

Volume 1, number 1

January 1987

**THE
NEW**

BULLETIN BOARD

7th Division
SWAP MEET

FEB. 8



N-CON 87
FEB 22



Official publication of the Seventh Division, Pacific Northwest Region,
National Model Railroad Association.

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The Seventh Division Bulletin Board is the official publication of the 7th Division, Pacific Northwest Region of the National Model Railroad Association, and is published six times a year. It is distributed to all members in good standing.

The Bulletin Board is solely the responsibility of the editors, and does not necessarily reflect the opinions of the Standing Committee, or the organization's policies.

Correspondence and contributions are solicited, and may be sent to: The Editor 7th Div. Bulletin Board, 9300 Ryan Crescent, Richmond, B.C. V7A 2H2. All other correspondence relating to the 7th Division should be forwarded to the Division Superintendent.

EDITOR PHIL MAGNALL

Happy New Year! Here's our contribution:

The Second Sunday format of public workshops at Oakridge Centre has caught on marvelously, and will continue through the coming year. Just passed, as you read this, will have been the annual beginners' workshop aimed at all the folks who got train sets under the Christmas tree and now want to do something with them.

February 8 is possibly the most popular of all the Second Sunday events, the Annual Swap Meet. Clean out that junk you aren't going to use; it could be another modeller's treasure! Contact workshop organizer Carl Sparks for table reservations. The fee is ten percent of your gross.

The Third Annual N-CON N scale convention is on for February 22 at Cloverly Centre in North Vancouver. This event promises to be even more popular than ever! See the special announcement elsewhere in this issue.

Page One: Mixed notes

After the serious ponderings of the last two editorials, some scattered thoughts and news:

The BB, you will have noticed, looks different this month. Inside, we have gone to a consistent two-column format, except for one or two pieces in stock (which we won't bother to reset) and the Timetable. The reason is simplicity, translating into economy: since this newsletter is assembled on a rented computer, the considerable effort that goes into designing and juggling one- and two-column items so that they fit costs money. By doing it this way, the entire issue can be run off as a strip of "loose type" and pasted up in short order. We've also put the dealer ads on a directory page, where they may prove to be a more useful reference. The cover design is mostly an esthetic exercise, although now, in response to requests, it will be easier to see at a glance whether you have an entire year's issues in your file box.

A less noticeable change, perhaps, is the absence of **Brian Rudko's** name from the inside cover. He and his wife, **Brenda**, are off on an extended round-the-world tour. Their plans are to return in

about six months, and then pack up and head east to try Toronto living on for size, possibly for good. Brian's presence, plus that of his superlative finescale modelling at show time, will be missed, although he has promised to stay in touch with dispatches suitable for *BB* use while he is travelling.

Our offer to run "Pike Ads" has met with underwhelming response: one person has asked me how many had come in. It's up to you, guys. We had thought it would be a good way to meet other members, especially if you don't get to many functions and/or live in the interior...

On the subject of the interior, I spent New Year's visiting relatives in Kelowna, and also swung by Vernon and **Pat Quain's** new store. It's not our purpose to give free plugs to retailers, but Pat's efforts to run a well-stocked specialty train store for Okanagan hobbyists deserve a hand. There's not a tremendous population base to draw on compared to the million souls in Greater Vancouver, and it's doubtful Pat will ever get rich from his enterprise. Nor can he just pop over the local wholesaler to pick up an order the way city dealers can; everything has to come by mail or courier from hundreds of miles away. Nevertheless, he has put together a train lover's delight of models, kits, and parts that compares favourably with the better big city shops. Why not drop by Quain's Trains the next time you're in Vernon?

