



February 2007  
NEWSLETTER

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### President's Message

Well, it's a few days to **WINTERFEST 2007**. This year looks like its going to be another fun weekend of running trains on the BIG layout. We all need to pitch in and help with the layout. Last month in the newsletter there was a message from Bob Pawlak asking for help. Please Help Out!!! Set up of the layout will begin at Noon on Friday. We hope to have the layout running by 5pm. After the layout is set up you can go to the hotel and check in and get ready for registration and the workshops. On Saturday try to arrive early and help check out the layout. As we need to make final adjustments and to check that all the electrical is working properly. (DC & DCC) I ask all members to volunteer to help out with the operations of the layout. We need to have people help out with the contests also. After you have volunteered for a job, please be on time to take care of your responsibilities. After that you can go look for bargains at the show. I also want to thank Bob Pawlak and all who make Winterfest happen.

At the banquet we will be having some guests from The N-Scale Collector. The will be talking about the upcoming convention in Connecticut. I will be the layout coordinator for the convention. I am asking for all members to help assist me at the convention. So in closing, get your trains and your contest entries. And have fun!!!!

P.S. The Patriots ARE GOING TO GO ALL THA WAY!!!!

Mark

# Winterfest 2007

Last call for the 13th Annual Northeast Ntrak Conventiion. January 26-28, 2007. The convention will be held in conjunction with with annual "Big Railroad Hobby Show" of the Amherst Railway Society, at the Eastern States Exposition Grounds, "the Big E", at 1305 Memorial Ave, West Springfield, MA on January 27-28. This is your last reminder. Hope to see you all there.

### NOTICE

The March Issue of the Northeast Ntrak Newsletter will be about two weeks as the Editor is taking time off. It should be sent out about March 10th.

In this issue we start a two part article by Peter Wisniewski of his trip with Susan across country by train. It starts in Boston and ends in LA.

## Ringling Red opens in Tampa

### A return to the rings

**By Marty Clear**

**Published January 4, 2007**

A year ago, the Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey unveiled a new kind of circus. Gone were the three rings that had shaped and defined big-time circus entertainment for more than a century.

The new circus featured a story line, and audiences got to watch it all on massive video screens. The new, higher-tech circus was generally popular, Ringling officials say, but some people disapproved of tampering with a cherished American tradition.

The new edition of the Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Circus, which premieres this week at the St. Pete Times Forum, retains the 38-foot-tall video screen but abandons the story line. And the three rings return, in an altered form.

"It was time for the circus to get a facelift," said Jonathon Griggs, general manager of Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey. "Last year was the biggest change for the circus since we went from the big top into the arena in the 1960s. So, of course, we listened to the feedback, and we've made adjustments to make this year's circus even better."

One thing audiences said they missed last year was the three-ring format. The plot line of the 136th annual edition of the Ringling Bros. Circus was played out on an open floor, with a family visiting the circus and getting an opportunity to live out a circus fantasy.

For this year's edition, the "rings" are back, but for the first time they are rectangles. That shape allows crews to fold up the "rings" and remove them during the show when an open floor is needed, Griggs said.

Last year's show is still on the road; Ringling always has two companies touring. The show Tampa audiences saw last year is halfway through its 2-year run; the new show will set out from here for two years.

One of the most popular elements of this show is Bello, perhaps the world's most famous clown. Bello returns with a death-defying act in a spinning wheel high above the circus floor, Griggs said.

"We've had wheels before, but we've never had one like this, that breaks in half in midair," Griggs said. "This is absolutely unique in the circus world." Also new in this edition is a tiger act that is performed behind a mesh fence.

"In the past the tigers have always been in cages with bars, so your view is interrupted by the thick bars of the cage," Griggs said. "Now they're in a mesh cage, so you're looking directly at the tigers, with nothing blocking your view."

Marty Clear can be reached at [mclear@tampabay.rr.com](mailto:mclear@tampabay.rr.com).

