



Volume 23  
Issue 2

February, 2010

# BANTRAK Newsletter

## The Engineer's Cab

Alan Del Gaudio



Wow, February is upon us!

Next weekend is the Great Scale Model Train Show in Timonium. This show is the biggest of the series. All those Christmas present gift coupons are waiting to be spent and one can safely say it's too cold to do yard work! Steve Van Metre and Martin Myers are coordinating our layout for the event. *[Alas, in the end BANTRAK was unable to participate in this show due to inclement weather. – Editor]*

Several topics came up at our last meeting that will need further discussion.

1) We need to sort out options for pulling the trailer; it has considerable weight, thus we need to know which vehicles can do the job, and, of those with such vehicles, who can help.

2) We need to rework 2 more corners and we have the base module for a new outside corner. It was also suggested we look at 1 or 2 more inside corners – maybe make two at 45 degrees in lieu of a 90-degree inside corner. Phil agreed to work on the “Ellicott City” corner.

3) There is talk of a new yard or yard upgrade. Eric has offered to host a discussion session in February.

4) It would be nice to have a BANTRAK Addendum to the N-Trak standards. This covers the BANTRAK way of N-Trak, such as: Power Poles not CJ, Velcro (hooks) on the front of modules, how to cut the track/roadbed for the ends of modules (I should have had Skip show us at the meeting), DCC radio throttles, module adoption/caretaking etc. The website would be a good vehicle for this. Eric will coordinate this as well. Thanks, Eric!

5) Charitable donations

6) We need homes for 2 outside corners. Most importantly, of the two, Tim needs to move the one he is baby-sitting, to free up space in his home and vehicle for a new module.

*(continued on page 5)*

### Inside this issue...

The Engineer's Cab.....	1
RIP Track.....	2
A 50 <sup>th</sup> Anniversary.....	2
Site of the Month.....	3
Book Review.....	4
WGH Photos.....	5
BANTRAK Calendar.....	6

### Next meeting...

February 21, 2010  
2:30 pm

Jack Walsh's

### On the web...

News, information, and  
forums are all at:

<http://www.bantrak.net/>

# RIP Track

## *Treasures in Old Stuff*

**Phil Peters**



You just never know where you are going to find the answer to your question. Or when! Before we examine this, a bit of background might help.

At the last meeting one of our members asked if there was somewhere a depository of the collective wisdom members of the club have gained as a result of the many years of experience they have in the hobby and building modules. A very reasonable question, and one to which the answer would probably fill at least one thick volume if all of us could just remember the bits and pieces we have all learned the hard way as well as from others in the hobby both in the club and at shows.

Old BANTRAK newsletters contain many of these gems. The internet is a fantastic tool for finding out things we never thought anyone cared about. And the photos you can download provide a wealth of detail that you could never find in a book. And they are free.

But usually the tidbit just drops into your hand out of the blue when you least expect it.

The past few weeks I have been working on an old GloorCraft model from back in the 60s or so. I don't even remember where it came from. The kit was a box filled with pieces of wood, a roll of Campbell shingles, roof paper and a bag of detail parts. Excellent drawings! The written directions said essentially, "Start here and follow the drawings."

As I worked I realized I hadn't cut windows out of a wood wall in a heck of a long time. And it was NOT an easy learning curve! After the third window that went in an rectangular opening that, despite numerous measurements and careful filing, etc., still

revealed its maker to be an ex-French teacher and not a precision machinist, I decided to pause and rethink things.

Somewhere I had ordered a knife set that came with hundreds of different blades in all shapes and sizes. I decided to try one of the spade-shaped flat ended blades to see if that wouldn't give me a straighter cut and a neater corner. Hooray! Now the cuts were much more accurate and the fit much tighter.

A simple piece of knowledge and one that would have saved me a lot of frustration had I known it earlier. Sometimes I wonder just what I've learned after spending 60 years in this hobby.

I followed the kit directions for lining the roof to apply the shingles. No problem here. I didn't trust the glued backing on the shingles; it was at least 40 years old. I carefully applied

*(continued on next page)*

## **INGA-Net turns 50**

Congratulations to our friends, the International N-Gauge Association Network!



some Elmer's yellow glue and put the shingles on. Not a bad job, I thought.

