

February,  
2007  
Issue 2

# BANTRAK

# Newsletter

Volume 20



## *N-Scale – Realism in Miniature*



### *The Engineer's Cab*

by Mark Bandy, President

SCALE  
SHOW

Timonium  
Fairgrounds  
February 3rd  
and 4th

#### Table of Contents

What's Next?	1
Stretch that Tunnel Portal	2
Life of a New BAN- TRAK Member	3
Special Lumber Loads Available	4
Building a Replica of an Existing Structure	4

### WHAT'S NEXT?

**B**ANTRAK is quickly approaching another milestone, its 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary. Now over 40 members strong and 65 plus modules within our archive book, DCC/DC capable with a flick of a switch, is there anything we can't do?!

In order to stay ahead of the curve, we need to start thinking about projects for the coming year. Following the success of the December Christmas show and our kick-off meeting for the year behind us, we are looking at an exciting year, with many ideas for learning sessions presented and a new layout design for our February show.

Some interesting areas we might explore for the future are computer operated layouts, block signals (CTC) and OneTrak modules – let your imaginations soar, let's see what we can accomplish as we approach year 25.

In addition to the above, there were some preliminary discussions about producing a *25th Anniversary Car* at the January meeting. If you have any suggestions concerning the type of car, or two-pak, color, lettering, etc. then please make your ideas known so that we can get this project off of the ground.

Speaking of the January meeting, an important decision were made with respect to upgrading Club and individually owned modules. By a unanimous vote of those attending, it was decided to set a *BANTRAK Club Standard* with respect to module wiring. It is no secret that we have been having increased difficulty with power drops and intermittent operation caused by our use of Cinch Jones Connectors (CJs) and low gauge wiring. The new Club standard will be to replace all CJs with Power Poles and to re-wire power busses with 12 gauge stranded wire. To accomplish this, it was further decided that the Club would assume the cost of the wire and power poles and provide a \$10 rebate to any Club member who has already converted his/her module to this standard. Further it was decided that all 4' modules will have two drops per track, three drops per track for 6' and 8' modules.

To accomplish this task, the Club will have two work sessions at Skip's house at which time the wiring and power poles will be provided. The dates of these work sessions are March 24/25 and April 14/15. All modules must be converted by the October Scale Show in order to be eligible for that and subsequent shows. This should provide ample time to accomplish this worthwhile upgrade

See you at the Scale Show!



## RIP TRACK

# Stretch that Tunnel Portal!

By Phil Peters

In order to get through the mountain on my new layout extension I needed a tunnel portal that would span the three tracks that access the old NTRAK Coal Creek modules. Now it is not hard to find ready-made portals that span one or two tracks, but three, not really. One solution is to cut apart a portal you like and mold or carve a splice to widen it to the desired width. This is especially easy if the portal imitates stone or concrete work. Wood poses more problems. You have to be more careful in carving the details to match the wood on either side of the splice.

I had to settle for a double track portal made by Woodland Scenics. These come two to a box and are offered with different textures, concrete, wood, etc. This gave me a double for one side of my layout and one I would have to work on to make it do for the triple track. Normally I would have simply cut the tunnel portal in the narrowest part of the arch, dead center in the curve and then gone to work molding the extension section. As luck would have it, this set had one intact portal and the other was already broken very near the center. Oh goody! I didn't have to ruin my saw blade cutting the plaster.

While I fully appreciate Woodland Scenics's consideration in providing me with a pre-broken portal to fit my individual needs, the problem was that the break was slightly off center. I measured the width of the final portal over the three tracks and marked it off on a sheet of plain styrene. I glued .125" square pieces of styrene outside these lines and used them to line up my two tunnel halves, making sure the bases were even. This enabled me to draw the outline of the new, extended portal. The bottoms, sides and top were easy to trace and fill in the blank center along the straight top of the portal. However, I wanted to make sure the lower part of the curved arch was consistent with the curvature of the existing plaster casting.