## Show Schedule for 2006 – 2007

### **Jan 26 to 28 WINTERFEST 2006**

Big "E" Exposition Center, W. Springfield, MA

Set-up Fri noon to 5pm and Sat 7am \* Show Sat & Sun 10am to 5pm

Coordinator: **John Dunne - 508-697-7635**

Winterfest Coordinator: **Bob Pawlak - 781-862-2485**

### **February 17 & 18 Museum of Our National Heritage, Lexington, MA**

Set-up Sat 8am Show Sat 10am to 5pm - Sun noon to 5pm

Coordinator: **Bob Pawlak - 781-862-2485**

### **February 25 Mystic Valley Show, Foxboro, MA**

Christina's Function Facility, Rte 1, Foxboro, MA

Set-up 8am Show 10am to 4pm

Coordinator: **Dennis Yip - 617-964-5311**

### **Mar 24-25, 2006 Great Train Expo,**

Shriners Auditorium, Wilmington, MA

Set up Sat 7:30AM Show Sat 10AM to 4PM - Sun 10PM to 4PM

Coordinator: **Fay Chin - 978-657-7913**

### **Apr 15, 2006, CVMRR Show, Lebanon, NH**

Coordinator: **Doug Lawson - 603-543-0226**

### **Apr 22, 2006, Hooksett Lyons Club**

Cawley Middle School, Hooksett, NH

Set-up 8am Show 10am to 4pm

Coordinator: **Mike Walker - 603-426-8620**

### **May 10 Children's Hospital, 300 Longwood Dr, Boston, MA**

Set-up 7am Show 9am to 3pm

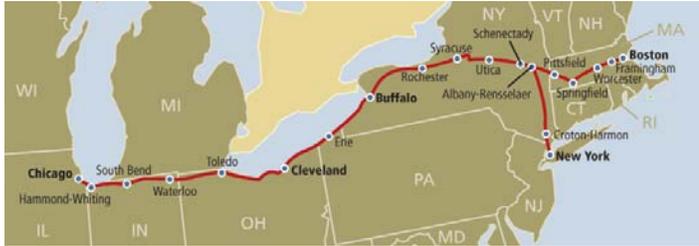
Coordinator: **Bob Pawlak - 781-862-2485**

### **Aug 9 - 14 N-Scale Collector Convention, Hartford, CT**

## Editors Comment

We have been discussing for a few years now how many shows should the club do each year. My feeling have always been that we should not do more than around six shows a year, until we have enough active members willing to bring modules and club boxes to that amount of shows. Then we can start looking at maybe trying to do more shows. The shows we select should be the ones that will bring in the most people to view the layout. It takes a lot of work to put on a train show and to go to so many of these small shows that do not drawing that many is a waste of time. My suggestion is we should limit our club shows to: **Winterfest**, Springfield, MA, **National Heritage Museum**, Lexington, MA, the two **Great Train Expo's**, Wilmington, MA, **Hub Division**, Marlboro, MA and maybe one more. We do not have the members to handle all the shows we have on our schedule. As I have warned many times because of the large number of shows we are trying to do with this small number of members who are willing to attend and support these shows, the active members are getting tired. If we don't cut back on the number of shows I feel we will lose more active members and will not be able to get enough members to support any shows. We have over 50 members, how many of you bring modules to shows? How many shows? One or two a year? That would be great if we only did 5 or 6 shows a year but when we are trying to do 10 or 12 shows a year that is not enough. How many of you are willing to share bring the club boxes to shows or the yard? One or two? I hope our club will give serious thought to this issue and soon.

# My Amtrak trip across country by Peter Wisniewski Part one - Boston to Chicago



I always wanted to take a train trip across the US. But, I could never find a good excuse to do it. Well, I finally found one!

There is a large annual model contest in the Los Angeles area. No, it isn't a model train contest. It is a plastic model kit contest (one of my many hobbies). Since I always wanted to go to that contest, I had a good excuse to take that train trip!

I started making plans few months in advance. It takes 3 days to go from Boston to LA. It is also more expensive than an airplane trip. Since I've never traveled long distances in a train, I really didn't know what type of accommodations I needed. But I did know that I didn't want to be stuck in a standard coach seat for 3 days. And I was able to convince Sandy to come along too! Actually, that part wasn't hard at all...

The trip consists of 3 legs: Boston to Albany (5 hours), Albany to Chicago (15 hours) and Chicago to LA (2 days). For the first leg, we selected a coach seat and for the remaining 2 legs, we've chosen a roomette. Roomette is a private compartment with 2 bunks and a toilette. However, to save some time and money, we decided to fly back to Boston.

We arrived at the Boston's South Station with a bunch of luggage and big smiles! The first leg begun on time! It was a reserved coach seating on Lake Shore Limited to Albany. Train 449. It was a short train: 2 P42 locos, Food Service car, 3 coaches and another Food Service car (used as a baggage car, as the "real" baggage car was being serviced). They were the older rounded profile Budd cars. We sat in the last coach. The train was less than half occupied. Even though it was early spring, I enjoyed the scenery.

