



**Volume 23**

**Issue 3**

**March, 2010**

# BANTRAK Newsletter

## The Engineer's Cab

**Alan Del Gaudio**



The past month has been full of interesting activities and non-activities. And snow! We sat out the non-event where the GSMTS was stuck with pressing on since the Fairgrounds remained open despite our "guv'nor" telling everyone to stay off the roads.

In hindsight, canceling our layout was the right decision. I was in the Carolinas earlier in the week and checking every day on the anticipated snowfall levels, 3-6", then 4-8" (thinking we can power through this) then 8-12" (ooh boy-but know the media likes to whip everyone into a frenzy with a chance for any snow in the air down this way, wasn't sure what to make of it) then 12-16" and at that point I called and e-mailed a bunch of us particularly the coordinators and Skip. It was time to say, no vas, no show and call Howard. We were the last layout to cancel. Howard understood: "this is an act of God," he said.

Well at 3 pm Friday I was near the Fairgrounds and no snow, I was hoping for none and perversely at the same time hoping for a lot because if we only had a freak chance of 4-5 inches, I and we would be saying – arrghh, we could have done it, yada yada. History now.

We were able to go on with our meetings at Jack Walsh's and a layout tour at Howard Zane's. Just for us, Howard County cleaned all the snow off the side streets, so we were able to park at each site. Whatever scale you model, Howard Zane's layout is a real treat, one of the nicest ever and total inspiration. He is a wonderful host (as is his wife). He's always willing to share "how I did its" and offer comments. Sorry to be sentimental, but I often think: with Mr. Zane and MB Klein at the fore and with so many great model railroaders, layouts and shops, we have a true model RR Mecca here in the Greater Baltimore area (including our fine suburb, the District of Columbia).

The meeting went well (Thank you, Jack!) and several things

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### ***Next meeting...***

March 21, 2010  
2:00 pm

Ed Aufderheide's

### ***On the web...***

News, information, and  
forums are all at:

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

# RIP Track

**Time**

**Phil Peters**



Time is one thing you have plenty of when you are retired. Besides having no happy hours, you are on round the clock, 24/7. The pressure is relentless. It's no wonder some people crack under all this stress. It's tough being yourself all the time. But somebody's got to do it. This is where model railroading comes to the rescue. As we know, it's a great hobby and it does take up a lot of time if you want it to. But I would like to make a case for time in another light – as an aid to our modeling.

Last month I mentioned that I had been working on a kit that I had found on the shelf. It was an old one that consisted of a box of pieces of wood and sheets of siding and construction paper roofing plus a bag of detail parts. The directions were a typewritten sheet with excellent scale drawings of the structure from all sides. Basically, you took the measurements from the drawing, cut the wood appropriately and assembled the pieces. The directions only gave you the order of the steps to follow. And that wasn't always the best advice.

So where does time come in? Partly in laying out and measuring the pieces. But it also plays a very important role in the assembly process.

*Take your time.*

I've long accepted that my modeling skills are about average. Okay, if you insist, maybe a shade above. But I am sure not a contest winner who turns out museum-quality pieces. I admire the people who can do that. That is real art, and talent. And that is the quality level I aim for when I start any new kit. Obviously, I fall short. But there is one modeling goal that I



set for myself that I have found to be extremely important, more important, perhaps, than achieving "museum quality". It is a very simple guideline:

*Make this model better than the last one.*

This applies to every aspect of building the structure or scene. Pay more attention to the little things, fitting parts, applying adhesives, painting, weathering, adding appropriate detail parts, etc. Bob Mohr has always emphasized the importance of patience and persistence in building the beautiful rolling stock and equipment he produces. And these virtues cannot be emphasized enough. Without them a modeler is setting him/herself up for a let-down.

I often find myself getting to a point, then, for some unexplainable reason, rushing ahead to get the work done. And that is when not taking the time works against producing good quality work.

That is precisely where this kit forced me to s-l-o-w down. I took an awful amount of time with it, trying to force myself to double-check

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measurements, fitting and refitting parts, testing paints and colors, etc.

And it paid off. This model came out better than anything I've produced so far. Will it win a contest? I don't know. Are there some glitches? Yes. I know where they are. But building this kind of kit forced me to focus on taking the time patience and perseverance



require. I think it paid off. End result: I am happier and more satisfied than ever with my work.

If you haven't done it, work on a model that doesn't come with all the parts pre-cut. Scratch-build something. Try board-by-board construction. Sure you'll make mistakes. I sure have, and do. But you will be a better model railroader for doing it. Enjoy.

