

August, 2008

Issue 8

Volume 21

# BANTRAK

# Newsletter



## N-Scale – Realism in Miniature



### The Engineer's Cab

by Mark Bandy, President

Don't Forget the  
Bedford Train  
Show!

August 23rd  
and 24th

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### Last of the Summer Wine

As mid-summer approaches, our club is again preparing for two of our most popular events of the year. First the Bedford Show, notably known as the “N scale weekend” scheduled for August 22<sup>nd</sup> through the 24<sup>th</sup>. Second the “Great Scale Train Show” at Timonium on October 10<sup>th</sup> through the 12<sup>th</sup>. Both events produce overwhelming member attendance.

In the past few years club attendance at Bedford was around 16-20 members: Spectacular for an event that is almost 100+ miles away from B'more. Bedford is a small town off the Pennsylvania Turn Pike (one exit west of Breezewood). The event started out bringing “N”scale clubs together like a mini “N” scale convention in Bedford at the fair grounds in 2005. Usually on Saturday evenings, there is a pig roast and live auction, an opportunity to socialize with others and perhaps bid on train items. There is a lot to see, such as the Pennsylvania Railroad’s historic horseshoe curve near the town of Altoona and also the railroad museum is well worth visiting. Each year the event has grown, with more clubs participating and requiring more space. The venue is now in a sports complex south of Bedford at Everett off Route 30. There are forms you must fill out if you plan on attending.

This year *Tim Nixon* is the show coordinator who is preparing the layout and corresponding with Mike Phillips (Bedford’s show host) for maximum space requirements. In the past, due to space limitations at the Bedford venue the club layout has been small. This year hopefully our crew will tackle the layout with a different approach. Tim is looking at the option of placing the yard against the bleachers so we can maximize floor space for more modules. Those who were at the Brunswick show will understand. Please contact Tim if you plan on participating with your module or modules.

This October *Dave Clyde* will coordinate the scale show at Timonium. Again oNe Trak will be included to the N Trak modules, thus, preparing for the future Christmas Show at the B & O. This event is still in the planning stages; please let Dave know your intentions Your participation is appreciated by us all. Those of you who might be participating with their One Trak at the Christmas Show should think to include the module at the October Show. This will help to prepare the B & O show coordinators. The raffle layout should be finished and we should be ready to sell tickets to spectators at the October Show.

Lastly, the most important item to discuss is our raffle layout. The raffle layout sales help the club

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## RIP TRACK

### Odds & Ends

By Phil Peters

Here are some items that have caught my attention lately.

Murphy is alive and well, and not just in N scale! Usually the best time to renew your faith in the infamous Irishman's Law is to invite someone over to view the layout. The law works in direct proportion to the visitor's position on the ladder of people you are trying to impress and in inverse proportion to the amount of time and effort you have put into the layout beforehand to get it ready. If the trains run flawlessly the hour before the visitor arrives, you can be sure the avenging Murphy is hovering above your shoulder, ready to pour his mischievous beer into your DCC system and spread it throughout your layout\*.

**MURPHY IS ALIVE AND WELL, AND NOT JUST IN N SCALE! USUALLY THE BEST TIME TO RENEW YOUR FAITH IN THE INFAMOUS IRISHMAN'S LAW IS TO INVITE SOMEONE OVER TO VIEW THE LAYOUT**

Now I realize there is a physical law that says that all systems tend toward chaos is universal. However, I really thought it had a special application to N scale, more particularly, MY N scale. Oh! How fortunate for me to be operating on an HO layout and to find out that the loopy Irish imp also operates in their world! Big Time!

Saturday night I pulled my road trains into town only to find out a) the switcher crew had not worked the town and no cars were ready for me to pick up; b) my train with double-headed power was too long for the siding and would have to foul the main with nowhere to go; c) there was a wide gap in the track which allowed the A truck on my F unit to go on the ground whenever I tried to use the road units to help with switching; d) my usually assigned switcher had picked up on the bad vibes I was emanating and decided to operate on its own unique timetable; e) the switcher's wheels thought the track was too dirty to allow it to

run properly in response to its master's command; f) the switcher's rear B truck felt it was an appropriate time to pick the switches farthest into the layout whenever it felt like it.

If HO is as tricky as N scale, why do people go in for it? Besides, it is hard to get back on the track.