Using the .125" square styrene I made a jig for the portal that held the two separate pieces securely in position. I bridged the top of the portal with a .25" x .020" styrene strip. To create the lower curve of the opening I had only to span the break with a thin piece of styrene strip. Since the lower part of the portal is thinner than the thick top member of the tunnel, I used a piece of .125" x .020" styrene. The one-eighth inch depth conformed perfectly to the thickness of the Woodland Scenics portal and continued the curvature of the two parts perfectly.

As I mentioned above I have widened tunnel portals before and the plaster or hydrocal has held up well. But I had only a small space, a quarter inch or less, to fill out. The span to be bridged in this case meant adding about one half inch between the two sections of portal. This is a rather large amount to work in and still have a plaster portal that would withstand the handling necessary to put it in place. I could just see this piece coming apart again as I set it into position.

As a gardener I am very familiar with rebar and have used it in a number of garden structures. So, naturally, I felt that drilling the sides of the portal and joining them with short pieces of solid stiff wire would strengthen my portal sufficiently. With the wire in place and secured with CA. I was ready to pour the center portion of the tunnel. Now it was only a matter of mixing up some molding plaster, pouring it in my mold, and sculpting it to shape with the surrounding concrete form, a very easy procedure.

Next month I will have pictures showing the progression from pieces to portal.



### BANTRAK Organization

Mark Bandy ,	President	mjbmoels@comcast.net
Bob Mohr ,	Treasurer	rtmohr@msn.com
Al Palewicz ,	Membership	alpalewicz@att.net

### Our Next Meeting

Our next BANTRAK Club meeting will be held 2PM on Sunday, February 18th at Jack Walsh's home in Columbia Maryland

MAP ATTACHED



## The Life of a New BANTRAK Member

By Al Palewicz

Since BANTRAK now has a number of new members, and several potential new members, many of whom are still a little dazed as they try to figure out exactly what this club is and what we do and whether they have any interest in doing it with us, I thought I would relate my recollections about being a new member, 8 years ago in 1998.

My brother, Leo, and I had just then renewed our childhood interest in model railroading. I was mainly interested in running trains, and Leo was mainly interested in controlling the running of trains with computer software and equipment he was designing. We realized we needed some help in figuring out what to do to get this hobby going, so we went to a train show in Timonium, perhaps the April 1998 Scale Show. I am not sure of the date. There we encountered the nicest layout we had seen, and were happy that it was in N scale, the scale we were interested in most of all. We wanted trains of a size we could keep in one room, without taking it over completely, and of a quality that still made us believe we were looking at accurate scale models. So N scale it was.

At the Scale Show we approached a member (Jack Walsh, though he probably does not recall it) and he invited us to a planning and module rehab session at somebody's house north of Baltimore (Skip Hayes' house). We went to the meeting on a rainy Sunday afternoon and found ourselves in a long business meeting at which the club essentially impeached its President and installed a new one. Leo and I wondered if we had made a big mistake.

Then the meeting adjourned to the garage, where a number of 2 foot by 4 foot train setups we learned are called modules were lying on tables. The job of the day was to rewire all of the modules that were there. Leo and I were assigned to two modules that looked old and fragile, and told to see if we could replace the wiring. I believe the way it was decided as I overheard it went something like: Why not give the two new guys those old pieces of (deleted) that Gene built? Response: Yeah, they can't do them any more harm than they have already taken. Fortunately, Leo is an electrical engineer, and after looking at a few of the other modules we (that is, Leo) had little problem rewiring them. After our work was inspected, we were asked if we would like to take these modules home and rehab them completely, replacing broken scenery, and re-gluing where necessary. We did so, and were able to show up at the October Scale show with the two "pieces of (deleted)," restored, if not to their original finery, at least to a state of not being an embarrassment to the Club to include in a layout.

During the time we were working on the modules, we called a number of the members we had met at the first meeting and the several after the first one and asked them for advice, which they freely gave us. One or two of them even came over and showed us how to do what we thought needed doing on the modules.

