

The Local

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Free-Mo Concept

*Article and photos by Mike McNamara
New Jersey Division/HO Scale*

AT THE RECENT PRINCETON JUNCTION 2010 MER Convention in New Jersey many MER members had their first look at an HO scale Free-Mo modular layout set up. Modules constructed by myself and Bob Clegg were on-site to demonstrate the Free-Mo concept and the potential for a modular layout at the convention hotel site as an added attraction for conventioners. During the convention I presented a clinic introducing the Free-Mo concept, a review of the primary standards and a look at designing and building a module. A copy of the presentation is available in PDF form at files.me.com/mikemc/fskiko. I was also on-site throughout the weekend explaining Free-Mo while operating trains on the modules.

So exactly what is Free-Mo? Well, the concept is to allow for a module that can be more prototypical than earlier standards by focusing mainly on the endplates, leaving modelers lots of flexibility in designing what happens between these interface points. Free-Mo takes advantage of developments in the hobby since older modular standards were conceived, such as the proliferation of Code 83 track components and DCC layout control. The end results are a module that is relatively easy to build, set up and operate, and can be quickly connected to any other module. This was demonstrated to great effect at the NMRA 75th Anniversary convention in Milwaukee this past July as builders from across the country set up a 4,000 square foot layout featuring dozens of modules.

The Free-Mo standard specifies a single track mainline centered on a two foot end with no backdrop allowing for a module

that can be connected in either direction and still mate up to the next module's track and wiring. Modules can be any length and can have ends at any angle. Free-Mo layouts are set up and operated in a point to point, point to loop or loop to loop, and can be any size and configuration. The goal is not so much to entertain the public, but to allow for a realistic and operational layout that can be enjoyed by the module builders and the public as well.

In addition to the "technical" standards such as track, wiring and module height, there is also a Free-Mo "spirit" which is to provide a platform for prototypical modeling with plausible, believable scenery, structures and trains and realistic, reliable trackwork and operations. You won't find high speed Thomas passenger trains or dinosaurs and racecars on Free-Mo modules. These certainly appeal to the public, but not so much to the NMRA member.

How can a Free-Mo modular set up benefit the MER conventions? Well, besides the obvious advantage of having an actual operating model railroad on-site, the modular layout can be used to conduct operating sessions through out the weekend.

It can also be used as an interactive tool for giving a clinic on operations or for a demonstration of scenery or structure techniques given at a clinic. A member can use a module to get their Golden Spike award and as a method to work towards the AP awards for Prototype Modeling, Scenery and more. The modules also expose non-model railroaders to the hobby at the convention site, never a bad thing as you never know where the next model railroader might come from.



Free-Mo modular layout setup at recent convention.

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The Local

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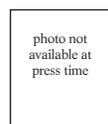


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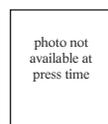


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All subscription information, advertising rates and publication deadlines are now located on page 16.



The MER website is <http://mer.nmra.org/>

From The Business Car

By John Janosko
MER President

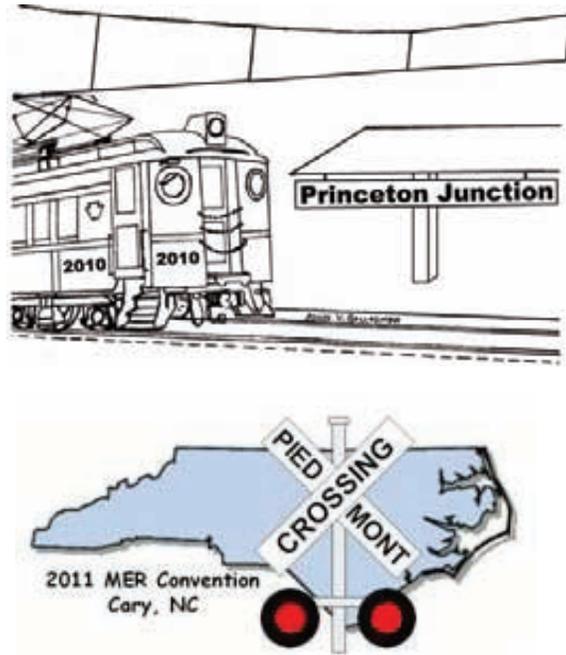
IF YOU MISSED the Princeton convention, you missed some great layouts, wonderful operating sessions and some excellent clinics. My hat is off to Bob Clegg and his crew for the wonderful convention. Hopefully, we can do as good a job with the **Piedmont Crossing** convention in Cary, NC in October of 2011.

One of the many things that the President gets to do at the yearly convention is to give the Presidents award. The 2011 Presidential award will be on engine facilities. So over the winter you may want to build a water tower, coaling facility or maybe a diesel fueling facility. Your entries will be judged and you may get enough for the AP program along with a nice plaque to put on your wall. The 2010 numbers of models at the judging were less than usual. Let's see if we can

keep the judges busy in Cary all day Saturday.

One other thing that came up as we closed the **Princeton Convention** was that one of our members had several items in the auction. When he came to the company store on Sunday to pick up his unsold items it seems three items were missing. If anyone accidentally picked up some extra items, please contact either myself or P.J. Mattson and we will make sure they get back to their proper home.

I hope everyone had a great Christmas and I wish you a prosperous New Year. May you have plenty of time to work on your layout and on those model kits that you bought over the years and have not got around to putting together? 📦



Visit the South Mountain Division on the Web!

