



Volume 23

Issue 5

May, 2010

BANTRAK Newsletter

The Engineer's Cab

Alan Del Gaudio



Whew, April is in the books.

As far as shows, it had to be the most intense month I've seen in my short life at BANTRAK. Thank you to the coordinators for the Timonium (Ken and Al Potter) and B&O Thomas (Steve Van Metre) shows. On top of those, we had a very nice showing at the NMRA mini-convention in Columbia, MD.

How does one measure success; layout size, runners, how fast it was set up, taken down? How about the sense of satisfaction of our "customer"? In most ways all 3 events were very, very successful. Our layouts were appropriately sized for the respective venues and we heard plenty of accolades from the organizers. A great big thank you goes out to those that participated in running and contributing to the layouts.

What was more of a nail-biter was filling up the run schedule. Whether it was the proximity of the shows, family events, spring honey-dos for some of the shows, we were thin on runners. While this was most obvious in the 1st Sunday afternoon at the Thomas show, the event that causes me the most concern is the Timonium shows. For the past 3-4 Timonium shows, when I arrived on Sundays with a couple of trainsets as "just in case", I was begged to set up and run. Shouldn't be happening! We are filling the run slots because our club members are double and triple shifting.

I invite your comments on why this is. We have taken great pains to make the layout DC or DCC capable with the time it takes to walk the interior perimeter for a changeover. As far as sign-up sheets; the list gets put out at Timonium on the Friday we set up. (Other shows are circulated in advance.) This is to reward those that bring modules and need to take the afternoon off. This is appropriately preferential, not exclusionary. Clearly, the set-up group alone does not fill up the run schedule, so there is plenty of room. Please give it some thought.

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Next meeting...

May 16, 2010
2:00 pm

Bob Mohr's House

On the web...

News, information, and
forums are all at:

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

RIP Track

The Rocket

Phil Peters



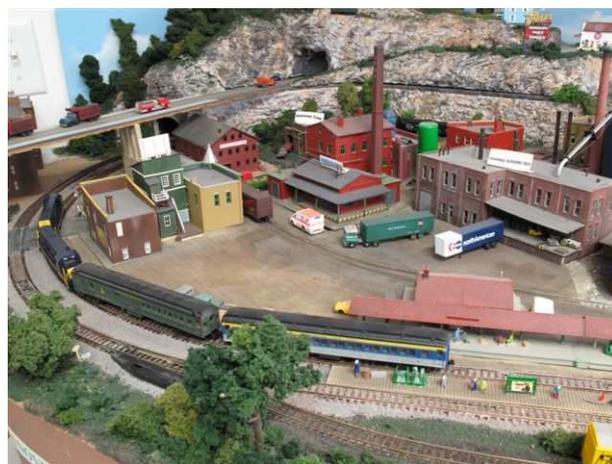
Leaving Baltimore Junction

There is really only one train that makes the complete circuit of the Tiber Creek layout. This is the *Red Hill Rocket*, a commuter train that goes up to the mines in the morning and returns in the evening. It is a convenient and cheap way for my citizens to get to the various towns to work and for miners to get to the Red Hill Mine. From Red Hill, people can also get the bus that will take them over the mountain to Hagerstown.

It's still dark when Ole Pete, Ole JD (and when we say old, we mean it; hey, these two were around when dirt was invented) and Billy Bob pull the combine and coach from its storage/cleanout track and spot it at the Tiber Creek station. While the Tiber Creek commuters are gathering and boarding, the crew returns to the engine house to fuel the locomotives and themselves. Beer is the reason for being for our railroad. The brewery keeps us afloat and our crew does its share to keep the brewery going. Rule G is sort of loosely interpreted around here. Our railroad is so far off the beaten path the FRA hardly knows we exist, let alone where we are!