During those months we attended another four or five meetings, mostly business meetings, but always in a member's home where there was a layout to look at, admire, and ask questions about. After a year in the Club, Leo and I had basically figured out what we needed to do to construct some modules, setup a layout, and get enough decent trains together that we could make a true contribution to the Club's shows, both in supplying a module or two, and in bringing and running decent trains that ran well on the Club's layouts.

We have not stopped learning since then. Leo has left the Club, but he still works on his computer control system, and every once in a while he asks me to schedule a train club meeting at his home so he can demonstrate his latest achievements. By October 2003, though, we had a good set of modules, and we proudly brought them to shows (the photo is from the October 2003 Scale Show), and club members' trains ran over them easily and well. It took a long time to reach the point where we felt "comfortable" being called BANTRAK members, but always we felt welcome, and always we knew we were learning things at every event in which we took part. I urge all our new and potential members to be patient, and to remember that they have to reach out to the club members as well as expect the members to bring them into the Club fully. When we both try, we all grow in our hobby, and most importantly, we all enjoy ourselves, both at the BANTRAK events and at home. In another article, I may try to explain how we went about acquiring our first "decent" train, that is, one that looked good, would stay together, and ran well on the Club layout.

**Club Dues invoices will be sent out on February 17th by e-mail. Dues payments should be given to Bob Mohr on or before April 1, 2007**



## Special Run Lumber Loads Available

By Ralph Grutzmacher

**A**l Palewicz, Bob Mohr and I put together a special run of lumber loads honoring Club founder *Gene Villaret* and former member *John Buwalda*, both deceased. The loads feature the “**Villaret & Buwalda Lumber Co – sustainable harvests since 1983.**” The loads are fully complete and friction fit into Red Caboose center beam flat cars. There are six different patterns to provide a random appearance. With easy modification (unwrap, cut wooden core, rewrap) they can be made to fit other kinds of bulkhead flat cars.

I will be making one additional order in February. The member cost is \$7 per car including postage. Contact me if you are interested in being included with this final order.

These loads were fabricated by Allen Frasch. He conceives the artwork, obtains customer modifications and approval, and makes the finished load. If anyone wants to order another kind of load, contact Allen directly at:

Allen Frasch, PO Box 1429, Freeland, Washington 98249

[afrasch@whidbey.com](mailto:afrasch@whidbey.com)



## “Building a Replica of an Existing Railroad Structure”

By Mark Bandy

**T**o match an existing railroad structure one starting point would be to buy a manufacturer’s kit close to that building shape and type and modify the parts to mimic the original design (kit bashing). Another way would be to measure and draw the existing structure and cut out parts from raw stock material.

Tips I’ve found useful in building from scratch.

First, find as many photos as possible from books, magazines, historical railroad societies or if still standing, go to a site and take pictures and measure the building. The photos may show the building at different periods of time. Choose the year/era you want to model.

(Continued on page 5)

*(Continued from page 4)*

The railroad usually added additions or altered the buildings over time. Sometimes this is evident by the mix of materials on the building varying in color type or construction technique. Some books and magazines show floor plans and elevations of the structure, which help to improve authenticity. Reduce or enlarge the drawings to N scale to estimate the amount of material you will be using (a lesson for another day).

The types of materials used are wood (balsa), styrene, molded styrene and paper. Wood comes in plain and grooved sheets (simulated siding). Styrene and paper sheets simulate brick, asphalt and siding patterns. I find double stick paper works well to hold the materials to each other.

There are two ways to produce drawings;

1. Measure an existing building and take pictures, measure as close as possible as the proprietor will allow.

Photograph everything, even if it becomes redundant, and as many angles of a building to help to extrapolate any hidden areas.

2. Scaling photographs and sketches from books. Scaling the photo does require some experience, but there are some starting points to interpolation (to estimate distances between two known points) of photographs, (i.e. doors and windows of known width and height are helpful). Start with the doors and window dimensions themselves, door widths are sometimes 32-36 inches and about 7 feet tall depending on the year the building was built. Windows are (about) 36 x 66 inches and masonry bricks on walls have 4-8 inch long and 2 -3 inches high increments. Sizing the photo of the building may require using 3 different rulers, an architect's rule, engineering rule and model railroad reference rule. Use the rule which equals a window or door width at each side to the dimensions mentioned above.

