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President's Message Bob Fallier

The days are growing shorter, cooler and the colors of autumn are all but spent, brown upon the ground. That is usually a good thing for model railroaders as we jump as much into shows as kids jump into piles of newly raked leaves. Usually that is. But this has been a most unusual year, a subject upon which I'll not wax or wane or boast conjecture or precognition. It simply is and we do our best to deal with it.

We really are a lucky bunch. Regardless of our income or our retirement, our fluidity and flexibility, we Americans as a whole are very lucky. I was reminded of this just recently when I received an email from a friend. She writes: "Bad water today. Most people here tolerate it, but they've had years of upheaval and unrest to get used to less than sanitary conditions. More when I feel better."

I'm not sure whether she has been in the Ukraine, Belarus, or adjoining areas and she can't say. Deactivating land mines and booby traps isn't something we have to think about, but she does it day after day. Covid-19 is the least of her worries.

Yes, we are a lucky people. We have trains to play with, whether we have shows to attend or not. So lets get onto the subject of model railroading...

First off is the pending Greenberg Show in November. Following is an extract from the Greenberg web-site today:

"As of this date we do not have any shows which have definite dates. We have canceled all shows until at least 11/5/2020. As of today, no venue will allow us to operate shows in the manner we have operated in the past. We are anxious to return to operating shows. We will continue to work with venues and government authorities to operate train shows as soon as it is safe and legal to do so."

"Our offices will remain closed until we announce the resumption of shows, Please continue to visit this web site for the latest information."

"We have published below our current tentative schedule of Greenberg shows and would plan to announce a tentative schedule of Great Train Shows sometime in November. The Great Midwest Train Show is planned to resume about 30 days after the state of Illinois lifts its ban on gatherings of greater than 250 people. At present we have no idea when Illinois will release that restriction."

The Tentative Greenberg Shows Schedule for fourth quarter 2020 and first quarter of 2021:

Oct 31-Nov 1 - Monroeville, PA - CANCELLED
Nov 21-22 - Wilmington, MA - DECISION TO BE MADE BY 10/31/2020
Nov 28-29 - Edison, NJ - DECISION TO BE MADE BY 10/31/2020"

All of which means the Wilmington show may or may not happen. Let's assume it will and let Frank know if you plan to attend and with what modules. I would much rather prepare now for that show than wait until the last minute as we are want to do. And if it gets cancelled, then we move on. Period.

That would bring us to "Winterfest" in January. As of today, the show is still on. The following have committed to attending and bringing at least one module: Jim Nolan, Steve Cappers, Ken Harstine, Claus Schlund, Jim Pyle, Matt Thibodeau, Bob Pawlak (no module), George Michaels, John Doehering (maybe), Alex Dagget, Russell and Jeff Putnam, and myself. That accounts for 13 people and I would like to cut it off at 20.

IF YOU PLAN TO ATTEND LET ME KNOW ASAP - THIS INCLUDES OUR CANADIAN, NY, & MAINE FRIENDS.

My reasoning is simple: Social Distancing as mandated by the city or state, limited facilities, limited budget, management of the activities by Bob.

The activity plan for 2021 is equally simple: Set up on Friday as usual, on your own for dinner, but I will try to get a room for us at the hotel where we can eat and take care of registration materials. No "mini-show" or clinics. We will utilize club modules as much as possible, but not to the extent that we get overwhelmed with too many to set up/take down by a limited number of people. Saturday the show as usual. No model or picture contest. We will plan to have a pizza party at the hotel in one of the banquet rooms, with spacing as needed. I've been asked to inquire about a cash bar set-up for us on Saturday. TBD. We can order take out dinner from Uno's, if everyone is in agreement, then Pizza will keep it simple. I will have water and coffee available. No guest speaker, no formal presentations. A limited "People's Choice" ballot for best module and a suitable prize.

“Snake Weights” By Bob Pawlak

While building my “Bridges Canyon” module more than 20 years ago, I wanted to use Pliobond adhesive to glue Micro Engineering code 55 weathered flex track directly to the smooth back side of 1/8” plywood paneling I was using to cut out 1.5” wide pieces of roadbed. I could lay out the desired center line of the track with a pencil on the plywood pieces with various radii copied from my 1/8th scale master plan, draw transitions to straight sections, etc. The flex track was stiff and allowed me to bend it to the desired shape to follow the centerline and it would stay close to the desired shape. Pliobond is almost like contact cement but gives you a minute or two to make small adjustments. I could see the desired centerline between the ties and through the adhesive to try to do my best to keep the centerline halfway between the rails to adjust the position of the track before the adhesive made it impossible to move the track.