Back to philosophy: as a booster and part-time salesman for N scale, it's sometimes deflating to have to admit that the proportion of modellers in that scale hasn't changed much in recent years. It has stayed at 15 to 20% (with HO around 75%) for some time, despite the pressures of today's smaller homes which many cite as their reason for choosing N. I doubt the predictions of those who say it will eventually become the leading scale, because we are dealing with something of finite, limiting size: the human hand. There is something very comfortable about the size and heft of HO rolling stock; it fits a one-handed grip so easily, and almost anyone's fingers can build or decal a car without much difficulty. Each time you drop down a scale, however, you go beyond more people's capabilities. When you hit N, you've lost most modellers. As back-up evidence - and this is the interesting part - look at the disproportionate number of Sn3 models coming onto the market. Magazines are filled with ads for that scale, while standard S remains obscure and HO and O narrow gauge are taking a back seat in the three-foot gauge department! Why? Perhaps because Sn3 locos and

cars are virtually the same size as HO. If not, how else to explain why, out of O, S, HO, N, and Z, plus their narrow-gauge variants, these two scales seem to be coming out on top? The guy who invented HO was really on to something - it's all in the ergonomics!

Tom Beaton actual winner!

Gordon Varney came up to us after the last issue went out and asked if I knew about my "colossal goof!" "Oh, no," we thought, "did the national convention get placed in Seattle? Did we libel somebody?" In fact, we gave credit for Most Popular Model at Trains 86 to Gordy, when **Tom Beaton** was in fact the solid winner. It was all the more ironic because Gordy's O scale sawmill won hands down last year, while Tom's was ignored, and this year year the shoe was on the other foot! It was probably thinking about that that led to the wrong name coming out of our typing fingers. Anyway, we promised a correction in big type, so here you go, Tom. Congratulations!

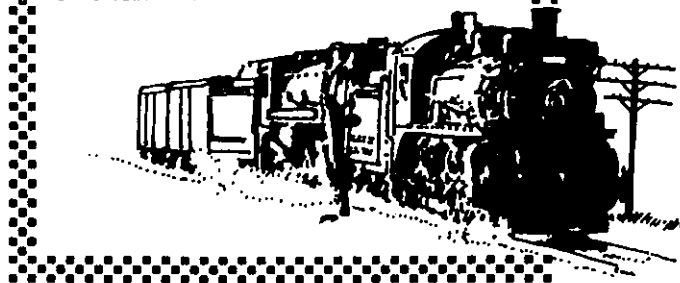
Division offers assistance to event planners

Your Standing Committee would like to hear from groups in the 7th Division planning a model railroad event. If you need advice, help, or monetary support, send us a written proposal. We want to promote the hobby in areas that are less active than some of the 'hotbeds'. The members of the Committee have a lot of experience with conventions and public shows; you can draw on their expertise if you wish.

Write care of:
#20, 13775 102 Avenue,
Surrey, B.C.
V3T 1N9

FROM THE SUPERINTENDENT'S DESK
and Workshop Words not received for this issue.

MAIL CAR



Congratulations on your editorial in the October issue. I also note concern expressed by D. Swart on page 8 of the current *Switchlist*. What he is proposing is, in my opinion, mere tinkering - and expensive to boot.

What ails the NMRA is likely more terminal. Panjandrum never give up their pet schemes and the organization has probably incurred financial and legal liabilities it can't escape short of declaring bankruptcy, which seems a likely eventuality.

The attached concept is designed as food for thought - an attempt to provide an alternative, or successor, the NMRA in order that the best of that organization's work, structure, and people may be salvaged so that the ordinary modeller may have the benefits of a constructive membership without having to pay a ransom to Chattanooga.

Jim Stevens
White Rock, B.C.

Editor's note: Panjandrum: mock title of exalted personage. Also, Mr. Stevens's outline will appear in a later issue.

I have been reading your editorials on What's Wrong with the NMRA and wish to compliment you on a job well done. I spent the last two years as Superintendent of the Second Division looking over my shoulder to see if there were any creditors chasing me. The time has come for the National to reform its dues structure and itself, socially and economically.

Keep up the good work and we will yet get the name changed to Model Railroaders, International, and otherwise be heard at the Headquarters Building in Chattanooga. I have written a few editorials myself and am now requesting that our own editor of the

Semaphore pick up where I've left off. We both wrote to Paul Shimada, when he was president, in answer to his own inquiry of what was wrong with the NMRA. He didn't respond to either letter. He only said he hadn't heard from the NMRA officers and so he guessed that everything was alright or it was "the darkness before the storm". The brass hats are just too detached from the membership to know what is going on and the divisions are suffering from their attitude. Let 'em have it!