The roof pitch sometimes requires guess work. The rule of thumb is if the roof pitch appears low it's between 4 or 5/12 pitch. If the roof pitch appears high it's between 9 or 12/12 pitch. A protractor might help if held up against the side edge of the roof in the photo.

Drawings: I know that all of us are not draftsman, architects or engineers which use or study drawings in our businesses. All there is to drawing, is producing rectangular shapes for walls and roofs at what I call, "true size and shape". Measure the size of windows and doors from manufacturer's stock windows and doors and draw their opening size on the wall shapes. You don't need to draw the textures. Most of us have computers; there is drawing software that is readily available, easy to use and inexpensive.

My Mt. Royal Station module was built by using Holgate + Reynolds vinyl stone sheets with Evergreen Scale Models strips applied to them to resemble stone accents then applied to plain plastic to support the stone walls. The roof was Kibri Spanish clay tile cut from patterns that were drawn true size and shape. I used Evergreen Scale Models styrene sheets for the windows and lower roofs and the shed roof. Some building paper was used for the single story baggage side. All of the walls were attached with double stick paper; some A.C. gluing was applied to the styrene strips. The station was measured in spots because it had repetitive sections and I used photos from books and magazines to figure out the buildings height through interpolation.

Research and lots of practice with the different techniques will improve the quality of your structures over time.

## NEW CLUB BROCHURES AVAILABLE SOON!

Revised BANTRAK Club brochures will be available soon. Revisions have been made and approved by our President, Mark Bandy, and Al Palewicz will have a supply printed up for public distribution shortly. While the brochure would look better in color, due to the extra cost, it was decided to again print them in black & white. Additionally, it was originally suggested that the photograph on the brochure be changed to one of a BANTRAK Module, but our current photographic resources did not include a suitable photograph so we went with the CSX Locomotive as before. If anyone has a really good photo of a BANTRAK module please submit it and we can use it for the next brochure run.

**John Darlington**

## SPIKES AND SLEEPERS

- ⇒ **SHOW n' TELL**—Our President has asked me to remind everyone to bring their modelling projects and new acquisitions to our regular BANTRAK meetings. The "Show n' Tell" segment has always been a most interesting and important segment of our meeting structure, and we need to put a greater emphasis on this in subsequent meetings
- ▷ **Welcome New Member!** Let's give a hearty welcome to our newest member, **Connie Lee**, who attended our last meeting (January) and applied for membership. With two ladies in our Club you guys are really going to have to clean up your language! **WELCOME CONNIE!**
- ⇒ **Educations Sessions Begin**—The first of our Modelling Education Sessions will be give by Martin Myers at our February Meeting. The subject is layout/module wiring.
- ⇒ **We Made The News!** -Al Palewicz has advised that the latest edition of the ASN Newsletter he received from Italy has a nice article about BANTRAK and our partnership with ASN. Al will bring the Newsletter to the February meeting at Jack's
- ⇒ **We are all on the same (E-Mail) Page!** - with the agreement of Andy Courtemanche, and Arthur Boyd, the BANTRAK Newsletter will now be delivered to all members by e-mail.

## COMING EVENTS

- ⇒ **Scale Show @ Timonium—February 3 & 4 Set Up Friday @ 1PM**
- ▷ **BANTRAK Meeting at Jack Walsh's home on Sunday February 18th @ 2PM**
- ▷ **BANTRAK Work Session @ Skip Hayes' home on March 24/25 (Time TBA)**

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

*The reproduction of the BANTRAK Club Logo without the express permission of the Baltimore Area N-Trak Club is prohibited*

BANTRAK Newsletter

Editor – John Darlington

Copy Editor – Elaine Darlington

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

BALTIMORE AREA N-TRAK CLUB

C/O John Darlington

2205 Stryker Court

Timonium, Maryland 21093