On the bright side, I have been adding people and more details to the home layout. It is amazing to see how much these things bring your scenes alive and make your layout more enjoyable to operate. There are so many choices on the market and the new set scenes from Micro-Trains are so realistic that we really do our work a disservice if we don't take advantage of them.

Now, I have that 1,000 figure set from Preiser to paint. Anybody up for a painting party?

**MY USUALLY ASSIGNED SWITCHER HAD PICKED UP ON THE BAD VIBES I WAS EMANATING AND DECIDED TO OPERATE ON ITS OWN UNIQUE TIMETABLE**

*\*Editor's Note: I guess Phil is never trying to impress me. Every time I have operated on his layout all trains have run well, or maybe I am not high enough on that ladder!*

### Accidents Happen!

Misfortune strikes our NVNTRAK Colleagues

In February of this year the Northern Virginia N-Trak Club suffered a loss when their NVX-3 trailer was rear-ended by a drunk driver while it was being towed from a show at the Equestrian Center in Maryland. The towing vehicle was demolished but fortunately the driver, **John Steitz**, sustained only minor injuries. The

*(Continued on page 3)*

### Our Next Meeting

Our next BANTRAK Club meeting will be held on Sunday, August 17th at Arthur Boyd's home in Baltimore

2pm to 5pm

Map Enclosed

(Continued from page 1)

to buy items needed to help run and participate in events. As it looks today; **Ed Aufderheide** (the raffle layout coordinator) says it is coming along nicely, but still needs more members to participate with their time to help bring it to life. This is a great opportunity for some of our new members to sink their hands into a layout and take home some knowledge of modeling methods. This year the layout is 4-6 inches longer and a couple of inches wider just so the track cross over works smoother. Also the layout has a little more interesting scenery to it. Ed has incorporated a wooden divider to separate a city scene from a country scene, and, I might add, it is very inspiring. A message has gone out from Ed requesting tree makers. The job is not very hard and you could build them in your home watching a ball game a movie or kids. The additional help would give Ed a break from working on the entire layout. I would like to remind all members that this layout represents our major fund raiser for the year, and without your participation and help, we will end up short of funds and unable to supplement activities, pay for items needed to run our layouts, or help pay for other special projects that have been bantered about.. Extra 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary club cars still on hand, drained some of the funds, making it necessary for us to have to assemble and sell the raffle layout again this year. As an added incentive, this year's club donation items will only go to those who participate in some way with the assembly of the raffle layout. I'll be coordinating that with Ed.

**Editor's Note: See Ed Aufderheide's Raffle Layout update elsewhere in this issue.**

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trailer flipped on its side and was dragged and bumped up an embankment. Luckily, the modules inside (4 corner, 4 POFF) were secured in heavy steel racks, and they sustained minor to moderate damage but were recoverable. Equipment/tool boxes broke open and damaged most equipment. Throttles (analog and digital) were damaged heavily. Trailer was not salvageable. Our drivers insurance covered everything (and they subrogated against the DWI driver's insurance) As of June insurance claims have been settled, NVNTRAK has a new trailer and module repairs and replacement of damaged equipment is underway.

*Editor's Note: In all of the years that we have been hauling our modules and Club equipment around the countryside, we have been very fortunate that we have not suffered such an occurrence that befell NVNTRAK. This is why it is so very important that we keep an accurate inventory and value estimate on our trailer's contents. Unlike NVNTRAK who has 3 trailers and therefore a spread of their risk is possible, we have only the one trailer that would make a similar accident much more of a catastrophe.*

Thanks to Chester Freedenthal, editor of NVNTRAK's "Call Board" for providing the details of the accident for this article



## Raffle Layout Update

**A**s promised at the last meeting, here is an update on the accounting for the raffle layout. To date I have spent \$280.00. For that we have paid for the following:

1. Frame Construction (soon to include the sideboards)
2. Road bed and track (all electrified and working)
3. Scenery foundation (hills, valleys, etc. in plaster paint)
4. All buildings for the city and farm areas
5. The base for the pond and the trestle foundations
6. I have the **ballast (no new purchase)**

**So what's left?**

1. Trees, trees, and more trees.
2. Ground cover, and more ground cover.
3. Glues, etc. for the ballast and ground cover.
4. Materials for the city street (Mark Bandy is making them)
5. Figures (people, cars, etc.)

### 6. Magic Water for the pond.

Mark and I worked last night. We think that we'll be between \$400 and \$450, depending on how much scenery and details we need.