Dave Swart
Portland, OR

First, let me introduce myself - Bob Warren - who has been responsible for the Region Way Freight column in the *NMRA Bulletin* for a number of years. And as editor of said activity I receive a reasonable number of regional and divisional publications each month to read through. None, and I repeat, none, have hit the nail on the head so much as your recent columns dealing with What's Wrong With the NMRA? It is unfortunate that your editorials will/can not be picked up not only by the other regional/divisional publications but also by the 'national' rag as I feel they deserve wider reading and discussion by the overall membership. However, I will be the first to admit that the majority of 'average' members don't really care, as hard as that might be to accept. They pay their dues when the time comes - probably more out of habit than desire to belong. Nor do they care about top-heavy management that the Association is saddled with since their prime interest is modelling, not politics.

One point you made that I think is novel, and certainly could be one that would cause a turn-around for the Association is for it to become a sort of *Consumers' Guide* as you indicated. Then you have to become a member of the organization to obtain the detailed, and I emphasize, detailed review of a kit. What a bullet for the Association to grab hold of and really give the membership something for their money.

Just wanted to let you know that I did enjoy your editorials and find that they are definitely thought-provoking. I would like to suggest that you send a copy of them to some of our national officials - especially the president, who states that he is open to suggestions.

Bob Warren
Clearwater, FL

Mr. Warren's letter was edited for brevity, but the above is taken verbatim from the text. It is our understanding that the editorials are being submitted for consideration at the next national board meeting.



The British railbus which visited B.C. this summer provided thousands with a unique opportunity to retrace the route of the old interurban system up the Fraser Valley. Hoped-for sales of the articulated, four-axle unit have not materialized, however.

NTRAK Corner

Hank Menkveld

December 5th, 6th, and 7th saw the Train Gang out in full force at the Vancouver Hobby and Craft Show in B.C. Place Stadium. And, as with the previous public displays, it was an overwhelming success. This time we managed to run an eighty-seven car freight! It was interesting to see many people looking in amazement and to watch the waving fingers as they counted cars.

We hope that our success will encourage others to build modules so they, too, can have the same fun we have during these shows.

I would like to thank all 30 volunteers who helped to keep things under control and little (or BIG) hands off the layout.

Now, a short word to those who are building or planning to build a module:

Modules stay the property of the builder. Once your module is registered, you will be notified of upcoming public displays and asked to participate. You are

responsible for transport of the module(s) to and from the show location. At the site, each module is to be accompanied by the three sections of Atlas track and two C-clamps that join your module to its neighbour.

With a bit of work, we may show up with a layout twice the size of what we have now when the next Vancouver Hobby and Craft Show arrives in December of 1987.

**Have you made your plans for the
NMRA National in Eugene ?
July 28 to August 2, 1987**

FULL STEAM TO EUGENE

Model Railroading as a Lasting Hobby

A little while ago, I dropped in on a local model train buff (note that I did not use the term "model railroader") and took a look at his large N scale layout which occupies a double garage. Only a year or two previously, the same location had been filled with HO trackage and locomotives, some with expensive sound equipment, but he had grown discontented and traded the lot in for what he could get. He then switched to the smaller scale. Now, he lamented to me, he was bored with his new layout. He had built it all, it ran, and there was nothing more to do. I looked over the dense, haphazardly designed track, at the garish, unnatural landscape, and inspected a fleet of locomotives that appeared to have been dipped in housepaint and sloppily decalced in his favorite roadnames. I thought: "How about ripping it all up and starting again? How about building a layout with a theme and a trackplan? How about improving your painting and building skills? And how about just operating your railway like a real one when you're finished?"

Of course, I said nothing, but thought it rather sad that someone who had spent so many years playing with model trains had no idea what model railroading was all about.

