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President's Message Bob Fallier



From the Office of the President

"Made in America"

Foremost on my personal agenda for November are my birthday, Veteran's Day, and the Marine Corps Birthday. Not necessarily in that order. Thank you to each and every man and woman who has served this country! Second comes train shows. We had a lively, though small show at the Wellesley Community Center on November 4th, the Greenberg show was on the 18th & 19th, and the "Tour d' Chooch" right after Thanksgiving. I plan to have my home layout actually running this year as well as a small point-to-point NTrak layout. Come and visit on the 26th.

There just seems to have been no end to the jobs around the house and yard this summer. Things that needed to be done and things that I've just wanted to do for a while. All take time, effort, and of course money.

But not all work is "work". Working on the railroad is not without some considerable effort, time, and expense, but I always feel it has been time well spent with a specific goal in mind. Model Railroading is fun, most of the time and we all enjoy playing with trains when things go well. But now and then we run into something we didn't expect, thus those famous first words: "this should only take a minute". I sent out a note to our readers a couple of weeks ago asking for your famous first words and you guys must be incredibly good engineers and craftsmen (and women), as I only had two responses to my email. Or maybe I'm just worse than the vast majority of modelers, which is possible.

In my request for your first words on beginning a project, I had noted that I began what I thought would just take two to three hours. Ha! At least eight hours over three afternoons I finally had the results that I wanted. Almost. I knew going into that project that I would have a polarity mismatch on at least one track, which in fact I did, and solved it with a Tam Valley Frog Juicer. Fully two years after installing those tracks I finally was able to run on them (other areas took priority). When first laid down as a large loop under a vast expanse of mountains and farmland, my DC Digital Block Controller was capable of automatically

correcting polarity conflicts between adjacent blocks. But converting to DCC was not as easy as it should have been. In fact, it made things a bit more complicated. Solvable, at a price.

Now I was able to run on both of those long hidden tracks and exit onto the equivalent of our Blue and Green tracks. Green had never been run on, at least not on this half of the layout. And Green runs through an inside corner module that has been affectionately named "Mountain Madness". This module has only been used in two shows since it was built eight years ago. It is great for short trains, with twists and climbs and very excessive grades that my Atlas RS-2s are quite happy with. Any engine bigger than the RS-2 can't negotiate the tight curves without derailing or crashing against the "rock" walls. And with the first run I found need of another Frog Juicer where Command Center power and Booster power are again a mismatch. Ditto on Blue and the third FJ. So far so good and real progress is being made. One full loop takes 15 minutes at a scale 20 mph and the longer loop takes 20 minutes at 40 mph.

Last month, September really, I took apart one of my storage yards because frankly, I had not built it as well as I should have the first time. With the rebuild came a number of improvements and as much as I hate soldering feeders to rails, I did manage to get a number of them done without distorting the rails, melting ties, or having such a cold solder joint that the wires fell off. I consider that a major improvement in my soldering skills. Following that came the thin cut off blade on the Dremel tool and a number of gaps cut at strategic locations. Ah! Some of those new gaps resolved some power issues without the need for new feeder wires. I like that!

Oops! Not all goes as planned. The wiring and new track is just fine. The ballast is nice and smooth and just to the top of the ties. But too even and plain looking. Unnaturally "clean". Add some color I say. Starting with black India ink to add some diesel oil stains between the rails and a bit of staining on the sides. I (continued on page 5)

**T-TRAK Train Show Schedule
2017 & 2018**

If you wish to be part of the T-Trak layout contact Fay Chin Show Coordinator at e-mail nttrak@gmail.com

December 2-3, 2017, NMRA HUB Div Model Train Show, Best Western Royal Plaza Trade Center, Marlboro, MA

Show Sat & Sun 10:00 am to 5:00 pm

January 6-7, 2018, Greenberg's Train and Toy Show, Hanover Mall, Hanover, MA

Show Sat & Sun 10:00 am to 4pm

January 27-28, 2018, Amherst Railway Society Railroad Hobby Show, Eastern States Exposition Fairgrounds, West Springfield MA

Show Sat 9:00am to 5:00pm - Sun 10:00am to 5:00pm

February 17-18, 2018, American Heritage Museum, 33 Marrett Rd., Lexington MA

Show Sat 10:00am to 4:30pm - Sun noon to 4:00pm

March 10-11, 2018, Southshore, 19 Fort Hill St., Hingham, MA

Show 9:00 am to 4:00 pm

March 17-18, 2018, Greenberg's Train and Toy Show, Shriners Auditorium, Wilmington MA