At 5:30 a.m. the locomotives hook onto the consist and depart Tiber Creek. The next station will be Cerveza City, the heart of our brewing kingdom. Like some other spots on the layout, getting to Cerveza requires a backing maneuver. Then it is on toward Hanover. On the way we stop to pick up passengers at the station at Baltimore Junction. This is where Chessie's westbound main joins the TCRR. Chessie trains will use the TCRR's tracks through Hanover, interchange on the track west of town, and continue on to Pittsburgh and points west.

Our train will join the main line just east of the interchange track and proceed to Hanover. This is a pretty busy station and we will take on quite a few passengers and pick up any packages and mail for Red Hill while we are here.



Hanover Station

Our next stop is Maple Grove. This town is the home of the immense G'burg Grain elevator as well as a lumber company and a cement plant. Farms come all the way up to the

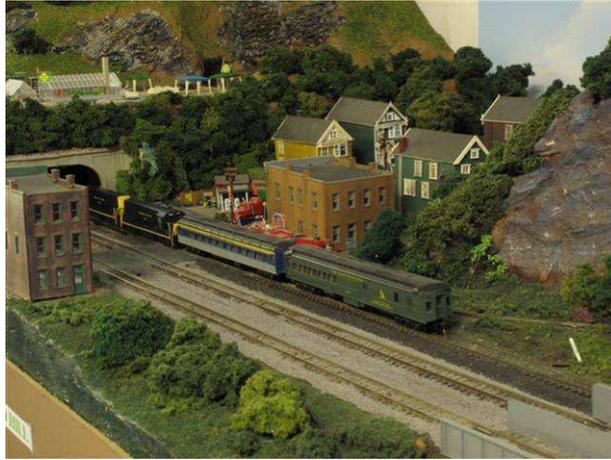
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tracks. Grain comes in by rail and is sent out in barges down the river. Since there is no runaround track in Red Hill, the crew will get on the back of the consist and push it up the holler to the mine.

This is a long and very scenic shove, and the way our boys do it, it can occasionally be fraught with danger, or, at least, excitement. Ole JD and Billy Bob often stand on the rear platform and will shoot the occasional rattlesnake sunning itself between the rails.

Meanwhile, Ole Pete is putting on the power to push our train up the mountain. We usually have two motors. Not that the commuter consist needs that much power, but after the commuter run, the train will take the loads from the tipple back to Philco Yard. The units are along to provide sufficient braking on the way down. The last thing we want to do is have a runaway and put our crew in the river. Lord knows they could use a bath, however. The only suds these clowns see are not in the shower.

Our train stops in Coal Creek to pick up more miners and then it pushes on to the platform at Red Hill No. 2 mine. After everyone detrains, the crew pulls the loads from the mine tracks and takes the two passenger cars down to leave them on the siding in Coal Creek.



Taking on passengers at Coal Creek

They will take the loads down the mountain with them. The two coaches will remain at Coal Creek until the afternoon crew comes up.

In season (around these parts the season extends all year long) the crew will drift the train quietly down the holler and hope they spot a deer. More than one train has come

back through town with a trophy rack on the running board. When the fish are running, (no one knows what kind they are – this is N scale; it's too d... small to tell), the boys are liable to stop the locomotive on the bridge over the river and get out the fishing poles and try their luck. Heck! They've been known to pan-fry the catch on the prime movers. Pity the guys who have to clean up that mess!

The evening crew will bring empties up when they come back this afternoon. They will pick up the passenger cars and spot them at the mine platform, and at 6:00 p.m. the train will trace its course in reverse to Tiber Creek.