Make no mistake: it is a terrific hobby with a lifetime of potential enjoyment if you know how to take advantage of it. Somewhere between the first trainset and the clear-out ad in the Buy and Sell, six months later, though we seem to lose a lot of once enthusiastic new hobbyists. Why? Poor planning, mostly, coupled with a lack of understanding about what a well laid out model railroad does once the track is down and the trains run. For those readers who are new to the hobby, and for those who have never really discovered the fun Model Railroading is supposed to hold, despite years of building and rebuilding, I would like to offer a few guidelines that may help to get you onto the right track. Constructing a layout represents a considerable investment of both time and money, and a little thought now can pay big dividends in the future.

1. DECIDE WHAT YOU LIKE ABOUT THE HOBBY

The things that most fascinate you about trains will strongly influence your choice of scale, theme, and layout design. Decide whether the intricacy of a Shay's gear and shaft motion or the ability to wind a 30-car freight through the mountains holds the most interest for you. If the former, N scale will not provide any satisfaction (you'll want O or at least HO scale). Yet, unless you have a spare barn, no other scale will let you run long trains convincingly. What kind of action intrigues you? A rusty, repainted old Alco diesel shifting cars along a weed-grown 5-mile shortline? The Pennsylvania in the heyday of steam? Backwoods logging? The list is endless, and if you're not sure what you like best, spend some time going through railroad books at the local library. Visit the layouts of other PNR members and see what they have done. Chances are, something will grab your interest before long.

2. DECIDE ON A THEME

By a theme, I mean an overall vision of what your railroad does, and where. Perhaps you want it to haul unit

trains of coal from the mountains to a bulk-handling port; or maybe it forms a bridge between two major railways, and serves a few towns along the way; it could be a specific section of a real railroad you've taken a shine to; again, there is no limit to the variety, but the scale and scope of your layout will definitely relate to your conception of what it should do.

3. PICK A PROTOTYPE LOCATION

In this hobby, "prototype" refers to "the real things". Some folks get right down to plotting the theoretical route of their fictional road on contour maps, which may be a little much for the beginner, but having an idea, at least, of whether your railroad runs through the desert of Utah or the Canadian Rockies, helps to create a framework on which to build your railroad. You then tend to choose more appropriate locomotives, cars, and buildings, and bit by bit, the layout takes on an atmosphere all its own. You find yourself working to capture the feel of a real place, something which can at times become a hobby in itself, and something you just don't get by randomly purchasing anything that holds some appeal or will fit an empty space without regard for its appropriateness.

4. CONSIDER MODELLING A PROTOTYPE RAILWAY

Most beginners are more interested in building their own version of what a railroad should look like, but the fun of following the practices of a real railroad should not be overlooked. Unless you are a skilful kitbasher and scratchbuilder, HO will usually be the scale of choice for such modelling because of the wide variety of equipment available. In this part of the world, Canadian Pacific, Canadian National, Great Northern, and the British Columbia Railway are popular choices, with some followers creating fictional locales and others building condensed versions of the actual towns and terrain on a specific route, such as the old CPR Kettle Valley Line. To some, such an approach will seem overly restrictive, but to others, a totally freelanced road is like tennis without a net - modelling to a set of rules appeals to them. The choice is yours.

5. DESIGN YOUR RAILROAD FOR OPERATION

It is likely that more beginners lose interest through poor layout design than any other reason. They get a table, nail down the track, watch trains go around for a month, get bored, and pack it away until spring cleaning sees it sold for 20% of the original investment. Model trains are designed to run, and model railroads should give them a reason to. Your track plan should show your railroad's theme at a glance, and unless there is no alternative, should not be designed for an unrealistic walk-around table. When complete, you should be able to make up trains and send them from point A to point B with appropriate switching and stops in between. Quite likely, it should be planned with two or more operators in mind. In short, it should define a believable railroad, and not a haphazard tangle of inter-connected track. A book could be written on the subject, and, in fact, one has been: John Armstrong's Track Planning For Realistic Operation (Kalmbach). There are others, but be warned that many are out of date and that even some recent books espouse 1940's concepts with no merit at all today. For an excellent book that teaches by example, try McClelland's The V & O Story, a profile of a superb freelanced eastern coal carrier. You may not have ambitions of the magnitude shown in both books, but the principles are very worthy of some study.