But I wanted some way to hold the track down flat and in the right place while the adhesive dried completely. I didn’t want to use track nails through the ties because they would stick out the back side of the 1/8” plywood. I also did not want to use temporary push pins for the same reason and because I could not simply “push” them through the tough plywood. I wanted something heavy to put quickly on top of the rails to hold the track flat and in place.

So, what is the heaviest material you can think of? Lead, right? In those days I had no idea where I could buy bars of lead that might do the job. But what about buck shot or lead shot? I somehow knew that shot gun owners and skeet shooters often times reuse their spent shells somehow using new and reclaimed bulk lead shot. Suppose I could fill a long, cylindrical shaped cloth bag with lead shot just big enough in diameter to hold down n-scale track. The bag could be made flexible enough to follow the shape of any track section curved, straight, or otherwise. It could be placed quickly on top of the track while the adhesive was still wet. The concept of the “snake weight” was born!



The picture shows my collection of “snake weights”. The three long ones are each about 24” long. One is about 12” long and the smallest one is about 6” long. The total weight of the group is about 20.5 pounds for 7.5 feet of snake

Believe me, they are 4” of snake weight.
Believe me, they are 4” of snake weight.!

So how do you make a snake weight? You need to cut a rectangular piece of sturdy scrap cloth (I think I used some ripped bedding) about 6” wide and 24” long (longer or shorter as you might prefer). You fold it in half lengthwise to make a 3” x 24” rectangle and then sew a double seam ¼” from the open edge along the length and along one end of the rectangle to make a long bag about 1-3/8” in diameter. The bag needs to be big enough in diameter so as not to sag between the rails to risk becoming glued to the track. To make the bag “neat”, push the sewn end through the tube with a dowel to turn the bag inside out to hide the seam. Next fill the bag with “lead shot” and sew the open end closed. Don’t under-fill or over-fill the bag. It should be firm but be able to bend in half as shown in the picture so it can sit nicely on top of curved track or be doubled up to have twice the weight in half the length.

I know what you are thinking. Who do you know that has a sewing machine that you can borrow or that will help you to make the bags? My mother taught me to use her sewing machine when I was quite young. I think of my wife’s sewing machine as just another tool I can use whenever necessary.

But where can you get the lead shot? My recollection is that I got a 25 pound bag for about \$40 at a sporting goods store on Massachusetts Avenue near Porter Square in Cambridge, MA. But today of course, you just go to Amazon.com and a 25 pound bag is about \$74 (ouch) with other choices of lighter bags for less money available for delivered to your door.

Since the lead shot seems so pricy and I don’t use my snake weights very often any more, please feel free to arrange to borrow them for an extended period if you would like to try using them.

For Bridges Canyon, long sections of 1.5” wide plywood roadbed with track, turnouts, track feeder wires, and switch machines attached on the bench were then glued to previously shaped pieces of extruded pink insulation on the module with 100% silicone (Frank Dignan’s recommendation) as the adhesive. In addition to first holding track to the plywood roadbed, the snake weights were used to hold these roadbed subassembly pieces in place while the silicone dried.

The right clamp, other than the human hand, for some sort of repair is often difficult or impossible to accomplish but the snake weights can often save the day and hold things in place. I have used them periodically in various unusual
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situations. I was using one recently to hold down a section of ripped rail on Bridges Canyon while the CA dried because there was no way I could rig any clamp I had to do the job. The same day when I got the most recent Newsletter and Roland's plea for articles, it prompted me to finally write this article about snake weights. I get the prize for procrastinating for 20 years!

Of course you can also use the lead shot for other modeling purposes such as to weight closed freight cars like tank cars and covered hoppers by simply drilling a hole in the bottom of the car, adding the necessary weight, and then plugging the hole. I have some hopper cars that would make excellent baby rattles.

Thanks from Eric Smith

I want to thank you and Northeast NTRAK for your generous donation to the Talent Fire Relief Fund, that was established about four weeks back to help raise monies for our employees who lost their homes and possessions in the wildfire that swept through our area back on Sept 18th. In total the fund rec'd over \$40,000.00 that was equally distributed to our six employees. They're forever grateful for the financial help as they start the rebuilding process. And indeed all of us at Micro-Trains appreciates this effort so very much as well.

I hope you're well during this crazy year 2020. And I hope the Springfield Train Show scheduled for next January can go on! I've not attended a train show since this past March when Micro-Trains exhibited at the Rocky Mtn Train Show in Denver CO. I look forward to seeing you in January!

Thanks again! And best regards, Eric

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Usually we would have only a printed certificate for this, but this year I think if you show up and win, then you earned something more than a piece of paper and a pat on the back. No other module awards will be given unless someone convinces me otherwise. Let me know if you want to have a Parade of Trains contest.