By Jane Clarke

THE SOUTH MOUNTAIN DIVISION has a new and improved website www.smdnmra.org! Roy Hoffman is our new webmaster and is committed to keeping the content fresh so you will return to it often. We will constantly be adding pictures to the layout tours tab. You will find links to local hobby shops, tourist railroads, conventions, and (soon) local club layouts.

Enjoy it and please send us your feedback! 📧



A screen shot of the updated webpage.

Keeping In Touch...

By Fred Miller, MMR
MER Business Manager

I TRUST all our members and friends had a good **Model Railroad Month** last November, followed by a wonderful holiday season. Perhaps you even found train goodies under the Christmas tree. It is always a good time to share our hobby with family and fellow model railroaders. As I have said before, this old timer always associates this time of year with memories of trains around the Christmas tree and big train displays in stores a half century ago.

And speaking of things said before, I just realized this is the seventh year I bring this holiday message to you in my column as Business Manager. Yes, our newly elected President, John Janosko has asked me to continue in this role, trying to keep the membership records straight and “*keeping in Touch...*” with y’all.

Each New Year brings to mind statistics of what has happened with our membership during the past year. Our active member-

ship has unfortunately decreased to just over 2,100, a drop from our high a few years ago of over 2,300. The number of members enjoying the printed and mailed version of this newsletter has increased. We are now mailing over 1,000 paper copies and sending the electronic version to over 400.

Another little piece of statistical fun: We have the modeling scales registered for 1,200 members. The distribution changed a bit from last year with 77 percent in HO scale, 11 percent in N scale, 8% in O scale, and the remaining 4 percent divided up between G, S and Z scales. These numbers change up or down by a percent or two each year. (For simplicity sake, I have used only one scale per modeler even though a small number of members model in multiple scales. I have also just used the base scales rather than the variations, e.g., HOn3 or On30.)

As we enter this New Year, get out all those stalled modeling projects and start enjoying your hobby of model railroading. As always *Keep in Touch* with any questions or changes in your subscriptions or addresses. A current address on file saves the MER some money.

Best wishes for the New Year of *model railroading*. 📧

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It also allows for the participation of any MER member to bring their module to a convention. It is not a closed group or club, so any MER member can be confident in knowing that what he builds at home will be part of a unique and fully functional layout built on-site at the convention.

For more information on Free-Mo check out the official website www.free-mo.org. There is also a very good Yahoo discussion

group with over 1,100 members. It is a good place to find out more information and ask questions of other Free-Mo module builders across the US and abroad. Search for Free-Mo on the groups.yahoo.com page.

Will Free-Mo modules be a staple of future MER conventions in years to come, much like Op-Sessions have become? It is up to the MER membership to make it happen! There were certainly some very interested MER members at the convention, so perhaps as early as the convention in Cary, NC next year we will be able to expand upon the modest Free-Mo efforts within our region. 📧

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By Lance Mindheim

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An Experiment in Judging At the MER Convention

*By Martin Brechbiel and Greg Meeks
MER General Contest Chairman and MER Model Contest Chair*

AS NOTED, there was a surprisingly low turnout in the Contest room this year in Princeton for reasons that can only be speculated upon at this time. And, at the same time, we had our usual number of Judges on hand, signed in, ready and willing to proceed in the usual system of 5 teams of Judges, 1 team of 3 individuals for each judging category that would have provided us with excellent coverage of the room. In fact, that arrangement would have been ideal as well; 1 senior Judge, 1 Judge to carefully read through the entry's paperwork, and 1 Judge to act as a "scribe" to record comments on judging comments sheet back to the modeler.

Except, we only had 15 models to judge!!! One suggestion was to do an en masse judging by the whole crowd and be done with it, and use that as a consensus exercise. But that seemed a bit awkward crowding 15 Judges around each model as well as getting everyone a good up close look at the model as well. We also happened to have 2 distinctly separate rooms that were situated directly across the hall from one another. What to do, what to do, what do.

After some deliberation, food, a beverage or 3, and some sleep, what we decided to do was to arrange the models to be evenly split between the 2 rooms (as best as reasonable...) and then split our crowd of Judges into 2 distinctly different teams; call them Team A and Team B for lack of anything more colorful. We sent Team A in to one room and Team B into the other, and then subdivided those teams into smaller units to actually judge the 5 categories; Construction, Detail, Conformity, Lettering & Finish, and Scratchbuilding. We kept the 2 teams isolated from each other, had them score the models using our new All-in-1 Matrix page, and had them record their comments on the judging comments sheet for each model in their respective rooms. After the 2 teams completed their respective rooms, we collected the score sheets and comment sheets for each model, replaced them with blank sheets, and then had the 2 teams change rooms. This resulted in all of the models actually getting judged 2 times(!) and also completely independently(!!). With the second round of judging completed, we collected the score sheets and comment sheets for each model again and then side-by-side tabulated the scores for all 15 models by individual category score and total score.

