

The

NER Coupler

A Publication of the Northeastern Region,
National Model Railroad Association

No. 181, April 1995



Messages from Tower A

I apologize for having nothing to say in the last issue. I am just getting my feet wet as your President and as Office Manager *pro tem*. If I didn't think so before, I now firmly believe Rod and Elizabeth Brown should be sainted for all the work they did so routinely on our behalf.



I'll be carrying on in the OM capacity until next fall, as things are now. Then our regular OM staff will take over.

I will remain Model Contest Chairman until a willing and able volunteer is discovered. I'd really rather see a new face for this task as I have guilt feelings about handing the job back and forth amongst a few faithful servants.

Yes, it means you must go to all conventions or have a very effec-

Famous for Its Hospitality, Québec City Will Host the Spring NER Convention

Nos membres se souviennent de la dernière conférence de la NER à Québec comme une des meilleures. Ne manquez pas celle-ci. Venez avec des amis ou avec quelqu'un ne'est pas encore venu.

The principal sponsor of the spring convention is the Alouette Division of the NER. Those who attended the Maine meeting last fall will remember the enthusiasm and professionalism with which Les Halmos and his team presented the coming attractions program. Reservations forms will be sent to members and others who attend the regional meetings directly from the Convention Registrars Charlie and Pat Bettinger, and Convention Chairman Ken May.

Thanks to the cooperation of the host team, we're able to give you a look at the general schedule of events as well as the world-class city you'll be visiting. On the last page of this issue, you'll see a simplified map showing the direct approach from the Pierre Laporte Bridge across the Saint Lawrence River to the Holiday Inn on Boulevard Hochelaga. Be sure to make your reservations as soon as you receive the materials. The deadline for hotel rooms is 1 May.

You can get to Québec City by airline, ViaRail and automobile. Those driving from the United States should be sure to have a liability insurance card for Canada. Your agent will give you one if you don't already have it. **Put aside May 26, 27 and 28**, plus travel time (5 hours from Burlington).

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CHANGES OF ADDRESS

should be sent to the Business Manager (see under Working Crew in left column)

CONTRIBUTIONS

from NER and NMRA members are most welcome. The Editor reserves the right to accept, reject or edit copy as received. Articles accepted for publication will be included in *The NER Coupler* in a timely fashion.

The newsletter is composed on a Macintosh Performa using Claris Works. Since copy must be edited and adapted to issue format, it is welcome in any readable form including computer diskette.

Photographs intended for individual publication or as part of an article are invited. If you wish us to return your photos, please include a sufficiently large envelope and adequate postage. Color photos of good color balance and contrast are acceptable.

Letters to the Editor of a constructive and professional nature will also be considered for publication.

Deadline for next issue is 5 June 1995

NER Membership is open to any NMRA member at \$6 per year. Look for the application blank in each issue.

See you in Quebec City!

**p.1 >>> Messages
from Tower A**

tive and large staff. You must work pretty hard two days a year, and not very hard on a few other occasions. The rules are pretty confining, but we must stay in line with NMRA's policies regarding the Achievement Program. The fun is, you get intimate exposure to the best models and modelers in the region and beyond. It's very rewarding to be someone who makes things happen.

Now I know there're members out there who have the time, ability and drive to be a helpful, devoted and effective Model Contest Chairman. I assume there should be at least one individual who wants to give as much as he or she gets from this hobby. If you are a past participant who achieved the Baldwin "Best In Show" trophy, then you know what it takes to make a great model, and can judge as well as administrate. However, it's not necessary to participate at that level.

I can teach any dedicated member who has administrative skills and a logical mind to do this job well. While you're doing it, you can't help but be drawn into the contest quality modeling whirlpool, so here is a real benefit to your skill level and hobby enjoyment.

Lastly, you will enable me to focus my full attention on being an effective president, not to mention get back to my modeling. Too many responsibilities make for poor performance. This is why we separated the Trustee and Presidential positions. Naturally, after all these years, I would like to give the members my best. See you all in Quebec!
BW

=====
**NMRA Plans to Celebrate 60th
Birthday with Car Spotter
Contest & Giant Train Show**

Union Pacific has painted a boxcar with the 60 year anniversary logo of the National Model Railroad Association (NMRA). The only other time UP did this was to honor returning Desert Storm Soldiers by applying a special paint job to a locomotive. The car is a general service unit which will tour the country.

