

April

2007

Issue 4

Volume 20

# BANTRAK

# Newsletter



## *N-Scale – Realism in Miniature*



### *The Engineer's Cab*

by Mark Bandy, President

### **SCALE SHOW**

**Timonium**

**Fairgrounds**

**April 14-15**

**This is A BANTRAK  
Club Event!**

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### **MARCH MADNESS IN N-TRAK**

**J**ust to sum up the last three months of what BANTRAK has been working on. March; the electrical work is finished on the club modules and our own modules. It was a lot of work and a great learning experience for me. I would like to thank Martin for all of his hard work in preparing the cables for these work sessions. We had three work sessions, one at Eric's house and two at Skip's followed by our monthly meeting.

February; this years first scale show, a neat layout and well coordinated. Our transition "Wye" modules gives members an opportunity to demonstrate flexibility in layout design. Martin and Ken pulled it out by designing a figure eight shaped layout giving runners an option to run a loop or figure eight.

January; at the club's first meeting of the year, members signed up for various committees, for the learning session, coordinators for train shows and guidelines. Keep in mind that our learning sessions will continue after future events. Next will be track work and ballast still looking for someone host this session which will take place around the July time frame. Instructors will be notified.

#### *FUTURE EVENTS*

For the next two months our time will be occupied with train show events. Coordinators will be asking for member participation in hope for new layout designs and presentation. Planning for the shows and participation should be easy due to new electrical work and probably some refurbished scenery. I hope everyone will participate with their module/s at the April scale show. Please see Tim Nixon to sign up.

The Brunswick Train Show on May 18-20<sup>th</sup> is new event for BANTRAK, it was a hard sell for the event planner to get us in. Catherine Tynan is V.P. of the Brunswick Railroad Museum; she is looking to fit us into one of their four venue spaces within one town block event, which sounds to me like a large space. I will report after Saturday the 31<sup>st</sup> on the size and particularities to this event.

For those who have never been to the N-Scale Collector Show it's a blast. This year Skip will coordinate the lobby layout. It is approximately 20 x 20 feet in the shape of an "L". Small, no yard, easy to run 40-50 car trains so we should will be able to switch over from Analog to DCC easily. This show allows you an opportunity to vacation and to buy, sell and trade trains. I hope you plan on attending.

*(Continued on page 3)*



## RIP TRACK

# Staging

By Phil Peters

**T**raffic is moving smoothly on the Tiber Creek RR now that we have the car card system in place. It has taken a bit of time to get car cards made up for each of the cars on the railroad, and I still haven't made them up for cars that probably won't run on the line on any regular basis, if at all. Actually this part of the system set-up was rather easy. It is just a question of copying information from the car onto the cards and folding the bottoms to make the waybill pocket. I believe I mentioned in an earlier article that I am using the car-card system marketed by Micro-Mark.

**TRAFFIC IS MOVING SMOOTHLY ON THE TIBER CREEK RR NOW THAT WE HAVE THE CAR CARD SYSTEM IN PLACE**

A bit more challenging has been creating the many waybills that direct the cars over the railroad. While I have made up quite a few for each type of car on the layout, it seems that I always need more. Fortunately this is a job that can be done piecemeal as traffic warrants or as the mood strikes me.

An altogether different need has arisen that I thought had already been foreseen and taken care of to some degree. I'm talking about staging. Before I extended the layout, cars were manually put onto the layout and removed by way of one of the passing tracks located at the rear of the layout, a section that I called the Interchange Track. After extending the layout the tracks ended in the three stub ends of the old NTRAK Coal Creek modules. The Red and Yellow lines represent trains headed east or west and the Blue line ends at the coal tipple and serves as staging for a loaded coal train. All in all this should be an improvement. Three staging spots have replaced one.

However, like everything in this hobby, it seems that you can never have enough of anything. Getting one only creates the need for another, and then several others, and then even more! While setting up trains to come onto the layout during an operating session and sending them off is now easier because they have somewhere to go, a specific track, I still can't seem to get the hang of how to remove and restage new ones during the running session. Trains go out to or cars are dropped at the end of track, but there is no one to remove them and replace them with new equipment.

Up until now I have limited action to the cars on the layout and the new trains coming off the Red, Yellow or Blue lines. This has created a fair amount of traffic, but it does have limitations. I use short trains, about a dozen cars at most. Over this and the length of the train overpowers the length of run and makes the train appear out of scale to the layout. Besides sorting a dozen cars in the small yard is a job in itself.

Since I don't have enough room to add more staging tracks, I have decided to have the train consists made up in advance and set out in a long train carrier box. It has places for four reasonable consists. The cars will be set out with their accompanying cards and waybills. During the session, I will go over and remove one of the trains that has just finished its run and come to end of track and replace the cars with one of the new consists in the box. The locomotive and caboose can be turned and sent back or replaced with another if desired.