And, then we proceeded to the really interesting part of the day where we retired to the conveniently adjacent conference room, sat down, and discuss those tabulated results. One of the fundamental premises of Judging as currently performed uses the Guidelines and Matrices for each of the categories therein along with a number of points to consider (and ponder). These are all installed to insure consistency in judging of models. Ideally, were one to take their model to any venue or to any level, be it Divisional, Regional, or National, the points attained by that judging would

be within a few points across those levels. And, in fact, for most of those models that I am aware of traveling across boundaries and levels, the points have been within those tolerances, but, that sample size is small. Right now one of our primary objectives is to assure that we have consistent results without variance within the MER. Unsurprisingly, there were a few "disagreements" on a few categorical scores, however, for the larger part, all of the scores tended to be in agreement (more on that to follow). This made for a few vigorous minutes but the end result was that I sent the disagreeing teams back into the Contest Room as a unit to affect some measure of resolution. And, for the large part they came back with resolution of either not seeing things the same, finding what the others missed, or simply misreading what was provided by the modeler on the form.

So, what's the bottom line after all this little exercise, you ask? We had 15 models, so that's 5 judged categories and a total score; that's 90 numbers from each group of judges. To break that down further, at the end of the day 80 percent of the scores were within 3 points, 67 percent were within 2 points, 48 percent were within a single point, and 20 percent were identical! Looking at the final scores, one team was higher on 7 models, while the other team was higher on the other 7 models and they tied one 1. Out of all of the scores, that resolution exercise affected only 7 categorical scores, and again, at the end of the day, every modeler benefited!

Finally, this exercise was also of benefit to all of the judges. It has been exceptionally rare that we get a chance to openly cross-check, calibrate, and validate how we judge models at any level in the NMRA. Just about every person that Judged in Princeton has expressed positive comments on this exercise, that they all learned something (novice through MMR!), and I think that we all found the ability to have that final convocation and discussion of score to be of significant value to the modelers. Should modelers interested in the Contest Room at the MER convention feel reassured about the quality of the judging – I am after this exercise! Is it perfect? That's a long way away and maybe not even possible given the subjective nature of the process. But, this year's results tell me that we are well on our way headed in the right direction!

Now, can we do this every year? No! Not if we get the normal 40 models – there's just not enough time then. But, the one detail that we would have done this year would still apply in that case. We would still retain the 5 Senior Judges from each category for a final discussion of each model to make sure that we get things "right".

We also introduced a new page that goes back to the modeler this year – a 1 page copy of all 5 matrices that shows the original of the numerical scores so that the modeler can get a more feed-

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New Membership Recruitment Program

As an aid to membership recruitment, NMRA recently instituted a six month "Railpass" trial membership program which costs the applicant \$9.95. Building on this idea, the MER is instituting a program whereby it will pay the \$9.95 Railpass fee for interested applicants in the MER. In other words, we are making available FREE six month Railpass trial memberships to encourage recruitment of regular members.

What's covered?

Same as Railpass—receive six issues of **Scale Rails**, three issues of **The Local**, eligibility to attend conventions and meets, eligibility to participate in contests.

What's not covered?

Same as Railpass—applicants cannot vote or hold office, and will not receive the New Member Pak from national (it's rather expensive).

Who can be recruited?

Anyone living within the MER who has not been a member of NMRA during the past thirty months.

How will the recruitment process work?

(1) The prospective member fills out the MER trial membership application form which was sent to all division superintendents (not the standard NMRA Railpass form) (2) The "recruiter" should

also sign the form, and then forward it to: Fred Miller, MER Business Manager, 333 W. Trade St, Unit #2504, Charlotte, NC 28202-1961. (3) Fred will record the information he needs in his data base, and will forward the application to the MER Treasurer. (4) The Treasurer will add the necessary check and forward the application and check to the national headquarters in Chattanooga.

What happens after the member's six month trial period?

The Railpass trial member will receive a standard dues notice from national headquarters. We hope a substantial number of Railpass trial members will sign up to become regular members.

Are there limits on the program?

The MER initially allocated \$2,000 for this program. The Board recently allocated an additional \$1,000 to extend the program to the end of 2010, or when the funds are spent – whichever comes first. When and if we approach either limit, Division Superintendents and members of the MER Board of Directors will be notified. At that time, the program will be evaluated by the MER Board of Directors. If successful, we will try to continue it.

For questions?

Contact Fred Miller, MER Business Manager (mailing address is above, 704-332-1753, tractionfan@aol.com), or John Janosko, MER President (see contact information on page 2). 

National Model Railroad Association (NMRA) Mid-Eastern Region Application for Free "Railpass" Trial Membership

YES, please sign me up for a free six month Railpass trial membership in the NMRA—which includes membership in the Mid-Eastern Region, and in my local Division. During this six month period, I understand that I may attend conventions and meets, and participate in contests. I will receive **Scale Rails**, the monthly national magazine, and **The Local**, the bi-monthly regional newsletter. I will not be eligible to vote, hold office, or receive a New Member Pak.

I also understand that the \$9.95 cost of this six month Railpass trial membership is being paid by the Mid-Eastern Region. (Regardless of who pays, six month \$9.95 memberships are available only once to each person.)

At the end of the six months, I may join NMRA, paying the regular active member dues.

During the past thirty months, I have **not** been a member of NMRA.

=====

Name: _____

Street Address: _____

City/State/Zip: _____

Phone: (_____) _____

Email: _____

Scale(s): _____ Date of Birth: _____

Signature of Applicant: _____

Signature of Sponsor: _____ (Required)

(A Regional or Divisional officer or board member)

=====

Date of form: 1/31/07

When this form is completed,
mail it to:

**Fred Miller, MMR
MER Business Manager
333 W. Trade St, Unit #2504
Charlotte, NC 28202-1961**

Do **not** mail it directly to MMRA
headquarters in Chattanooga, TN.

back as to where the Judges saw the model in the context of those matrices. I'm curious to hear any feedback from anyone on that practice.