I still need volunteers to do trees. Come on guys, you can do this while you are watching tv and bring them to the next meeting. Call me and I'll coordinate the purchase of any armatures and foliage. Trees are not expensive, they just take time to make.

*See Photos on Page 6*



### BANTRAK Organization

Mark Bandy	President	(410) 750-2262
Tim Nixon	Treasurer	(410) 757-5045
Al Palewicz	Membership	(410) 426-0339

Here is an article about the beginnings of the BANTRAK Club authored by our First President, Gene Villaret, on the anniversary of our twentieth year. It seems appropriate to publish it again on our 25th Anniversary. In the beginning it was known as the Greater Baltimore N-Scale Associates or GBNSA. Gene was a great guy and a complete gentlemen, and his ideas and comments resonate throughout our Club's history. To me, it is always a good thing to remember your roots and your original purpose for being.

Thanks to Jack Walsh for providing this important archive. J. Darlington, Editor



## BANTRAK

### TWENTIETH ANNIVERSARY 1983 - 2003

#### The first Baltimore area N scale club

#### EARLY DAYS OF THE BALTIMORE AREA NTRAK CLUB GENSA to BANTRAK

by Gene Villaret, Founder and First President

In late 1982 I obtained a list of Baltimore area N sealers to play trains with. Thus, Ken Mayer and I met. On January 7, 1983 I began calling all the names on the list, and so the first meeting of the first N scale club in the Baltimore area occurred on Saturday, January 29, 1983, at Ken's home. Seven attended. We sat around in Ken's basement train room, admired his layout and talked N scale. It was wonderful to hear someone else chattering about our little trains. We had a great time, but in spite of the friendly atmosphere, most of us were a bit dubious about jumping into even minimal commitments, and the majority felt that meeting every six weeks was often enough.

After the others had left Ken and I sat around and, well, gloated. The future of our modeling suddenly was looking much brighter. I went home from that first meeting with a great feeling of anticipation. We had an N scale club! The next meeting was set for the 26th of February, barely a month after the first get-together

The second meeting was at the home of two brothers, who live near Bel Air. They have a large demo layout in a huge basement and were very hospitable. The meeting was satisfying. We gained four new people, and lost two others. Most of this meeting was spent ogling the wonderful N scale empire before our eyes. It was huge and complex, and very absorbing indeed. One of the newcomers ran a brass loco that brought oohs and aahs. There were snacks and handouts and wonderful N scale trains in action. A very satisfying meeting! For the next meeting I decided to use the mails. Hence the first newsletter, dated March 20, 1983.

The purpose of the group was simply to have fun with trains. The only things we had to volunteer for were to host a meeting and to bring something to "show and tell." It was an era of heady days. As time passed, perhaps inevitably a feeling of repetitiveness crept in, like a vague but potential threat that might undermine a good thing. A stimulating element was needed, something to provide a group purpose sufficient to drive us toward some goal of group achievement. I was much enamored with trains in the 1-160 scale and saw in them a hobby I could carry into my future regardless of size of habitat which, as one ages, tends to become smaller.

My discovery of the Greenberg shows with their N scale layout seemed a promising means of promoting the scale, and I undertook to draw the club into public shows. Later I came to see the value of this in terms of a common purpose for our members.

One thing, as they say, led to another, the years passed and the shape of the club came to approximate today's BANTRAK. I must say I sometimes looked back, still do, with wistful nostalgia to those long-ago non-commitment days. A group of railroad modelers can do far worse than to encourage one another to build home layouts, to circulate from one home to another and to exchange pertinent information. There is no question, however, that the enormous strides in terms of the club's refinement, expansion, innovation and especially its impact on the public could not have occurred without the shows we now take part in with regularity. In the long run the future of N scale is being better served than it would have been had the metamorphosis not occurred.

Every one of us looks forward to putting up a large, unique layout, to run trains, and to use as a tool to see old friends, and make new ones.



## The Hopper Story

By Steve VanMetre

**O**n the weekend of July 20<sup>th</sup>, my wife Sandra and I were invited to attend a live steam event in Pennsylvania a few miles north of Carlisle. This event was held at a private layout called Pisgah Central, that being the name of the road on which it was located, sitting on ten acres with about 2 miles of track and in some spots close to 3% grades. It was not open to the public, just a bunch of friends getting together to run there 1.5 inch scale trains. The people were very friendly and a joy to be around. All and all there were about 12 live steam and 5 diesel engines on hand. The diesels actually use small gas engines with hydrostatic drives. The steam engines used a variety of fuels including coal, kerosene, and propane.