The great thing about this kind of run is that it allows people who are new to operations and to the layout to run the entire layout. With real time 2 minute stops at each town, they have time to study the track layout and see the industries that are serviced on the various freight jobs. They also get a sense of the East-West direction in each town. ●



End of the run: arrival at Red Hill Mine #2

Fun at the MiniCon

John Darlington



To those of you who chose to spend Saturday, April 17th engaged in an activity other than attending the first Potomac Division/Chesapeake Division MiniCon, you missed a fun and informative time. The event itself was held in the worship and education building of the South Columbia Baptist Church, which is rather convenient for most model railroad enthusiasts in the Baltimore/Washington region. This first, and hopefully annual, Mini Convention (MiniCon for short) was hosted jointly by the Potomac and Chesapeake Divisions, Mid-Eastern Region, NMRA and it was a truly interesting event from a number of angles.

First of all, The Chesapeake Division, resurrected from the Mt. Clare Division in Baltimore, has only been active since January, 2009. While all NMRA members are automatically assigned to a region and a local division depending on where you live, those of us in the Baltimore Metro Area have had no local division to call our own until the Chesapeake was formed. Our sister Division, Potomac, has been active for many years, and as a

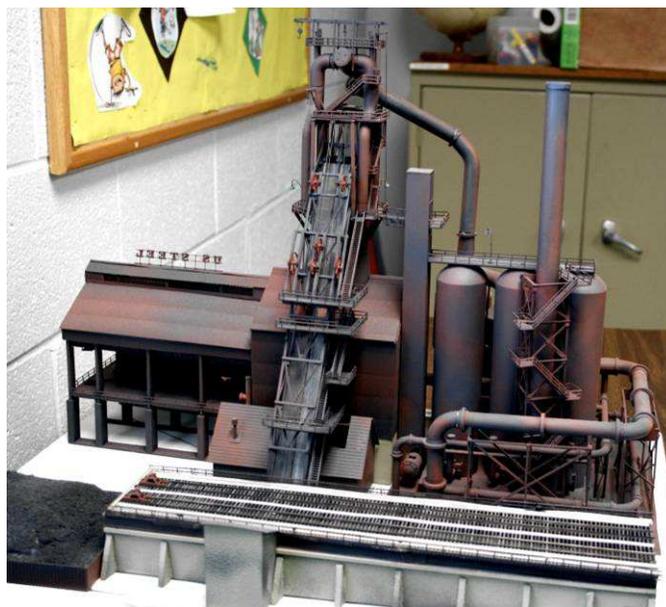


BANTRAK's layout

show of friendship and solidarity, they invited us to co-host this MiniCon to help boost our membership and public identity. As it turned out, 44 of the 86 attendees were from the Chesapeake Division.

The two key features of the MiniCon were the various clinics given by division members and the display of three n-scale layouts from the MARRS Group, Northern Virginia N-Trak, and of course our own BANTRAK. At the risk of being biased, it was obvious that the BANTRAK layout, showing off its new skirting with the Club logo, was outstanding both operationally and visually. Since NMRA members nationally and locally tend to be in HO scale, I found it enjoyable that all three layouts were in N scale.

The clinics that were given were of good quality and featured such topics as "Getting Started in Model Railroad Operations" (Arthur Boyd, Chesapeake Division and BANTRAK), "Weathering Rolling Stock" (John Drye, Potomac Division and NVNTRAK), "Resin Casting Basics" (Martin Brechbiel) "Trees Like You Like 'Em — Easy,



Scratch-built last furnace

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Fast and Cheap” (Bob Sprague), “Coal Mine Operations” (Roger Sekera), “Car Loads and Other Freight Car Detailing” (Bob Minnis), “Don’t Get Caught Speeding – Using JMRI



BANTRAK operating pit

Decoder Pro To Create Speed Tables” (Scott Henry) and a hands-on clinic entitled “Scratch Build a Wood Flat Car in O/HO” by Clint Hyde. I noticed that both Al Del Gaudio and Steve VanMetre were in attendance and I am anxious to see how their models turned out (maybe at our next BANTRAK meeting Show-n-Tell?).

In addition to all of this clinic activity, there were also scratch-built models submitted for NMRA Merit judging and I can truly say that they represented the best in model building. I was especially impressed with an N scale model of a steel blast furnace with a number of



Scratch-built box car

extremely detailed and delicate parts including coal lifts and elevators, chains and pulleys, and functioning – in scale – lights. A first class job!