Lastly, constructive criticism is good, and good ideas that make sense and promote participation are great; if you have a problem with anything regarding the Contest Room, bring that to my attention immediately. Don't let misunderstandings or hurt feelings lessen the fun of model railroading and the joy of sharing your modeling efforts with others. This article, the use of the matrix, the judging experiment, and the year-long judging apprentice program are examples that were all designed to

improve the consistency and accuracy of judging and scores. You can judge for yourself based on the above how well we succeeded. We will continue to improve the Contest Room with your help and participation. However, previous problems and issues must be left in the past so we can move forward. If it has been a while since you participated in the Contest because you had a negative experience, give it another try. We think you'll be happy with the progress. 📧

2011 Railroading Modeling University

By Bob Halsey
Carolina Southern Division/HO Scale

THE FIFTH ANNUAL RMU is scheduled for January 22, 2011 at the Northside Baptist Church (333 Jeremiah Boulevard) in Charlotte, NC. We have expanded the offerings available during this session to six one-hour class sessions in each of 4 classrooms. Classes start at 9 am and continue to 4 PM, with a break for lunch.

As before, subjects will include the basics for new modelers, and more advanced topics such as weathering, scenery, structures, wiring, detailing kits, scratch-building, DCC, and some electronic applications, etc., applicable to all model scales. The most desired topics will be scheduled for both the morning and afternoon, to allow everyone a chance to attend them.

This year's RMU registration fee is \$10 per family to be paid at the door. Registration is available online at www.carolinasouthern.org/RMUmmain.htm; or at the door. However, be aware that classes are filled on a first-come, first-served basis, so early online registration will assure you a seat in the class of your choice. Registration closes January 17th. On-site registration begins at 8:30 AM. A "box lunch" will also be available on site for \$5/person, which is not included in the registration fee.

In addition to attending the seminars, we encourage attendees to bring their favorite model to display (locomotive, car, or structure) whether it is detailed and/or weathered or straight out of the box. This is to show newer modelers the different levels they can aspire to achieve.

So you can look forward to an RMU that is both bigger and

better than ever before, and is more interesting and educational!

Our back-up inclement weather date is January 29th in the same location.

NOTE: The box lunch will include choice of turkey or roast beef sandwich, fruit cup, potato salad, chips, and choice of drink. 📧

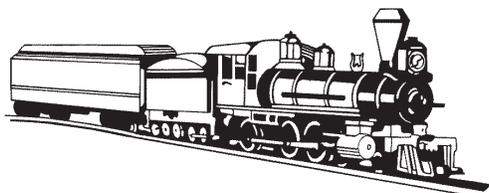
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Do you have a wanted/trade/for sale item(s)? Looking for car-pool options to an event or options for sharing a room? **The Local** publishes a FREE classified section for all MER members. Send your classified ad to the Editor at stevesexpressrr@yahoo.com, or see all the editor's contact information on page 2. The ad must include full name and contact information and will be limited to one issue. Word count is also limited to seventy-five (75) words. Please include your NMRA number for verification purposes (number will not be published).

FOR SALE: Cutting back on my HO and N scale locos, cars & structures. Mostly all brand new stuff and mainly New England roads. Misc List includes NS Oprn Rules, ACL Diesel Oprn Man, a Compl Time Book, etc. Specify Lists Wanted. Contact Bruce Bowden at email only bcbowden@atmc.net.

FOR SALE: Eight Walther Heavyweight B&O cars for a passenger train. They include one baggage car, one observation car, one diner car, three coaches, and two Pullman cars. An extra set of trucks is included for each car. Set of eight for \$280. Call Dave Cray at (717) 757-2631.



Dispatching by Telegraph...(Dad Did It)...

A series article – Part 4

Article and photographs by Mike White
Potomac Division/HO scale

THE PRIOR ARTICLES IN THIS SERIES introduced you to the basic message and procedure codes necessary to establish communication, transmit, and acknowledge train orders sent by telegraph.

Before going any further, there are a few additional procedure codes that experience has shown to be necessary in actual use. It is not unusual, especially at first, for an operator to make an error and realize it while attempting to communicate by telegraph. The operator making the error can signal the recipient that an error has occurred by sending the Morse “error” code which consists of eight or more dots sent in succession *immediately* after the error occurs. See figure 1. In this situation the standard Operator ID-Action format is not used. The error code alone follows the incorrect code immediately after the error is made.

The other procedural code that is necessary is a means of requesting a repeat of the immediately preceding transmission when the recipient does not understand it. This is accomplished using the standard Morse code for “repeat” which consists of two dots, two dashes, and two dots. See figure 2. This is sent to the originator immediately whenever a repeat is required. The originator then repeats the complete last line of the message that he was attempting to send.

This part of the series covers the oscillator and power circuits of the system. An oscillator is simply “an electronic circuit that produces a repetitive electronic signal, often a sine wave”. It is, in our case, an electronic circuit that takes DC input and turns it into a constant sound. The power supply is a Radio Shack 9v. AC to DC plug-in transformer that we will modify to power the oscillator circuit.