Then, being bored and wondering how to paint the roof, I started poking through my old scenery books and came upon one by Dave Frary that I had gotten years ago. Leafing through it there was a section on applying Campbell roof shingles. Darn! I wish I had found that a week earlier. Rather than wetting the entire shingle strip that had factory-applied glue, he said that applying the glue to the solid top strip would leave the individual shingles free to be raised to give the roof more texture. Wish I had known that!

I did raise a few, but most were glued down. Oh well.... He also gave step-by-step instructions for painting the shingles and these were invaluable.

Poking through another old model magazine I came upon instructions for building a team track unloading dock using roadbed cork for a more realistic concrete. The author also showed how he made a fold-down ramp at the end of the dock to allow flat cars with trucks and wheeled equipment to be unloaded. This was much like the one we had up in Hanover at the old Western Maryland station. This allowed me to fill in a scene on the layout that needed more authenticity.

The point of this article is: Accept the bits of wisdom where you find them, be it from a fellow modeler or in a years-old publication. It is impossible to catalogue them all. However, you can make a list of them on your computer and add to it as you come upon things.

When you are done, please email me a copy.

# Site of the Month: Miniatur Wunderland

Matthew Davis

You may have seen the YouTube video of it, or you may have read about it in a recent issue of Model Railroader magazine. And if you've been to Hamburg, Germany, maybe you've even visited the **Miniatur Wunderland**. In case you've never heard of it, it's the world's largest model railroad layout. It has seven and a half *real* miles – 650 HO gauge miles – of track, 830 locomotives, and more than 11,000 railroad cars. And there's more to come, as it's only about 60% completed!

Although there is the aforementioned very popular video on YouTube, there are also many different videos and photographs at the official web page, <http://www.miniatur-wunderland.com/>. On the home page, click on "Exhibit", then explore the various galleries and videos.



# Book Review

Eric Payne



*Nothing Like it in the World: The Men who Built the Transcontinental Railroad, 1863-1869*

Stephen Ambrose

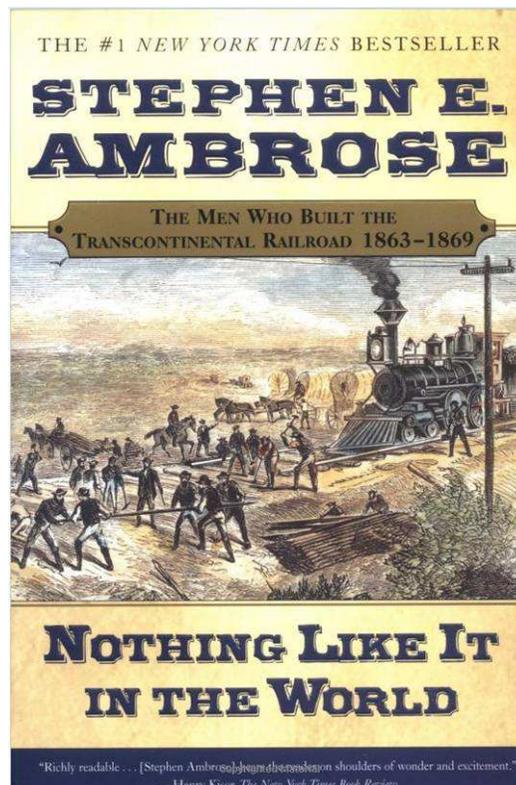
(New York: Simon & Schuster, 2000)

Over the holiday season I had some free time and decided to sit down with a good book. My selection was historical in nature and centered around the building of the transcontinental railroad. This book refreshed some historical moments for me and introduced some new ones. I won't go into the complete book (though I do recommend it as a good read), but I would like to share some highlights of the book.

It isn't about *why* the transcontinental railroad was built as much as it is about *who* was behind it. The time in the book actually spans 30 or 40 years, giving an account of the men who had the original vision as well as the men who ultimately completed their quest, from people who were involved financially at the outset, to the politicians who were bribed in the end to make it happen. I learned about the engineers who explored new wilderness while staking out the best routes across the plains, and the explorers who were hired to find the best route across the Rockies. There were stories of Chinese immigrants who were promised riches and stories of Civil War veterans looking for a way to work themselves across the country while getting paid.

Ambrose also introduces Brigham Young as an influential player in the historical log of the railroad, as a financier. Both the Central Pacific (working from the west) and the Union Pacific (working from the east) were nearing bankruptcy, and both companies counted on Young's Mormon workforce to help get the work done. Ironically, the line never ran through Salt Lake City and Young was forced to build his own branch line to his city.