In spite of the fire and temporary loss of business, Micro-Trains has committed to sending us cars for the show. Thank you very much Eric Smith! Be sure to visit the MTL booth and thank him personally!

Understandably, we (Jim Nolan) is not soliciting prizes from other vendors or manufacturers this year. If we do receive other donations they will go into the inventory for 2022. I may offer raffle items, TBD, and we will announce ticket sales when the on-line registration is opened.

At a minimum, your registration will get you two "free" cars and who knows what else the creative minds at NENT will come up with as a "thank you for attending".

Due to the mega-cost overrun for dinner last year (2020) our budget for 2021 is limited. We'll do what we can to have fun and make this show as pain free as possible.

The hotel is still planning on having us attend. Breakfast at the hotel is currently "grab and go". At this time there is no seating available. That may change. Registration cost will be based on the cost for the banquet room and set up charge for the bar.

Other NTRAK news... My great nephew, Xavrian, whom a number of you have met, has finally decided to begin building a module with great thanks to Roland for his donation of buildings. The module will feature a small city, passenger station, engine shed, and maybe 1 or 2 staging tracks in the front. Turnout(s) off of blue and red will be Peco Electrofrog with wired/gapped frogs. The balance of the track is also from Roland except for new Atlas end tracks. While we worked on the Red & Yellow tracks together, he wants to install the Blue track himself, including ballasting from Arizona Rock and Mineral.

And finally, as noted last month, Dwarvin Lighting is developing a prototype Fireworks flasher for me for the Disney corner module. I've also been doing some product testing for Dwarvin and very happy with the results. If you are planning on a fairly substantial number of light elements (buildings, street lights, etc), then using fiber makes a lot of sense. The initial cost may seem high, but the ease of installation more than makes up for the price. No Wires or lights to burn out!!! And compared to that popular just plug it in product, Dwarvin lighting is Very cost effective!

And last, it would appear that Hobby Emporium may no longer be a supporter for Winterfest. I'm not sure what is going on yet, but I will keep you informed.

Buy Rolands Engines - Please!!! Let me know what you want and I'll put it aside for you.

Happy Rails!
Bob



N Scale Yard Sale - Presented by our own Roland Kelley. All proceeds go directly to Roland. See sample Pictures!!! There are still a number of nice items left in the collection that Roland would like to sell. All items below have been tested and run well unless otherwise noted. All are in original boxes.

If you have any questions about them, please contact Roland directly.

- Kato, PRR, 8 car A&C set with matching E8/9 A+A engines (NIB) (picture)
- Kato, Amtrak Phase III 8 cars, set A&B (NIB) (picture)
- Walthers freight cars (3) (NIB)
- ConCor tri-level auto racks (6) (NIB) (picture)
- ER Models (Bachmann) Penn Baldwin Sharknose A-B set (Spookshow rates it "A") (NIB) (picture)
- ConCor Pennsy 4-8-4 - Nice! Similar Listed on ebay for \$100 (picture)
- ConCor 701D center cab, Pennsy, runs nicely (picture)
- 3x Bachmann Spectrum Conrail Dash-8, New! 2 road numbers (NIB) "can opener" logos- These run very well! knuckle couplers included.(picture)
- Kato F7 A-B-A, different road numbers, Pennsy, split frames. (picture)
- Kato E8/9, PRR tuscan red, 2 road numbers, use Digitrax DN163KOA decoders if you want DCC. (picture)
- LifeLike SW9/1200 Pennsy, 2 each, different road numbers Very nice, orig \$52 each.(picture)
- LifeLike C liner, A-B pair, similar listed on ebay \$119, split frames. (picture)
- Atlas GP-35, 2 road numbers, split frames, uses light boards at each end.
- Atlas SW1500, Penn Central, very nice little engine (picture)
- ConCor Pennsy RDC, 2 each run well, 3rd could use a tuneup.
- LifeLike FA2, 2 each powered (same number) and 1x dummy B unit
- Rivarossi 2-8-2 Heavy Mikado, numbered, unlettered (picture)
- Bachmann Spectrum Pennsy Doodlebug - needs a traction tire (picture)



BRASS: Pennsy, NJI MPB-54 Powered combine (single, \$150 new) and MP-54 3 car set (1 powered, center car, non-powered end car, \$450 new)

Kato TGV - Orange/Gray scheme, 6 car set >>> Both Cab Units are powered!!! Orig \$99. Current Ebay listing \$198-219 (Kato #S14701)(picture)

(NIB - New in Box, or like new in original