The MX T-Tone Code Practice Oscillator Kit is as the name implies a kit. It needs to be assembled. This kit comes with the most clearly written, easy-to-follow instructions I have ever received with any kit. They are outstanding. The only thing you have to add is an ability to do basic soldering.

As with any kit, it is important to verify that it contains all of the parts in the parts list before beginning assembly. I find this

especially true of electronics kits as the part names are not all that familiar and matching them to the parts description is a good way to familiarize yourself with the contents. I find this especially true of the color-coded resistors. You should verify that each of these match the description in the parts list. Figure 3 is a

photo of the results of doing this with the oscillator kit I purchased. At the lower right I have organized the resistors in the sequence they occurred in the parts list and I will keep them ordered this way until the instructions call for them to be used.

I did not provide a step-by-step description of the circuit board assembly, as different kits will require different steps. However, my instructions wisely stated that a thorough check of the assembly should be made at this point to verify that each part is correctly placed and that there are no solder “bridges” that will cause the circuit

to malfunction. Figure 4 shows the assembled circuit board.

In order to test your work, it is necessary at this point to make the “external” connections of the remainder of the parts. Again, my instructions strongly suggested that these connections, where possible, be “temporary” to avoid unsoldering later. The external connections are the off-on/volume control, the speaker, the power supply and a telegraph key. With the exception of the power supply (I substituted the 9v AC to DC plug-in for the 9v battery), the connections were all done following the instructions.

The complete description of the Radio Shack power supply is “AC-to-DC Power Adapter, 9v. DC, 300mA, Part # 273-027”. Figure 5 shows that the plug has been cut off and the wires separated, stripped, and tinned. The adapter is then wired to the external parts and the circuit board as per the instructions for wiring the 9v battery.

Once everything is “temporarily” connected, you are ready to bench test

the complete assembly. See figure 6.

In order to contain the completed oscillator, I also purchased a Hammond MX-H804 “project box” from the same source as the rest of the telegraph equipment. This is a finely constructed heavy plastic box used to house and protect the electronics (circuit

VISITOR	Message	
ID	Action	Desc
	Error

Figure 1: The Morse “error” code which consists of eight or more dots sent in succession immediately after the error occurs.

VISITOR	Message	
ID	Action	Desc
...-	..--..	Repeat

Figure 2: The Morse code for “repeat” which consist of two dots, two dashes and two dots.



Figure 3: The author reminds us to verify and organize any kit before beginning assembly.

board, etc.) This is the same type of box used with the practice keys described in Part 1 of the series (see Jul/Aug 2010 issue).

The adaptation of the project box described here are the modifications made to suit my particular application and are presented for illustrative purposes. You may want or need something different. Whenever possible, I try to facilitate removal, replacement, or repair of any assembly I cobble together. This is no different. My requirements are: external speaker and dispatcher's head-phone that can be switched between each other, the ability to easily remove the telegraph key from the assembly, and the capability to remove the electronics (off/on switch/volume control, circuit

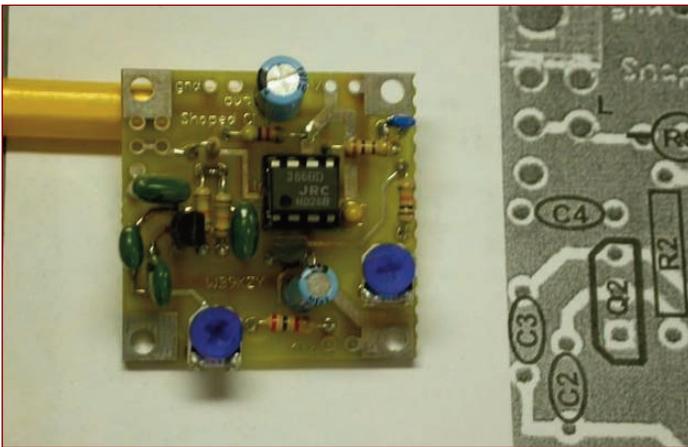


Figure 4: The assembled circuit board.

board) from the power supply and external speaker/headphone and key circuits.

The wired project box is shown in figures 7 and 8. Figure 7 is the view of the underside of the lid with the internal wiring of the components to the connectors, plugs and switch on the topside of the lid (see figure 8). The circuit board is secured in the base (the empty box at the bottom of figure 7) of the project box with double-sided tape applied first to the side of the circuit board showing in figure 7, then to the inside bottom of the box just before the lid is fitted.

The connectors for the external wiring are two Radio Shack 4-Position Speaker Terminal Boards – part #274-672. The head-phone jacks (I already had the head-phone) are Radio Shack 1/8" Mono Phone Jacks – part #274-251. The toggle switch used to switch between headphones and the dispatcher's local external speaker is a Radio Shack DPDT Mini Toggle Switch – part #275-663. The connectors are easily attached to the project box by



Figure 5: In preparation for wiring the adapter, the plug has been cut off and the wires separated, stripped and tinned.

drilling appropriate-sized holes in the lid. To make starter holes I used the point of a #11 x-acto blade and, holding it vertically spun it until I had a large enough hole to stabilize the drill bit.

This is probably the most complicated assembly process in fabricating the complete telegraph system. As shown on the Mile-stone Technologies web page, for an additional \$10.00 you can avoid the electronics work and buy a pre-wired version.