Show Sat & Sun 10:00 am to 4:00 pm

April 2017, NMRA Spring Training, TBD

April 22, 2018, Hooksett Lions Model Train Show, Crawley Middle School, Hooksett NH

Show 10:00 am to 4:00 pm

**2017-2018 NENtrak SHOW PARTICIPATION
SCHEDULE**

December 2-3, 2017 - NMRA HUB Division Model Train Show, Best Western Royal Plaza Trade Center, Marlborough, MA

Coordinator: Rob Selberg (MaiNetrak)

Jan 26-28, 2018 Winterfest, Springfield, MA Amherst Railway Society - Big Railroad Hobby Show

Big "E" Exposition Center, West Springfield, MA

Set-up: Fri noon to 5:00pm & Sat 7:00am to 9:00am

Show Sat 9:00am to 5:00pm - Sun 10:00am to 5:00pm

Layout Coordinator: Dan Pawling Jr., 617-244-5261

Winterfest Chairman: Bob Fallier - 603-465-3785

Feb 17-18, 2018 National Heritage Museum, Lexington, MA

Set-up: Fri 1:00pm - 4:30pm & Sat 7:30am to 10:00am

Show Sat 10:00am to 4:30pm - Sun noon to 4:00pm

Coordinator: Bob Pawlak - 781-862-2485

March 24,25, 2018 Great Train Expo, Shriners Auditorium, Wilmington, MA

Set-up: Fri 1:00pm to 5:00 pm - Sat 7:30am

Show Sat 10:00am to 4:00pm - Sun 10:00am to 4:00pm

Coordinator: Frank Dignan - 508-866-9660

April 22, 2018 Hooksett Lions Club, Crawley Middle School, Hooksett, NH

Set-up: 8:00am - Show 10:00am to 4:00pm

Coordinator: Russell Putnam - 603-835-6952

Show Dates Subject to Change...Check Newsletters for Updates. Please check schedule for errors and send up dates to Roland at: northeastntrak@msn.com Thanks for

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As far as operation is concerned, all the comments I laid out in the FVM GP-60 articles recently, apply here as well. Good paint and printing, tiny detail parts if it's going up on the living room mantle, and very reasonable speed range and general operation. They also pull pretty well and the speed match as expected, is quite close. Six of them are now in service on my MRL after number changes, and maybe two more will follow.

The Prototype MRL

I got to spend five days along the railroad this May in Livingston and Helena, and I feel the mini MRL is now caught up with the real one. I can't match the multiple four unit helper sets based in those two places, but I think I have the current feel just about right. It is truly an SD-70ACe railroad now, as the older EMD's have largely, but not totally, disappeared.

There are still a few SD-45's and an SD-40 or two to be seen, but beyond that, only GP-35's working the yards, work trains, and locals keep the new units.

company. Try to picture forty thousand horsepower (three units up front, four cut in mid-train, and three more on the rear) on a one hundred and fifteen car grain train going up Bozeman hill. It is a truly special sight to see. It's railroading on a scale you just cannot see here in the northeast. If you're able to railfan out west my friends, you will not be disappointed. The UP and the BNSF offer no end of good viewing. From Nebraska to Washington State, the trains are long and plentiful. Go enjoy



Roland Kelley talking with a visitor. Picture by Bob Fallier

Fox Valley Models SD-70ACe's Join the MRL Fleet
by Ernie Poole

The long awaited MRL SD-70ACe's finally arrived back in June, after being on order for 30 months. That's right, it was two and a half years since I ordered them. This will be the last time I ever order anything ahead of time. Enough said on that.

Having that outstanding order with BLW, I had also spoken a number of times with Ian at the Hobby Emporium wondering out loud if they were ever coming. He did eventually speak with FVM and was told they were coming soon. So the inevitable happened, and BLW sent me three units, and Ian had set three aside for me as well, sort of an implied order by now. I wanted six or even eight in the end, but maybe not all at once!

Dealing with Road Numbers

I now had six units on hand, but only three different road numbers. I had a chat with Peteski and Rand looking for techniques to change numbers without a repaint. Pete had seen a video showing a successful number removal using Micro-Sol decal setting solution. That's the bottle with the red lettering.



Here's what worked the best for me. Cut a thin piece of tissue paper like single ply toilet paper, just a hair larger than the target number(s). Place it over the number to remove, and wet it with Micro-Sol using a fine paint brush. You'll have to re-wet a few times as it evaporates quickly. After 5 minutes, push the paper away with the brush, and the number may even come away with it. If not, finish up with a bit more solution and the brush or a Q-Tip.

