, visit club website at www.csme1959.org.
- The **Eastern Cascades Model Railroad Club** and the associated **Live Steamers** meet on Wednesdays at the club house, 21540 Modoc Lane (off Ward Road east of Bend), 7-9 PM. Info: <http://www.ecmrr.org/> or (541) 317-1545.
- The **Ochoco Valley Railroad Club** meets most every Sunday, 2-4 PM in the club house on the Crook County Fairgrounds. Contact Brad Peterson at (541) 447-6158 or Glenn Edmison at (541) 617-1110.
- The **Rogue Valley Model Railroad Club** meets on (usually) first Saturday of the month, 10 AM at Medford Railroad Park. Contact Ron Harten at sprucerr@earthlink.net.
- The **Umpqua Valley Model Railroad Club** meets Thursday nights at 7 PM in the basement of the law offices at 880 SE Jackson St. in Roseburg, OR. The club has a modular railroad layout in one room and is building additional modules. For information, contact Nick Lehrbach at lehrbach@rosenet.net.
- The **Willamette Cascade Model Railroad Club** meets the second Saturday of each month at 7 PM at the Springfield Utility Board Energy & Conservation Services Building, 223 A St., Springfield. For information, contact Lee Temple at tandt@ram-mail.com.

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The *Brakeman's Rag* is the newsletter of First Division, Pacific Northwest Region, National Model Railroader Association. The newsletter is published quarterly. All NMRA members residing within the counties of Benton, Coos, Crook, Deschutes, Douglas, Jackson, Josephine, Klamath, Lane, Lincoln, and Linn in Oregon are considered to be First Division members. First Division has no dues. The *Brakeman's Rag* is transmitted by email and posted on our web page. Members who do not have email service receive the newsletter by U.S. mail with black and white photos.

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