This looks like a workable solution with a limited number of staging tracks. Now, if I can just break a hole into the next room....

**A BIT MORE CHALLENGING HAS BEEN CREATING THE MANY WAYBILLS THAT DIRECT THE CARS OVER THE RAILROAD.**

## ANNUAL CLUB DUES

The payment of Annual Club Dues is due today, April 1st. If you cannot meet this payment deadline please contact our treasurer, Bob Mohr, to discuss alternatives.

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The club has been running without basic guidelines for years. When the club was small, communication of every member's intention and expectation was easy. Early this year the club put together a committee for writing guidelines which will resolve minor problems during run sessions and give all the members' direction for making decisions. We should take what is successful and agreeable with the members and add this to our guidelines. This will serve as a great reference for new members.

New modules wanted! Last meeting there was a call for ONE trak modules for the October scale train show. Two years ago, we put together guidelines for ONE trak modules. Members that need a refresher can view them on the clubs' web-site. Those that are working on modules please let John Darlington the coordinator for this show know how many modules you have. This summer we should be able to get a grip on the module count and complete the ONE trak arrangement.

The club cookout is on June 23<sup>rd</sup> that is a Saturday this year. This also coincides will the Timonium scale train show. Our model contest will be held that day. Last month I announced the guidelines for the contest. I hope you participate.



## Meet John Hasson

*John is one of our newest Club members having joined BANTRAK in March of this year. The following is a brief bio of John which I believe you will find interesting—Editor*

I have been an armchair model railroader for many years, reading Model railroader magazine, going to the Timonium shows etc. But I have never put spike to tie except for a simple snap-track loop around the Christmas tree. Now that my wife and I are empty nesters and I have switched to part-time work as a form of semiretirement, I am looking to follow some of the interests that have been "shuttled to the siding" for many years.

Since I don't have a lot of space for a layout, N scale and modules seem like the way to go. Given those criteria, BANTRAK caught my eye at one of the Timonium shows and the rest is, as they say, history

(Even if a short one!).

I was born in Philadelphia and grew up in one of its suburbs. I received an E.E. degree from Drexel and moved to Maryland to get a job. About mid-career I saw the light and switched from hardware to software. That career spanned 40 years and now, as I said, I work part time.

My other hobbies include astronomy (armchair again), playing the guitar and computers. My increase in free time has set me on a

search for other pass times and eventually I hope to get into volunteer work.

But first, there are a lot of home repairs yelling to get done!!!!!!

**Welcome to BANTRAK, John!**

## Ground Rules

Since our Club has expanded so much over the last couple of years, it might be a good idea to go over some of the "ground rules" associated with Show participation.

1. **Run times during a Show Weekend are determined in the following order.**
  - First Choice—Module Contributors
  - Second Choice—Set up helpers
  - Third Choice—All others
2. **Certain tracks come with defined responsibilities, i.e. yard master, trouble shooter, etc. If you are so assigned, you must stay on your post during your allotted times**
3. **If you pick a run slot and then decide not to use it is your responsibility to get a replacement for your time.**
4. **No unattended trains will left running on the layout. If the train is not being attended to then it will be removed.**



### Our Next Meeting

**Our next BANTRAK Club meeting will be held on Sunday, April 15th at the Timonium Scale Show beginning at 2 PM**

### BANTRAK Organization

Mark Bandy	President	(410) 750-2262
Bob Mohr	Treasurer	(410) 529-0841
Al Palewicz	Membership	(410) 426-0339



## Book Reports

By Al DeGaudio

During the past couple of months I've had the opportunity to read two fine, very different railroad-related books. I finished one and one in process.

### *Set Up Running, the Life of a Pennsylvania Railroad Engineman 1904-1949*

First, and let me thank Jack Walsh for telling me about the first book, called *Set Up Running, the Life of a Pennsylvania Railroad Engineman 1904-1949* by John W. Orr, Penn State Press, 2001 [trade paperback]

The book is about his dad, **Oscar Orr**, who started out as a fireman on the Pennsy and quickly made engineer. The term "Set Up running" refers to when a person is made an engineer. The book covers his life on the PRR Williamsport Division, which encompassed Renovo, Ralston, Loch Haven and ran to Harrisburg, Wilkes-Barre, Altoona and Southport, NY. Starting with the H-6 Consolidation, he ran H-8s, L1s, [Mikado], I-1 Hippos, N-1s, M1 Mountains, 4-4-0s and K-2 and K-4 Pacific. In his career, he was not only involved with running road engines, but switchers as well.