6. LEARN FROM OTHERS

If you are already an NMRA/PNR member, you have one of your best resources and inspirations close at hand. You may not have the skills of some of the veterans with their prize-winning models, but by talking to them and attending the workshops they host, you can learn what mistakes you have made and where you can improve; often by simply using the right tool or simple technique. By comparing what you have done to the efforts of others, you can develop an objective perspective, and work toward better and better results with time. Remaining complacent and satisfied with your first efforts, like the fellow I mentioned at the beginning of this piece, is a short cut to boredom with model railroading.

Why be a Member of this Organization?

Tom Beaton

What do I get for being a member of the NMRA?

I get a *Bulletin*, once a month, that I am not really impressed with. Once in a while, there is something that may interest me but then I can get that from *Model Railroader* or *Railroad Model Craftsman*, so why another magazine subscription? Why have I stayed a member so long?

When I got back into the hobby many years ago, I joined the NMRA and then the PNR. I got involved with a group in the Coquitlam area which introduced me to other people, made some new friends, and learned some new ideas. I attended the Oakridge clinics, met more new people, and saw how things were done by people like Frank McKinney, Ken Davis, and Dave Simpson - wow! These guys were great modellers and showed us ideas we might never have thought of. One night, a fellow named Ken Griffith showed up at a meeting of the Coquitlam group and said he would like a member to join the 7th Division Standing Committee. Somehow, I got elected! *Boy, what am I getting into?*

Attending the first meeting was a little scary. There I was sitting at a table with Frank, Ken, Dave, and all these other great modellers I had seen at Oakridge. Wow again! They were a great bunch of guys and seemed to enjoy this job on the committee. *Oh well, let's see what happens.* Pretty soon, a Spring Meet was to be held - *oh-oh, here comes some work!* Well, the meet came and went; it was some work all right, but hey, I enjoyed it! Met a lot of new friends, learned some new things, and had fun doing it.

One day, as I walked into an Oakridge clinic, I was set upon by two fellas: Ken Griffith - him again - and this cigar-chewing guy named Ross Heriot. They immediately informed me that I was to run for Superintendent in the upcoming election.

Oh, no, I'm not!

Oh, yes, you are. You're running against Fraser Wilson.

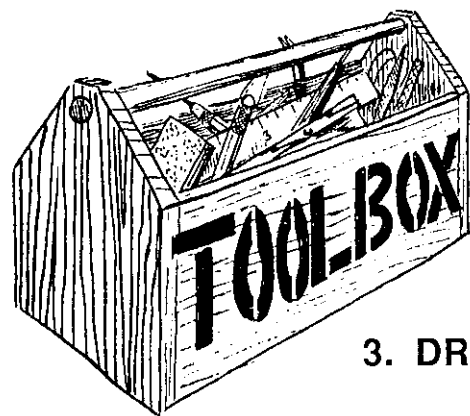
Oh well, then. No problem. Fraser will win, anyhow...

Election results? Something went wrong! I won! Now what have I gotten myself into? I don't need all this extra work!

Well, that lasted four years. It was a lot of work, but it was fun, I learned a lot more, and made still more new friends from all over the region. *Now that that's over with, I can relax and be a P.O.M. (plain old member).*

Not on your life! Next thing you know, my big mouth was accepting editorship of the *Switchlist*. *What am I doing?* More work; another four years passed, and once again I learned, met folks, and had fun. Now, I am a P.O.M. and I'm enjoying it. But what I'm saying is that if you don't take part in the activities that are being provided for you by those who are participating in the organization, don't sit around and whine about what the organization is *not* doing. As in any other group, you won't get much out of it if you don't participate in it.

From all the friends I have made over the years and all the things I have learned that have improved my modelling to what it is today, I feel (and I, too, think it's expensive) that I *do* get my money's worth. You don't have to be as crazy as I am, but get out and take advantage of what is offered to you and *participate*. If you only pick up one little tip at a workshop or clinic, it's worth the time.