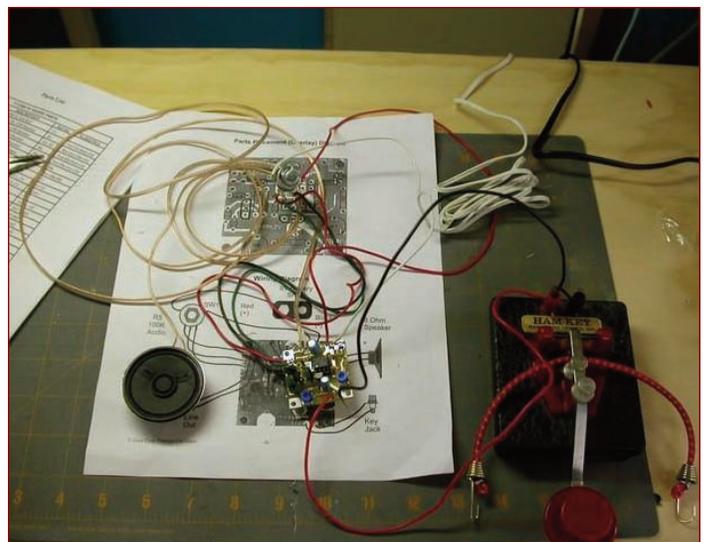


Figure 6: The author prepares to bench test the completed assembly.

continued on page 10

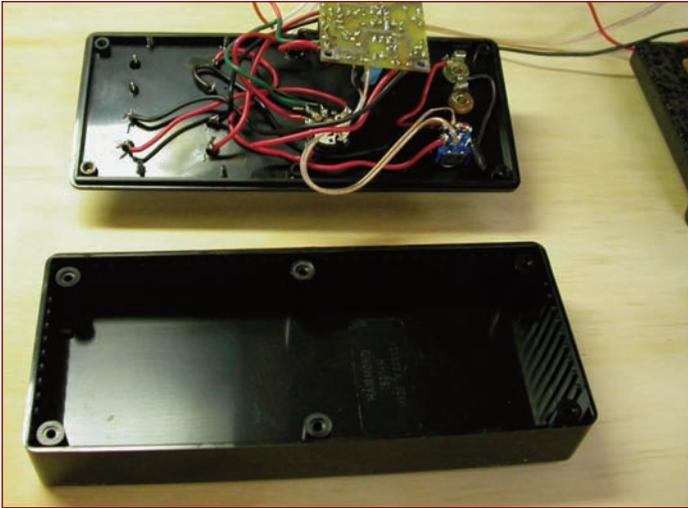


Figure 7: A view of the underside of the lid with the internal wiring of the components.



Figure 8: The completed wired project box.

This concludes the “construction” activity in building the system. The next, and final, part of this series will cover some ideas for a simple expansion of the use of Morse code to enhance communications between operator and dispatcher. 📧

It's Inventory Time!

*By Rick Knight.
Carolina Southern Division/HO Scale*

ONCE A YEAR I like to take stock of my power and rolling stock. With an operating session every Monday night involving a crew of more than a dozen, there is usually a bit of maintenance to be done here and there. In a typical session there is a Bad Order involving a missing coupler spring or a ladder that has fallen off a boxcar. The repairs get made and the car is returned to revenue service. As they need it, locomotive wheels are cleaned. But once a year it is time to stop and check the entire railroad.

I begin by printing out my inventory sheets. I keep track of the locomotives in one file and the rolling stock in a second file, both in Excel – it's simple and it works just fine for my needs.

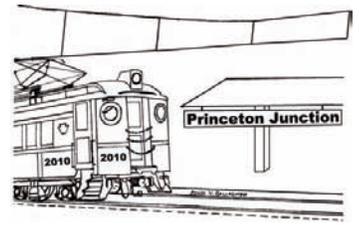
I usually start with the locomotives. Each one gets its wheels cleaned (even though they get cleaned on a fairly regular basis). I use a piece of an old sheet placed over the rails and sprayed with GooGone, and run the trucks over it until they are clean. I check the lights – and replace any that are burnt out. I take the loco to the workbench, flip it over and check to see if there is any accumulated gunk wrapped around the axles. Using Q-tips and tweezers, I clean whatever needs to be cleaned. I add a touch of LaBelle

oil, then I use the NMRA gauge to check the wheels. I have the test track set up to check the coupler height with the Atlas device. Then I check the entire body to see if anything needs a spot of glue to reattach a railing or whatever. Once I am done I make a note on the sheet – which gets entered in the master file later. One by one all of the power goes through the same ritual.

With the rolling stock it is much the same. I check the couplers to make sure they are at the proper height. I check the wheels to make sure they are in gauge – and make sure they are clean. If a car just seems light, I will verify the actual weight on my scale and add as needed. I also check all of the details on the car and do repairs as needed (or set the car aside for a major project). I make notes of what I have done, and move on to the next car.