It's a fast moving collection of 2-5 page stories that just keeps you turning pages. You get a perspective on the locomotives, the trains, neighboring railroads We learned how Oscar was able to make considerably better time on the road than other engineers. Coal stops often set back a train far longer than the time to add coal and water. Often they had to wait for several more trains to pass by.

His talent for not only running a locomotive but his penchant for studying them allowed Oscar to maximize their efficiency. This caught the attention of the engineering teams of the PRR and they often had him evaluate new types and sub-types of locomotives.

Over the years, given the improvements in locomotives, he saw a consist go from 28 cars to nearly 100. He learned the secrets of the "Coast-to-Coast" tender.

All in all, it's a great book and if you have any interest in railroading, steam or the Pennsy, you have to read it.

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### *The Men Who Loved Trains*

The next book is considerably different in time, perspective and stature of characters While *Set Up Running* deals with men on the line, *The Men Who Loved Trains* covers the sad era of the demise of the Pennsy, NYC, Penn Central, the birth of Conrail and AM-TRAK. Its characters were the movers and shakers of the industry. Written by Rush Loving Jr., this hardcover book is published by the Indiana University Press, 2006.

Some of the concepts tried by PC progenitors involved running priority freight, trailer on train and computerized classification yards. They had even run a container train from NY to LA in 54 hours, 20 minutes, with the Santa Fe. This is still a record today. Unfortunately, the PC was comprised of 2 incredibly weakened railroads. Once the Pennsy let go of it's cash cow, the Norfolk and Western, it was doomed. The NYC had suffered much from the rise of commuting via car and motor freight moving upstate produce to the NY City.

The original thoughts in the 50s were create two strong railroads in the East; PRR/N&W and C&O/B&O/NYC. It did not work out that way in 1960. But 40 years later, we sort of have that. Also it was interesting to read of the impossibility of melding the PC into a cohesive unit, one part was in dire financial straights, the other so buried in hubris, autocracy and bureaucracy that it could not possibly see the situation for what it was rapidly becoming.

Even more remarkable were the financial machinations of the PC in their fiscal reporting. Those reports were completely shot through with deception, yet 35 years later we saw the same things from Enron and World Com.

It pointed out how little Congress understood what the railroads were about. So strongly ingrained was passenger operation to most

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minds that, even in the mid-60s, Congress did not even consider that freight largely moved by rail and was the only source of profit. They insisted the railroad keep routes even if the rider ship was only was a few hundred people a week. In combination with huge labor problems, they would have had sad but pronounced impact on further weakening the North American RR system, particularly the Northeast.

The book covers the innovators, the greedy, the well-intended fear-filled leaders and their quest to make a mark on a struggling industry. I'm a third of the way through it, but while at times sad, it is illuminating. I've always eschewed anything from 1958-1975 feeling it was the low point of Northeastern railroading and too depressing to think about. But even in this cauldron of misery there were many good, brilliant and talented railroad people trying to make a difference. And we know, in the end, Norfolk Southern and CSX didn't buy out Conrail because it was a weak target.

I recommend them both!

## **WORK SESSION!**

**MARCH 24/25 2007**



## SPIKES AND SLEEPERS

**THE RETURN OF THE BANTRAK PICNIC!**

After a year or so hiatus, our Annual BANTRAK Picnic is returning in 2007. Mark asked me if I could host it again and I was glad to say "yes". Since our home is just a few blocks from the Timonium fairgrounds, this year we are coordinating the date with the June Scale Show. The picnic will be held on Saturday, June 23rd, beginning at 1PM.

As in the past, this will again be a "contributory" picnic with everyone's favorite dish welcome. We will supply the hamburgers, hot dogs, brots rolls and drinks (feel free to contribute if you have a special brew) while most of the side dishes and deserts donated by others.

It is **VERY IMPORTANT** that we have a fairly accurate headcount a week prior to the picnic so that we will not over or under buy the meats and drinks, so as soon as you know if you are coming or not send me an e-mail (jjdjr2@comcast.net) It is additionally important to know who is planning on contributing to food and drink so that it can all be coordinated.

Of course spouses and children are always welcome and Elaine and I look forward to seeing them again.

**MARK YOUR CALENDARS NOW!**

## COMING EVENTS

1. Scale Show @ Timonium, April 14th & 15th  
Set up on Friday, April 13th @ 3pm (Club meeting on Sunday)
2. Brunswick Show, May 19 & 20. FURTHER DETAILS WILL BE FORTHCOMING
3. BANTRAK Picnic and Scale Show weekend.  
June 23rd @ 1PM (Club meeting precedes the picnic)

*The BANTRAK Newsletter is the official publication of the Baltimore Area N-Trak Club.*

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BANTRAK Newsletter

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We are on the Web! Try "BANTRAK.NET"

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