The trick is to spot the car and report it on the form shown below. Entrants are in three groups: youth (6-12 years), teens (13-20 years), and adults. Each category will be awarded five prizes. The youth group will have five winners of a Bachman model train starter set; five teens will win a subscription to a rail-modeler's magazine and a Bachman trainset; and five subscriptions and five Bachman Spectrum locomotives will be awarded to the adult bunch. The Grand Prize winner and a guest will be transported to the sixtieth anniversary NMRA Atlanta conclave from anywhere

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NMRA's Car Spotter's Entry Form

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone (day) () _____ Birth Date _____

Parents' Names (if under 21) _____

_____ NMRA member? _____

Currently a modeler? _____ What Scale(s) _____

Where did you hear about this? _____

Where did you spot car? _____

Fasten this form to a standard postal card and mail to NMRA Car Spotter Contest, 4121 Cromwell Road, Chatanooga, TN 37421

Convention

QUEBEC 1995

Quebec City, which is well represented by the famed Château Frontenac on your NER button, with trains from the past, present and future, extends a warm welcome to the 1995 NER Spring conventioners.

Quebec, the cradle of French civilisation in America, resembles no other city in the world, and is a land imbued with history, tracing the beginnings of Canada and virtually the entire North American continent.

In fact, accommodations for your stay in Quebec City will be at the Holiday Inn located at 3125 Boulevard Hochelaga. Just after you cross the St-Laurent River on the Pierre Laporte bridge, take the Hochelaga West exit and then you will see a little further on your left the Holiday Inn with plenty of parking space.

REMEMBER WE HAVE 150 ROOMS RESERVED AT THE HOLIDAY INN IN SAINTE-FOY AS REQUESTED BY NER CONVENTION STANDARDS. PLEASE RESERVE BY MAY 1ST AND HELP MAKE A SUCCESS OF OUR HARD WORK IN PLANNING QUEBEC 95 !

By the way, the Quebec Bridge, located beside the Pierre Laporte bridge, is a railroad landmark belonging to the Canadian National. Work started on this bridge in 1904, it collapsed twice in 1907 and again in 1916, but was completed with the middle span in place in 1917.

There are plenty of restaurants near the Holiday Inn. You can also drive to Laurier Boulevard where you will come across the Laurier and Place Sainte-Foy shopping centers.

Next to the Laval University Campus, a few miles on your right, you will be able to see the Plains of Abraham, where Moncalm and Wolfe fought for possession of Canada in 1759, a real landmark.

Continuing a little further you will come across the famed Château Frontenac with its splendid view of the St-Laurent River. This 100 year old landmark should be one of the activities for the Non-Rail attendees.

RR ACTIVITIES, YOU ASK ?

Activities will begin on Friday afternoon with registration at the Holiday Inn, followed by a layout tour of 6 model railroads with mini-buses. No need for a road map this time around as mini-buses will depart the hotel at fifteen minutes intervals starting at 6.30 PM. There is an 'S'cale layout to be visited, all 5 others being HO.

Saturday will be a complete day of activities, with a full slate of clinics, the display area in the hotel, a two (2) day affair, and a special fan trip which includes a visit to CN yards in Charny, plus a visit to Vallée-Jonction, site of Quebec Central Museum where guides will show you around. The model and photo contests will also be on.

The banquet will offer two choices, Chicken or Beef and the evening will end with music and dancing, so bring your dancing shoes.

Non-Rail entertainment arrangements will include a visit of the famed 100 year old Château Frontenac and then a modern highway bus will bring you to the "bateau-mouche" for a wonderful river boat tour on the Saint-Laurent river, while viewing Quebec City.

Sunday will be the NER BOD meeting and you will still be able to enjoy the display area still going strong with plenty of modules from MODU-RAIL and some in 'S'cale. You will be able to admire Dominique Sirois's dining ware collection and also visit some model railroads even Stateside on your way back.

Well, TAKE SOME TIME OFF and come and visit us in Quebec City during Memorial Day weekend. We are expecting you. We are sure you will enjoy your stay.

NB : Your best route to Quebec City is US 91 North, Quebec 55 North and then take 20 East at Drummondville to Quebec City. Cross the Pierre Laporte Bridge (Route 73 North) and you will spot the Holiday Inn on your left. Continue till you reach the Hochelaga West "Ouest" exit and the rest is a piece of cake !

REMEMBER SPEED LIMITS AND DISTANCES IN CANADA ARE POSTED IN KILOMETERS, NOT MILES.

QUÉBEC 1995

La ville de Québec bien représentée par le célèbre Château Frontenac sur votre macaron, flanqué de trains du passé, présent et futur, vous souhaite la bienvenue au congrès RNE 1995.

Québec, berceau de la civilisation française en Amérique, est une ville unique au monde, qui baigne dans l'histoire et a donné à son tour naissance au Canada et de ce fait à toute l'Amérique du Nord.

Vous hébergerez au Holiday Inn situé au 3125 Boul. Hochelaga. Après avoir enjambé le pont Pierre Laporte, prenez la sortie Hochelaga ouest et vous le verrez bientôt à votre gauche avec plein de facilités pour le stationnement.

RAPPELEZ-VOUS QUE NOUS AVONS RÉSERVÉ 150 CHAMBRES AU HOLIDAY INN TEL QUE LE STIPULENT LES RÈGLEMENTS DU CONGRÈS R.N.E. AIDEZ-NOUS À LES REMPLIR AVANT LE PREMIER MAI! PARTICIPEZ ET FAITES UN SUCCÈS DE QUÉBEC '95 DANS LEQUEL NOUS INVESTISSONS BEAUCOUP D'EFFORTS.