Time consuming? Yep. Tedious? You bet! Essential to a smooth running railroad? Worth all of the time and bother! I have my crew over every Monday and they expect a glitch here and there, but not so many that it takes away from the fun of the operating session. 📧

Princeton Junction Convention 2010 Contest Report



By Martin Brechbiel and Greg Meeks
MER General Contest Chairman and MER Model Contest Chair
Photographs by Martin Brechbiel and Eric Dervinis

THE CONTEST ROOM at the **Princeton Junction** Convention had a number of truly outstanding models! Our host, the New Jersey Division really out did themselves—thanks, Bob Clegg and his crew and the entire convention staff for a great convention and for making our contest experience almost painless, far less stressful, and “interesting” by providing us a not 1, but 2 spacious rooms across the hall from each other, with excellent lighting, and more than adequate space for all of the festivities.

Thanks also to Roger Ossman, our Photo Contest Chair for helping to administrate the Photography and favorite train contests. There were no Arts and Crafts entries for another year leading to the inevitable question of whether to continue that category or not. Please send me your thoughts on that topic.

A special Thanks also to those who judged the Model Contest: Bob Charles, Charlie Flichman, Chuck Hladik, Dave Chance, Ron Parisi, Herb Gishlick, Rich Newmiller, and rest of the cast. We also want to thank John Johnson for his continued involvement with the preparation of the plaques. We also want to thank the host of volunteers that rotated through the rooms during the Convention!

We had a very surprisingly low turnout for the Model Contest. There were only 15 models in the judged contest!!! We've been averaging entries in the mid-40's for several years and I would like to hear from anyone that can explain how we dropped to 33 percent of our usual numbers. From that number of 15 models, 6 received Achievement Merit Awards. And, despite that low turnout, we had a good distribution of models with at least one model in every category except traction, non-revenue, and off-line displays. Great job and I thank every modeler that brought something to the room for their participation!

SPECIAL AWARDS

The MER has always had a selection of Special Awards associated with the judged model contest.

Clyde Gerald Kit-Bash Award: the best kit-bashed model in the model contest.

John Bell – Bethlehem Car Works PRR M70b RPO Kit 440



Bethlehem Car Works PRR M70b RPO Kit 440.

The Blue Lantern Award: sponsored by the Narrow Gauge Car Shop and given to the model that best represents branch line or private line equipment or facility with no more than 40 percent commercial parts.

Ken Hamilton – Lumber Stacker Diorama

The Philadelphia New Modeler Award: given to the first-time entrant in the model contest with the highest point score. (A plaque and a cash prize from the Philadelphia Division!)

James C. Peoples – Grand Canyon Depot 1/29th scale



Grand Canyon Depot 1/29th scale.

The Ray Bilodeau Narrow Gauge Award: given to the best narrow gauge model!

Ken Hamilton – Gn15 Industrial Switcher

Favorite Train: chosen by popular vote.

1st – George Downer – Logging Train

2nd – John M. Johnson – HO Freight Train

3rd – Bob Duffield – Local Freight

The President's Award: this year was given to the President's favorite tank car.

Lou Whiteley – Dow Chemical 10,000 gal tank car #C-10341



Dow Chemical 10,000 gal tank car #C-10341.

continued on page 12

Best-in-Show: given to the entry with the highest point's score in the model contest.

Ken Hamilton – Gn15 Industrial Switcher*



Gn15 Industrial Switcher.

MODEL CONTEST:

Steam: 1st – Alan Mende* – CNJ 0-4-0 No. 840



CNJ 0-4-0 No. 840

Freight Cars: 1st – Ron Parisi – 1955 Rebuild of URTX M&StL all-wood reefer



1955 Rebuild of URTX M&StL all-wood reefer.

2nd – Lou Whiteley – Dow Chemical 10,000 gal. tank car #C-10341

3rd – John Bell – Sunshine PRR X41a



Sunshine PRR X41a.

Caboose or Cabin Car: 1st – John Bell – Bowser PRR N5c Tail Car



Bowser PRR N5c Tail Car.

Passenger Cars: 1st – John Bell – Bethlehem Car Works PRR M70b RPO Kit 440

Structures On-Line: 1st – James C. Peoples* – Grand Canyon Depot 1/29th scale

2nd – Gene Sing* – Bemis, Maine Log Cabin Station



Bemis, Maine Log Cabin Station.

3rd – Joseph Rugarber – Freight Station

Structures Off-Line: 1st – Thomas Griffiths* – B&O R.R. Stick Lighter



B&O RR Stick Lighter.

Displays On-Line: 1st – Ken Hamilton* – Lumber Stacker Diorama

* – Denotes AP Merit Award—scoring a minimum of 87.5 points.

PHOTO CONTEST: Our Photo Contest Chairman was also surprised with a very low turnout of entries, yet they were of excellent

quality. Is there no interest in photography anymore????

Best-in-Show:

- Model: 1st – John M. Johnson – M1 Along the Creek
- 2nd – John M. Johnson – M1b Approaching of Tower

Prototype: Steam

- 1st – Roger Cason – Wilmington & Western #58
- 2nd – Roger Cason – Rock Face & Locomotive
- 3rd – Roger Cason – Frostburg Turntable #2

Prototype: All Other

- 1st – Roger Cason – S-curve on the Sand Path grade
- 2nd – Ludwig Riemenschneider – Working on the Railroad
- 3rd – Ronald Parisi – Single Track Railroad Bridge, York PA

If you have any question about NMRA or MER contest rules and regulations, NMRA judging of models, contest questions of any kind, complaints, suggestions, or whatever you might want to talk about, please contact me at martinwb@verizon.net. 🏠

History Moves On...