## Site of the Month: da Trains! Railroad Data

Matthew Davis

Have you ever been designing a layout or module, and wondered what radius to use in N scale for a 5-degree curve? Or while working on a kitbash or scratch-build project, tried to calculate which Plastruct piece is the closest match for that 10" I-beam on your prototype? Do you know how close your grab-irons are to scale? How quickly can you calculate how much you need to reduce that TT scale plan to make it N scale?

These questions and more are answered at **da Trains! Railroad Data**. From the main page there are links to other pages with charts, tables, and graphs with all kinds of data. There are also plenty of links to other sites with useful information and software downloads. The site is extremely easy to use – no flashy gizmos, just good old-fashioned links.

HO	S	O	81	A	G	F
87.1	64	48	32	29	22.5	20.3
0.0066	0.0117	0.0156	0.0234	0.0259	0.0333	0.0369
31	29	26	23	23	20	19
		1.64"	3'128"	3'128"	1'84"	
0.0287	0.0391	0.0521	0.0781	0.0862	0.1111	0.1233
0.0100	0.0137	0.0182	0.0273	0.0302	0.0389	0.0431
30	27	25	21	21	18	17
0.0115	0.0156	0.0208	0.0313	0.0345	0.0444	0.0493
29	26	24	20	20	17	16
		1.64"	1'92"	1'92"	3'64"	
0.0459	0.0625	0.0833	0.1250	0.1379	0.1778	0.1970
0.0230	0.0313	0.0417	0.0625	0.0690	0.0889	0.0985

Point your browser to <http://www.urbaneagle.com/data/> to check it out – then bookmark it so you can find it again next time you need some railroad data!

# Water Effects

## *Different Strokes for Different Streams*

**Arthur Boyd**

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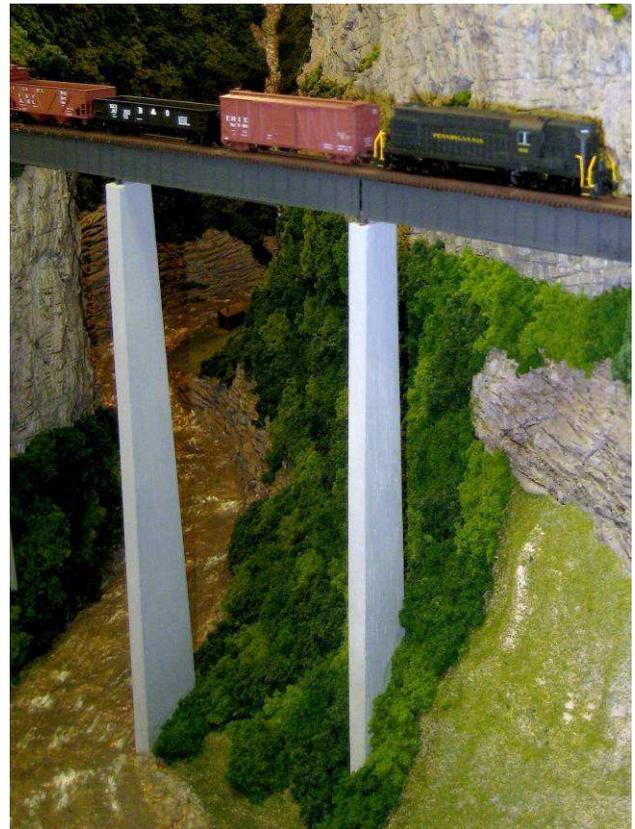
There are many methods of simulating water on model railroads. On my Clear Creek and Caldwell Mining and Railway Company layout, I used different methods at different locations depending on the desired effect for that type of waterway.

For a wide, slow-moving (and therefore calm) river, I used the two-part resin EnviroTex Lite, since it dries absolutely flat and clear. The stream bed was first painted shades of greenish brown to enhance the reflection of overhanging trees. For Clear Creek, which is fast flowing and darkened by mine tailings (from the adjacent Clear Creek Mine #1), I painted the stream bed shades of brown and black, then used Woodland Scenics Water, since it dries with a slight yellowing that enhances the muddy stream effect. I added a wash of browns and blacks between coats, to add more "muddiness" closer to the mine and clearing as it got further away.