I had the opportunity to take what I thought was going to be a relaxing ride through the woods across trestles stretching 100 feet, through a tunnel which was about 40 feet long, and by a pond which was stocked with some nice size fish. I was wrong. Little did I know as I settled into a very comfortable hopper car behind a nice 4-6-2 Pacific type steamer with a gondola bringing up the rear



that being relaxed was the last thing I would feel. After crossing the diamond we started down what I believe to be about a 150 foot long 3% grade to find ourselves sliding along at a pretty fair clip. Having already been down this road with a pair of diesels I knew what was at the bottom, a fairly sharp S curve was waiting for us. I said sliding because that is just what we were doing. The engineer had the drivers locked up and was very busy trying to hold the train back but it was out of his hands as he then became a passenger on his own train. I realized we were in a bad

situation when the engineer looked back with a concerned look on his face and put his feet down to try to slow us down. I sat straight up and wished I could help but I could not reach the ground as the car sides held me in. Luckily, the Fred Flintstone trick worked and we made it through the S curve only to wonder what was next.

As the train snaked its way through the woods we were greeted by faces and small fake animals on the sides of the trees. Chugging along down to the bottom of the property, we are now about 100 feet lower than where we started and are now about to begin the up hill climb back to the top. As the big hearted Pacific enters the 1.5 to 2% grade you can hear her bark and really get the smoke in your face as she begins to work to climb towards to pond. After passing though two covered bridges we approach another switch which will guide the train across another trestle which is not the longest but definitely the tallest at about ten feet from the top of the rail to the ground. With a break in the grade we are moving along at a pretty swift speed when the worst happens. The hopper car I was riding in picked the switch and off track I came. So here I was, bouncing along in a derailed hopper car entering the trestle, this was worse than rolling down hill headed for you know where, now I had a chance to fall and get there quicker. My Guardian Angel must have been watching over me that day because as the car started onto the trestle it came to rest. I actually considered walking back at this point but I stuck it out because as dangerous as it seemed it was also very exciting and a long walk at this point. After righting the cars we continued



around the pond and up to an area where there sat a metal building with 5 or 6 tracks for car storage. This is the highest point on the railroad, about 30 feet or so higher than where we began. Once back at the station I was glad to be in one piece. The whole trip to about 40 minutes and was a lot of fun even with the hair raising moments.

While we were there a 2-10-2 jumped the track which left all of the drivers on the ground. I jumped in to help along with 7 or 8 other people. It took all of us about 20 minutes to get this thousand plus pounds of engine back on track. It makes me glad I model in N scale. It just goes to show, no matter what the scale, we all encounter the same trials and tribulations.

# Raffle Layout Pics



SPIKES AND SLEEPERS

Editorial -

Above and Beyond

Last month I wrote an editorial outlining my dissatisfaction with the N-Scale Convention that was held in Louisville, KY in June. While those comments were strictly mine (its one of the nice things about being Editor) I have the impression from subsequent discussions with others that my comments were not far off the mark.

I would now like to turn to the subject of BANTRAK's participation in that event. Like night and day, cold and hot, our participation was as exemplary as the organizers' was pedestrian. We have heard all of the excuses given for such a short fall in accomplishment. What I want to recognize are the efforts of our band of BANTRAK members who spent many hours waiting for something good to happen.

I would like to specifically compliment the efforts of Martin Myers, Tim Nixon, Al Delgaudio, Jack Walsh, Al Potter, Eric Payne, and Bob Winterbottom. Not only did they meet all of the time line criteria, but our modules were assembled and operational a day before it was required. They spent most of Thursday and Friday just cooling their heels waiting for something to happen.

Of this crew, I would like to particularly single out Martin Myers for his dedication and tireless efforts in preparation for this show and his remarkable resilience and patience in helping to get the DCC operational.



Congratulations to all of you!

J Darlington, Editor

COMING EVENTS

- 1. **BANTRAK Club Meeting @ Arthur Boyd's home in Baltimore on Sunday, August 17th 2-5pm**
- 2. **Bedford Train Show, Bedford, PA, August 23rd and 24th**

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

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BANTRAK Newsletter

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