The technique may slightly stain or etch the base paint just the smallest amount during the process. I noticed a minor shiny spot in the base blue where I rubbed it with a Q-Tip during the removal. It does not change the color at all, but in the right light, you may see a minor change. If you add the new decal, use the setting solutions as advertised, clean up any residue with clean water, and then follow up with a clear satin overcoat, it's effectively invisible.

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Joining the Fleet.



I decided to take a shot after watching it twice, and it does work pretty darn well. In a few hours the duplicate 4406 became the 4409 using decals I already had on hand. I changed only the single digits in six different places. It's not perfect, but if I don't point out the unit, you are not going to catch the imperfection. That's way better than a complete repaint just to change one number on a loco for an operating railroad. For more on that, see the videos posted by mu26aeh on Railwire and in an Athearn post on Facebook.



Summary of N Scale Steam Manufactures by DGM



"Being new to N-scale, I am very interested in N-scale steam locos. What are your thoughts on Model Power Steam Locos?"

This question from a fellow trainboard.com member prompted me to share my thoughts on a variety of steam loco models from a number of manufacturers.

If you go with Bachmann, generally stick with the DCC pre-installed versions. Older models are mixed. I have a pre-DCC 2-8-0 from Bachmann that runs great and a pre-DCC Bachmann 0-6-0 that is awful.

Athearn's 2-6-0 model is a nice runner but also a pre-DCC model. I find these to be excellent models at a great price point. I am not very familiar with their newer, large steam engines, but word on the track is they are pretty good. These models are the same as the MDC 2-6-0. Athearn acquired the tooling from Roundhouse.

Atlas makes a 4-4-0 that is also not-DCC though it can be modified. These require really clean track but they have awesome detail and a huge cuteness factor. Atlas also makes a Shay - which is kind of a special purpose model (great for logging or mining layouts). Once upon a time, they imported steam engines from various European manufacturers (Rivarossi etc.) and you will find these on eBay. They were good for their time, but cannot hold up to a modern day Kato.

The newer die-cast Model Power engines are pretty good. I have had good experiences for the most part with their 2-6-0's and 4-6-2 DCC-friendly models. The newer ones are factory-DCC and even better. These are made by Ajin in Korea I believe. As I understand it, the 4-4-0 shares a similar mechanism and is pretty good as well.

The pre-DCC Kato Mikados run very nicely but are a DCC no-go for the most part. The newer Kato Steam (GS-4 and FEF) models are excellent but there is a limited selection of road names for the models they

chose. Kato also makes Japanese and European prototype steam.

InterMountain makes a beautiful cab-forward model. One of my good friends reports that it is a bit of an awkward runner, but I strongly suspect the new release coming out from InterMountain will be improved.

I do not have experience with the Broadway Limited models. They are beautifully detailed but I don't know how well they run.

Con-Cor originally produced some nice steam engines that were made by Kato. These are great runners. I have a Hudson that I love. Like the Kato 2-8-2, DCC is not a serious option. They moved this model to China for production and the Chinese models are also pretty good but they are NOT DCC models. They also make a GS-4 (also originally made by Kato) for which the latest Chinese releases that take (HURRAY!) a socket decoder. These are also solid runners.

Fox Valley makes a 4-4-2 that is a winner in terms of detail and running as well as being a DCC socket upgradeable model (HURRAY!). The only downside is they are only made for one road name - Milwaukee.

You also have older Arnold models for U.S. prototypes which, like older Atlas/European models, are somewhat dated and won't do DCC but they will run and they can pull.

Lastly, you have some beautiful models of European steam made by Minitrix/Marklin and Fleischmann. These are excellent runners and all take DCC socket decoders.

2016 Wellesley Train Show by Don Pawling, Sr.



I am sending some old news not reported earlier so that the Club's record of community participation is more up-to-date. MaiNeNtrak joined with NENT to create a 35 foot dogbone layout. Seen in the foreground is the Empire Builder running eastward over the Great Plains toward Chicago. Pictured are Rob Selberg and Dan Pawling, Jr. Steve Cappers was also on board. Great show in a tight space.