Despite of all negative stories we've heard about Amtrak's punctuality, we were running exactly on time! We passed several very long freight trains (mostly 70-car three-level automobile rack trains). Then, it happened: Right after leaving Pittsfield, MA we were delayed by over an hour! We had to wait for 2 long eastbound CSX freights and eastbound Amtrak train.

As Amtrak leases trackage rights from CSX in this leg of the trip, they are at the mercy of the CSX dispatcher and the freights have higher priority than Amtrak! So remember,



Local power around Framingham, MA, still not used to seeing CSX as "local" power.

Ready to board the Lakeshore Limited at South Station to begin a great cross-country experience.



Beautifully renovated Worcester Station.



Enjoying all the leg & shoulder room. So much more space than in an airliner. No sardines-in-a-can feeling here. (right) One of Amtrak's local trains at Worcester Station.



(left) Haven't kept detailed notes but judging by the clock, this is Albany, NY. We've arrived late. Not much daylight left....

(right) Sandy in our Roomette. To her left is the toilette which doubles as a step for climbing to the upper bunk. (below) Sandy showing off our miniature (but private) latrine.



Peter and Sandy still smiling in their Roomette as they start their first night on the train, and spending the very cold night.

Whenever taking Amtrak, don't be in a rush and always have extra time in reserve (we had a whole day in reserve).

Few miles before Albany we encountered a stretch of the old fashioned jointed rail. It was in a bad condition and it made for a very bumpy and noisy ride! Nothing like what I remembered from my childhood train trips (which were on better maintained jointed rails in Poland). The rest of the route was on a welded rail and I can say that I really appreciate how much smoother it is compared to the jointed rail!

When we arrived late in Albany, the second train (also Lake Shore Limited) was waiting for us. Train 49. We were rushed onto it and promptly departed. This train consisted of couple of P42s, then several Viewliner Sleepers, and some Heritage Diner, Lounge and Coach Cars. As we chose the roomette accommodation during this leg, we were treated like 1st class passengers. We received complementary meal and soft drinks for dinner. Dinner was a nice experience as it was served just as the Sun was setting.

The roomette compartment is best described as "miniature"! It is an experience in intimate closeness! But, at the same time, it included a toilet and a sink. All of this in 3'6" X 6'6" space! Our steward (Tom) was quite pleasant. We somehow managed to squeeze all of our carry-on luggage into various cubbyholes in the compartment! It took some serious planning just to figure out which things to put where and which things to take out for the next morning! I would compare this shuffle to the dreaded car switching puzzles on Jim Whitehead's UP Northern layout! But we managed somehow.

One odd thing about this train: Every time we had to stop to wait for a passing train, it would lose the main power to the entire train! Only the emergency lights would stay on. Very strange! Especially knowing that modern locos (like the P42s have separate HEP generators).

This leg took us (unfortunately overnight) through Buffalo, Cleveland, Toledo and Lake Michigan and Lake Erie. We arrived over 2 hours late in Chicago. So, Amtrak lives up to their reputation after all! I've also found out that they had a problem with a heating system in our car. That explained the freezing temperature in the compartment overnight. Even with the extra blankets they gave us it was still quite frigid.

The next part of our trip was quite a bit smoother. We checked our luggage into storage in the Amtrak's Lounge at the Union Station and went on a little exploration of Chicago (as we still had over 2 hours 'til our next train's departure). After last night's experience, we first unanimously decided to try to upgrade our accommodations for the next, 2-night leg of our journey. Amtrak still had full bedrooms available on that train, so it was a done deal. As we were working out our upgrade with the Amtrak clerk, Sandy noticed that she felt like the Union Station's floor was moving ever so gently. Both the clerk and I gave her a strange look (as we were at the lowest, underground level)! We also needed a fresh set of batteries for Sandy's digital camera and few other items. So, we went outside and it was quite cold and very windy (typical Windy City weather, I suppose). We weren't dressed warmly, so staying outside was not an option. We found what we needed, snapped few shots of the Chicago's skyline and went back into the station.



(left) Sandy climbing up to the upper bunk on the right. On left, where Sandy's arm is, there is a surprisingly large storage area over the car's center corridor.

(right) Intermodal equipment as we get closer to Chicago.



(above left) Colorful locomotives at the outskirts of Chicago's Union Station. (above right) Interesting trackwork near Chicago's Union Station. Even more complex than the tracks on Jim Whitehead's layout. Amazing!!!



(left) More of Chicago's local commuter motive power. Looks like Metra uses double-decker cars too.



The Chicago skyline behind wind-blown Sandy. It sure is a windy city.



Arrival at Chicago's Union Station. All the platforms are underground.



Chicago Union Station



Me posing in front of one of Union Station's many entrances.