Clear Creek joins Pleasant Run, a mountain stream, where the water tumbles over rapids. There I painted the stream bed "natural rocks" tan color. I put on one coat of Woodland Scenics Water, let it dry, and brushed white shoe polish on the down-stream side of the rocks trailing out to a point, then added another coat of "water." As the final coat dried, I "teased" it in places to add turbulence. This "teasing" to make turbulence or waves is easier with Woodland Scenics Water than it is with EnviroTex - which insists on returning to absolute level until after you have given up and gone to bed for the night! EnviroTex would not have worked on the steeply sloping

stream, anyway - it would have all puddled at the bottom!

For Great Gorge and its waterfall, I used artists' acrylic gloss gel. It dries clear and holds



its shape. For the falls, I painted the area to be covered by falls black, then I painted on the gloss gel, let it dry, and brushed on white shoe polish in a streaking manner. After that dried, I added more gloss gel. For the stream from the falls to the railroad bridge, rushing fast over rocks, I continued with the gloss gel making it intentionally bumpy, then after it dried I dry-brushed the bumps with white shoe polish, let it dry and added a top coat of gloss medium

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(like matte medium, only glossy).

At the relatively level but deep mountain stream at Summit, EnviroTex gave the needed clear depth over the rock-strewn stream bed. Once dry, stippling on gloss gell gave it a slight turbulence instead of that mirror-flat appearance.

There are more waterways to go, and more experimentation with different materials to achieve the desired effect in each location. A log retention pond will have a black bottom from the tree tannin. A port will be gloss brown paint with no discernable depth in the murk.

Next time you look at a waterway, ignore the concept that it is "water;" look instead for color, texture and light. Then think about what materials would mimic what you see, and think beyond materials sold for making model railroad "water."

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

were decided. Steve Van Metre will head up the raffle layout. I told him that several of us can be counted on to provide suggestions about the layout and build models as required.

Eric will host a brainstorming session regarding an upgraded yard facility, while Steve, Dave Clyde and Bob Winterbottom will form the nucleus of a committee to look at our moveable bridge. I'm stating these projects in the simplest terms because both the bridge and yard may go from simple fixes to redesign.

We will have an inventory reduction offering soon.

Kudos to Eric for organizing the BANTRAK FAQs. It's a Work In Progress but he promises to keep it

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### **NMRA Convention Call for Modules**

The N-scale community has started their big push to start the planning for the Ntrak layout at the 2010 NMRA Convention/National Train Show in Milwaukee this summer (July 16-18). At this time, they are soliciting modules from any groups or individuals that are interested in participating. With almost 10,000 square feet to fill with modules, there is room for lots of participation.

If you are interested in bringing modules to the convention, please contact me ([aland2g@comcast.net](mailto:aland2g@comcast.net)) via e-mail soon. Brandon Baxter is the coordinator. I'll forward to him. If we are not likely to attend as BANTRAK, I'll turn over direct contact to those interested in participating.

While this would not need to be an official club event, if 3-5 of us want to participate, it makes sense to be clustered together. Please let me know by March 21.

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

shorter than the book of Leviticus.

While thinking about what to write, I looked at a number of random Newsletters. Two issues struck a chord.

One was the May 2004 issue where the club made the commitment to go with Digitrax DCC Radio throttles just in time for the big N-Scale convention in Chantilly. There were several well-written columns on the various aspects of this project by John Darlington (President), Bob Mohr (Treasurer), and Phil Peters always having a lot about it in his monthly columns. Martin had provided the impetus when we had our back-room layout at the Greenberg show. We did this as a group buy and will be looking into another group buy soon.

The other comment was part of a column Ralph Grutzmacher had written in the December, 2006 Newsletter. I'll work at remembering this when I get nervous about lil' ones pushing up to our layout.

"I recommend that everyone take a few minutes at the beginning of the display period to experience a child's eye view of trains running. Grab a chair and watch the layout form the same eye height that 8-year old has. Watch trains meeting on adjacent tracks and wonder if they will miss each other. Watch as a fast passenger train overtakes a freight train. Watch the motion of the drive wheels of a steam locomotive. Watch the scenery beyond the track flash by in the space between cars.....Be transported into all the activities depicted or hinted at. Now you're ready to listen to a child who is so excited that the questions and observations stumble out of their mouths. Most of these children will not become model railroaders, but they will remember "the magic of model railroading!" (Well said, Ralph!)

See you on the 21st!

*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

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### Treasurer

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

### Membership

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



### **BANTRAK Calendar**

**3/21**— Club meeting at Ed Aufderheide's, 2:00

**4/9-11**— Great Scale Model Train Show, Timonium (Club meeting 4/11 at show)

**4/16-17**— Small layout at NMRA Columbia

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).

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