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just need an eyedropper of alcohol to spread the drops of ink. Oh Crud! Not quite the words I muttered as the open bottle of alcohol slipped from my hand and a puddle of it quickly spread across the painted floor. In my haste to stem the flow of alcohol, I forgot that I also had an open bottle of black ink in my other hand. Now I have both ink and alcohol on the floor and my hands. Great! I quickly cleaned up the spills, my fingers will take a bit longer to un-blacken, and then much to my chagrin last night I discovered that I had also spilled ink on the fascia and Digitrax UP5 plug in panel. After that discovery I finished what I had begun Friday night before the incident and finished the ballast work in the yard.

Made in America. There was a time that most of us remember when almost everything was Made in America. Your car, your Kodak camera, your clothes, all made in America. And then the world changed. Half of your Ford or Chevrolet is made in Canada or Mexico. Who knows where your food comes from, and your clothes, camera, and 90% of the other things you buy are not made in the USA. In my travels with the boy scouts, I collect bits of rock and twigs, labeling & bagging them so that I know later where they were from. Most find homes on my layout – somewhere. Blending in with the store bought made-somewhere-else scenery. Then two weeks ago I had an idea. Why not use the same materials for car loads? Why run a bunch of empty, pristine looking gondolas about the layout (or at shows for that matter) when I can have real loads of real stone, gravel, and timber. So that's what I've been doing when not working on track, the house, yard, and let's not forget the work that I get paid to do.

So here is to you America: Ten cars with loads from Florida to Alaska, Maine to Utah, and a lot of stops in between. Genuine, American Stuff!

Next... Roland asked me to fill the front page this month. It seems that of all you gentlemen, and ladies, have all sorts of stories and experiences, but never seem to write them down anywhere. Without you, no newsletter. So please, if you have a tid bit or a photo to share, then please send it to Roland for the next newsletter.

Greenberg November 18 & 19. I still have India ink under my finger nails and stains on parts of other fingers. I'm sure my hands looked like I hadn't washed them in a month. Maybe by Christmas they will clean up again. Anyhow, another very good show and thanks to everyone who was present. Special thanks to Frank Dignan who once again kept everyone in line and held us to a tight schedule for set up on Friday and Saturday. There was an unusual glitch in the Red track Saturday morning, but we just kept running and running with DCC on both Red and Blue, as has become the "norm" in recent months.

We had several kids join us, both as members and guests, and from what I saw they were pretty well behaved. Jim Pyle is particularly attentive to our younger members, guiding and directing them as needed. My great nephew Xavir (Peruvian spelling, not a typo) joined us on Sunday (picture below), but being quite unused to being surrounded by adults, and having never been to a show like this of any kind,



Thanks to Bob Pawlak for spending a few minutes explaining the operation of his Bridges and Canyons module to Xavir and to me. And for the guys who came to play but didn't bring modules, thank you very much for staying to help take down and load up after the show. I think we achieved a new record of being 100% ready to leave in under 45 minutes. Many hands really do make light the load, including Xavir and Andrew who scurried and carted things about as asked.

On the subject of kids, I do need to reiterate that under age 16 a parent or guardian must be nearby at all times. It is unfortunate that last spring we had two young men, 16 to 18, whose actions necessitated immediate responses and they are now considered persona non grata. As President, people naturally start pointing at me for answers or actions, so in that role I must also reiterate the rules that serve to protect all of us.

Parents who drop off their kids and expect us to entertain them for an hour or longer seem to forget that they are making us responsible for the actions and safety of their children. While I thank the parents for trusting us and applaud you guys for earning their trust, we must also recognize the fact that we've been made responsible for their children's well-being. That is a responsibility that we cannot blatantly or blindly accept, and therefore I ask that you direct parents to see me before the child is allowed to do anything on the layout, accidentally damages something, or worse, gets hurt or lost. I do not know what our legal status is as a club, and I don't want to find out what our legal status is as (continued page 6)

individuals. Imagine if you will that one of the kids runs off to the rest room or snack counter, the parent returns, and we have no idea where the little dumpling has gone. A bad situation to be in, and as long as everyone, including parents, abide by the rules, we should never need to find out.

Next Stop: Tour de Chooch on November 25 & 26, and a reminder that my doors will be open to the public on the 26th. You are all welcome to come play, chat, and have a good hot cup of coffee.

December brings us to the Hub Division Model Train Expo in Marlboro, Ma. on the 2nd & 3rd. And then comes Winterfest. Get those reservations and registrations done, your checks to Bob Pawlak and module info to Dan Pawling, John Bingel, or Fay Chin.

That's all for this month.
Happy Rails!

Bob Fallier
November 2017

Pictures by Bob Fallier