*By Bob Price
Director and MER Archivist*

MER HISTORY THAT IS. During the recent MER Princeton Junction Convention, Bob Price was named MER Archivist, replacing John Johnson who stepped down from the position. The change included the transfer of four boxes of The Local, rosters, board meeting minutes and other various items which had been organized and maintained by J.J. since 1999. We extend many thanks to the former archivist for all of his efforts in maintaining the archives for all those years. Any new inquiries for information should now be directed to Bob. Contact information for him can be found on page 2.

One piece of information that J.J. passed along to Bob at the convention was that 2011 will be the MER's 65th anniversary. Yes, back in May of 1946, the first post charter organizational meeting was held in Baltimore, MD. George Nixon presided over that meeting which was attended by 52 members who helped get the organization going.

Happy 65th anniversary! 🏠

Attention members: Are You Interested In Presenting A Clinic at Piedmont Crossing??

We have already started to fill a number of time slots for the next convention with some excellent clinicians. Many of our MER members have signed up or have indicated their intention to do so. This is your opportunity to make **Piedmont Crossing** a memorable event and to earn some AP Author or volunteer credits in the process. The convention will be held in Cary, NC (just south of Raleigh) from October 27 to 30, 2011. Contact Jack Dziadul at (919) 721-8757 or dziadul@windstream.net with any questions. 🏠



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Coming Events

January 8th & 9th also 22nd & 23rd. GATSME Model Railroad Club Open House. Located at Prospect and Madison Aves in Fort Washington, PA (Just off exit 339 (old#26) PA Turnpike). This is a 40' x 50' museum-quality HO layout, based on Pennsylvania during the steam-to-diesel transition era of the early to mid 1950s. During shows, the mix of trains may include more modern equipment as well. Up to six trains (sometimes more) operate simultaneously on the East-West mainline, plus locals over multiple branch lines. Over 50 years of model railroading on display! Open Noon – 4 PM on dates listed. Admission is free but donations are appreciated. For more information visit www.gatsme.org or call (215) 646-2033. (Future open houses also occur in March.)

January 8th and 29th. February 19th. Clinton Central Model Railroad Club Holiday Open House. The club is located at 15 Logan Ave in Castanea, PA (in the former New York Central railroad station) and is currently celebrating its 30th year as a model railroading organization. The club has transformed the old 30 x 50 freight room into a continuously growing HO scale DCC-controlled model railroad layout with over 800 feet of track. They have also developed a collection of railroad artifacts, which includes an extensive railroad library. For more information visit www.ccmrr.org.

January 14th and 15th. Joint Meeting between Philadelphia and New Jersey Divisions held Haddon Twp. High School, 406 Memorial Ave in Westmont, NJ. Layouts on 14th open from: 7 PM until 10 PM. Clinics on 15th from 9 AM until Noon. More open layouts from 1 PM until 5 PM. For more information contact either Greg Shindledecker at (610) 383-7767 or greg@shindledecker.com and Bob Clegg at (856) 696-0463 or bobcats@comcast.net.

January 22nd. 6th Annual Railroad Modeling University hosted by Carolina Southern Division. See article for more details and registration.

January 30th. Potomac Division layout tour in Burke, VA. 1 PM till 4 PM. For more information contact Brian Sheron at bwsheron@mac.com or (301) 349-5754.

Divisions and Clubs tell MER members about your upcoming event!! Send your FREE event listings to the editor (contact information is listed on page 2.) Be sure to include all the specifics for the event: including the date/time, place, cost, a contact person, and a means of getting in touch with him/her (address, phone, e-mail, etc.), and if available a website for updates or to get more information. Please see the publication deadlines on page 16 to make sure your event is published on time.

Achievement Program Update

*By Charlie Flichman,
MER AP Manager*

Since the last report in **The Local**, the following Achievement Program certificates were earned and awarded:

Division 1 – New Jersey

P.J. Mattson – *Association Official*
Joseph Rugarber – *Association Volunteer*

Division 2 – Potomac

Andrew R. Dodge – *Master Builder, Motive Power*
Andrew R. Dodge – *Master Builder, Structures*
Andrew R. Dodge – *Master Builder, Prototype Models*
Brian Sheron – *Association Volunteer*

Division 3 – Philadelphia

Steve Salotti – *Model Railroad Author*

Division 10 – South Mountain

Jane Clarke – *Association Volunteer*
Peter Clarke – *Association Volunteer*
Roy Hoffman – *Gold Spike*

Division 11 – Susquehanna

Alan Mende – *Master Builder, Motive Power*

Division 12 – Carolina Southern

Neal Anderson – *Gold Spike*

Division 13 – Carolina Piedmont

Jack Dziadul – *Model Railroad Author*

In a perfect world, this information will appear soon in **NMRA Magazine**. This should not deter you from giving recognition locally. Normally you will be able to recognize AP accomplishments long before the names appear in **NMRA Magazine**. 

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<u>Publication Schedule:</u>	<u>Articles/Callboard items due to Editor by:</u>
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Mar/Apr	Feb 1st
May/June	Apr 1st
Jul/Aug	Jun 1st
Sept/Oct	Aug 1st
Nov/Dec	Oct 1st

If you are interested in advertising with the Mid-Eastern Region of the National Model Railroad Association please contact the Editor, as listed on page 2. The current advertising rates for **The Local** are as follows and must include camera ready art (jpeg, pdf, bmp, tiff formats):

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