3. DRILLERS

Whether you're putting grab irons or nut-bolt-washer castings on a model or simply laying flex track, the ability to drill accurate and properly-sized holes is essential.

To hold the small drills used in model making, one should first buy a **pin vise**. This is a small hand-held drill chuck of sorts which allows one to carefully drill holes in plastic, wood, and thin metal.

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Some have a free-turning knob at the top designed to fit the palm of your hand, but I prefer a straight-shafted version as it can be inserted in a drill press, enabling one to drill precision holes as small as #80. Cheap ones are commonly available at hobby stores, but they often have a rather crude and off-centre gripping action, leading to drill breakage. And, of course, they are useless in a drill press. For about \$10, one can buy a quality tool, such as that put out by Starrett, from industrial suppliers like Malkin and Pinton, and it's worth the extra few dollars.

The drills themselves commonly come in indexes olding from #61 to #80 sizes, the latter being about as small as most of us are ever likely to want to go.

Packages aimed at hobbyists are priced in the 30- to 40-dollar range, but one can buy them more economically, again from industrial suppliers (Thomas Skinner & Sons in Vancouver, for example) at about \$.85 to \$1.25 each. Try an assortment of the even numbers from 62 to 80 for starters. If you need anything bigger, you're usually talking about common hardware store sizes, and can pick up a set anywhere at reasonable cost. Larger numbered drills are available, however, if required.

Some holes need to be threaded (commonly for Kadee couplers) with a tap. If you plan a lot of metal work, you can buy a whole set of taps, but for most of us, the sizes we need are available individually at the

7TH DIVISION TIMETABLE



February 8, 1987

7th Division Workshop: Annual Swap Meet. Oakridge Auditorium, Oakridge Centre, 41st Avenue and Cambie Street, Vancouver. Start: 1:00 PM.

February 22, 1987

N-CON 87: Vancouver's 3rd Annual N Scale Meet. See advertisement below.

February 28, 1987

4th Div. NMRA Hobo Mini-Meet: See railroads as the hobo does - take photos, hike to abandoned tunnels, handcar races, model clinics and contests, awards banquet. Everett, Washington, 10 AM to 8 PM. Info: Roger Ferris, 19929 Second Ave. NW, Seattle WA 98177. Phone (206) 283-0637.

March 1, 1987

Swamp Creek & Western RR Club "Rollin' Rails" introduction to model railroading. Displays, layouts, dioramas. Francis Anderson Recreation Centre, 700 Main Street, Edmonds, WA. 11 AM to 5 PM. Info Roger Ferris, 211 Railroad Ave, Edmonds, WA 98020. Phone (206) 283-0637.

July 28 - August 2, 1987

Full Steam To Eugene: NMRA National Convention, Eugene, Oregon. Info: Dave Kleger, Registrar, 2154 Golden Garden Street, Eugene, OR. 97402. Phone (503) 689-2536.

hobby store. They can be chucked in your pin vise, but get a little advice on their use, as they are brittle and are easily broken if misused.

Other items that come in handy: Some sort of **centre punch** or **scriber** to put a dimple where you want your hole to go. Without something to hold your drill in place for the first few turns, it will wander and mar the surface. Also, when making a hole to fit something snugly (such as a truck pin), it is best to drill it undersize and ream it out, test fitting as you go. Reamers are available, but an **oval needle file** will usually suffice. We did promise economical advice, but if you have the bucks, there is nothing to beat a Dremel Moto-tool, especially in metal, although in a pinch, your pin vise and regular power drill may work.

Once again, we have been receiving address changes from 7th Division members, and once again remind you that we do not handle them!

N-CON 87

Vancouver's 3rd Annual
N Scale Convention

February 22, 1987
10 AM to 4 PM

440 Hendry, North Vancouver, B.C.

Admission: \$3 per person / \$6 family
\$1 discount for anyone bringing a **display or contest entry** and for **NMRA members**

POPULAR VOTE CONTESTS:

Steam loco Diesel loco Passenger car
Freight/Work car Passenger train Freight train
Structure Display