The entire book is not about people however, it also includes their daily habits, rituals and struggles.



From facing danger while blasting tunnels in the Sierra Nevada mountains, to facing Indians on the plains. He describes the whiskey towns that sprung up at the "end of the line" and the small towns that were established when the railroad was built, and disappeared 20 years later.

In the end, it was an easy read, especially with my interest in history and trains. The author looked at the project from a human perspective as well as a financial and historical one. If you are interested in the men who built the transcontinental railroad and the stories surrounding them, I would recommend this book highly.

# World's Greatest Hobby On Tour

Photos by Alan Del Gaudio



## ***The Engineer's Cab (continued)***

As we packed up the B&O Festival show it struck me that many of us are contributing 4 or more modules for most shows. Our trailer is packed to the limit. The concept behind N-Trak was for almost everyone to have a module. Clearly some veterans in the club have retired and can no longer manage to bring one. No problem. But adopting a module or being the care-taker is a great way to get involved. To be candid, an alternative may eventually be smaller layouts, particularly if two or three key people are unable to attend.

Okay, off the soapbox.

I'm constructing a large layout in my basement. Thanks to Bob Mohr for suggesting that I look into L-girder construction for the benchwork. Since the layout is a dual-level concept and there are two big end loops, I was dreading that I was going to have to build something massive enough to hold a main battle tank or make a huge birthday cake of 2" Styrofoam layers. Following his suggestion, I picked up Linn Westcott's book "How to build Model Railroad Benchwork". This is a truly useful resource. Earlier on, Mark Bandy suggested I pick up Terry Koester's book, "Designing and Building Multi-Deck Model Railroads". It's also very useful. Both are published by Kalmbach Model Railroader Books.

*(continued on next page)*

## ***The Engineer's Cab (continued)***

Last weekend, Tim, Eric, John Hasson and I went to the World's Greatest Hobby on Tour show in Chantilly. What a mob! Certainly, that model railroading is alive and well was evidenced by the many families and strollers in attendance. The show was not so great in terms of N-scale companies. Kato was there and their UP Heritage SD-70 Ace locos are really sharp. They didn't have much to say except, when asked about new passenger trains, (this is my interpretation) "if it's on the east side of the Rocky Mountains, fudgetaboutit". Athearn had a nice wall display and Woodland Scenics had a very professional booth with several dioramas that make you want to run home and start building scenery. Another nice touch was that they had displays to show in-process construction steps. Broadway says the Alco PA/PBs are one the way soon (PRR Tuscan 5-stripes with trainphones). Frankly, the show was so crowded; I had to get some air.

As far as layouts, I think I read the largest Standard gauge layout was set up. The Z-scale was very nice. It sure looked like many clubs would have benefited from having more set up time, because just getting the layouts unloaded and set up is a task in itself. (This maybe the best feature of ...dare I say.... T-Trak?)

NV had nice N Trak and T Trak loops. There was also a preview of the Eastern N-Scale Alliance layout which will be at Danville in September.

I hope to see you at the GMSTS next weekend! One request. We may be contacted by other clubs and organizations about shows. Please look for Martin, Eric, Tim or myself. If none of us are within sight, any former club officer should be put in contact. But before looking for any of us, please get names, e-mail addresses and phone numbers, date and place.

*Alan*

**BANTRAK** was founded in 1983 as the **Greater Baltimore N-Scale Associates**. Begun as a "round robin" group to share skills and experiences, we have expanded our focus to include participation in many diverse activities to promote model railroading in general and N-Scale model railroading in particular. Activities include participation in local, regional and national shows, meets and conventions. **BANTRAK** membership includes membership in the national **NTRAK** organization.

### President

Alan Del Gaudio ..... (410) 480-9155

### Treasurer

Tim Nixon ..... (410) 757-5045

### Membership

Al Palewicz ..... (410) 426-0339



### **BANTRAK Calendar**

**2/21**— Howard Zane's layout tour, 12:00-2:00

**2/21**— Club meeting at Jack Walsh's, 2:30

**4/9-4/11**— Great Scale Model Train Show, Timonium

The **BANTRAK** Newsletter is the official publication of the Baltimore Area N-TRAK organization.

This is your newsletter! Please send articles, photos, and suggestions to [matthew@houseofflameandglass.com](mailto:matthew@houseofflameandglass.com).

Editor: Matthew Davis