I was very impressed with the overall skill and knowledge of the clinicians and attendees and hope this will become an annual event, not only for the Divisions involved but for all those



Bob Mohr and Steve VanMetre having fun

who have an interest in model railroading. We can use more of these events that can go a long way in enriching our modeling experience in the Baltimore/Washington area. ●



Scratch-built pickle car

Site of the Month: The Railwire

Matthew Davis

One of the great things about the internet is the way it connects people to each other. By participating in forums, you can meet and learn from others who share your interests. Whether you're interested in operations, DCC, electronics, modern passenger, old-time logging, or some obscure tiny railroad from the transition era, you can find like-minded individuals to talk to.

The Railwire (<http://therailwire.net/>) is a large and active forum for model railroading. Posts can be read by anybody, even "guests", so you can learn a lot just by visiting and reading the discussions. Of course, to get the most out of it and join the discussions, you'll have to register (for free).



An early morning freight winds its way through the fog on Steve VanMetre's mountain module set at the B&O "Day Out with Thomas" event. Look for full coverage of the show next month!

Photo by Matthew Davis

Module building session

Eric Payne

On **Sunday, May 23rd, 2010, 1pm-4pm**, Ed Aufderheide is hosting a module building session. So far, the plan is that we will meet at the local Lowes on Quarterfield Road in Glen Burnie/Severn, MD to buy supplies. Then we'll head over to Ed's (10 minutes down the road). Ed will provide all the tools.

So save the date, and **email me if you are interested**. I believe Ed will be working on some corners, and I will be doing some home layout modules as well as some intended for N-trak use.

Layout Tour

BANTRAK members may be interested to know the NMRA Chesapeake Division is having an Anne Arundel County layout tour on Saturday, May 22, from 1 to 4 pm.

The layouts are:

- Jeff Mutter's Erie Lackawanna (506 Benforest Dr, Severna Park)
- Severna Park Model Railroad Club (283 Oak Ct, Severna Park)
- Noel Widdifield (1356 McDonald Road, Shady Side)
- Hal Olson (1685 Camden Ct, Arnold)

See <http://www.trainweb.org/chesapekmemnra/> for more information.

The Engineer's Cab (continued)

On a lighter note; I'd like to get some feedback at the next meeting for another BBQ/Clinic. Last year seemed to be a happy event. This year I can host it on SATURDAY, June 19. I'd like to have 3 clinics. One can be related to module construction. We need 2 more. One thought is building wood kits. Who's interested as a participant and as leader/teacher?. This should be a hands-on clinic and we'd need to get X number of simple kits. Are there other clinics you'd like?

How about we have a super show and tell on your latest or recent project? What should work, even weather not in our favor, is there is enough room that those wanting to learn more about the various show and tells can do so while those wishing to shoot the breeze about other model RR subjects can go outside (or another room). During the winter months, we're a bit crammed in and it's hard for socializing and show and tell to go on simultaneously.

Our next meeting will be at Bob Mohr's on Sunday, May 16.

Our next show is Bedford, PA from August 27-29.

As far as future shows:

Timonium, Oct 29-31, Great Scale Model Train Show

Ellicott City, Nov 27/30 Turf Valley Show is possible, more details after July 4

Baltimore, B&O Museum Festival of Trains, approximately Dec 18- Jan 2 Eric will brief us

Please keep in mind that BANTRAK is going to be a major player in the 2011 N-Scale Convention (late June) in the Hershey, PA area. We'll have a layout. More news to follow.

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

5/16 — Club meeting at Bob Mohr's

5/23 — Module build session at Ed Aufderheide's

8/27-29 — Bedford, PA

10/29-31 — GSMTS, Timonium, MD

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.

Editor: Matthew Davis