Rappelons que le pont de Québec, situé près du Pont Pierre Laporte, est un site ferroviaire du Canadien National. Les travaux de ce pont ont débutés en 1904; durant la construction le pont est tombé à deux reprises en 1907 et 1916. Il fut terminé en 1917 avec la travée centrale.

Il y a plusieurs restaurants aux abords de l'hôtel Holiday Inn à Sainte-Foy. Également vous pouvez vous diriger sur le Boulevard Laurier où vous passerez devant les centres d'achats Laurier et Place Sainte-Foy.

Après avoir passé le campus de l'Université Laval, vous rencontrerez les Plaines d'Abraham où Montcalm et Wolfe ont combattu pour la possession du Canada en 1759. C'est un vrai site historique.

En continuant, vous découvrirez le fameux Château Frontenac avec sa vue splendide et imprenable sur le fleuve Saint-Laurent. Ce site historique de 100 années sera à l'horaire des visites pour les non-intéressés au chemin de fer!

LES ACTIVITÉS FERROVIAIRES!

Ces activités débuteront le vendredi après-midi avec l'inscription au Holiday Inn. Suivra une visite de réseaux dans de petits autobus destinés à cette tournée. Pas besoin de carte routière, alors que ces mini-bus partiront de l'hôtel aux 15 minutes, le tout débutera à 18.30h. Il y aura un réseau 'S' à visiter, les 5 autres étant en HO.

Le samedi, sera entièrement consacré aux activités du congrès. Au programme, il y aura 9 heures de clinique de vive voix, une exposition de trains miniatures de deux journées à l'hôtel, une excursion de chemin de fer à Charny en plus de Vallée Jonction où des guides vous expliqueront le musée du Québec Central. Les concours de modèles et de photographie se tiendront la même journée.

Vous aurez le choix de deux entrées au banquet et une soirée dansante suivra, donc une bonne participation...

Les personnes non intéressées au chemin de fer pourront bénéficier d'une visite guidée du Château Frontenac, en plus de profiter d'une excursion sur le fleuve Saint-Laurent en "bateau-mouche", tout en admirant la ville de Québec de ce merveilleux point de vue!

Dimanche, il y aura rencontre des membres d'administration de la R.N.E. et l'Assemblée annuelle de la DAQ. Vous pourrez encore visiter l'exposition de trains à l'hôtel incluant les réseaux modulaires de MODU-Rail et même des modules à l'échelle 'S', admirer la collection de vaisselle de Dominique Sirois pour les wagons-restaurants, et visiter des réseaux l'après-midi, même du côté américain.

Eh bien, **PRENEZ LE TEMPS** de venir nous visiter à Québec. Nous vous attendons les 26-27-28 mai 1995 et vous aimerez votre séjour, c'est promis.

NB: La meilleure route pour Québec à partir de US91 Nord, c'est Québec 55 Nord et prendre la 20 Est à Drummondville jusqu'à Québec. Enjambez le pont Pierre Laporte sur la route 73 Nord et vous verrez le Holiday Inn à votre gauche. Continuez jusqu'à la sortie Hochelaga ouest et le reste est un jeu d'enfant!

RAPPELEZ VOUS QUE LES LIMITES DE VITESSES ET LES DISTANCES DANS LA VILLE DE QUÉBEC SONT LES MÊMES QU'AU CANADA!

Convention

TIMETABLE / HORAIRE

Friday May 26th

Registration - Hospitality room	15:00 - 21:00
Layout tour (With mini buses)	18:30 - 22:00
Non-Rail Clinics on handycraft	20:00 - 21:00

Saturday May 27th

Registration	08:00 - 12:00
Several live Clinics & videos	08:00 - 15:00
Model & photo contest registration	08:00 - 11:00
Display Area (In Hotel) (Conventioners only)	09:00 - 12:30
Non-Rail Château/Bateau-Mouche	11:30 - 16:00
Fantrip - CN yard and Vallée	10:30 -
Junction (Québec Central Museum)	
Display Area (In Hotel) (General Public)	13:00 - 17:00
Happy Half-Hour	19:00 - 19:30
BANQUET	19:30 -

"We are happy to announce that
there will be no guest speaker"
After Banquet (Music & Dancing)

Sunday May 28th

ALOUETTE DIVISION QUÉBEC	
Annual meeting	08:30 - 09:00
N.E.R. BOD Meeting	09:00 - 11:00
Layout Visits (see schedule)	11:00 - 17:00
Display Area (In Hotel) (Still going)	10:00 - 17:00

Vendredi le 26 mai

Inscription et accueil
Visite de réseaux (Par mini-bus)
Clinique Artisanat

Samedi le 27 mai

Inscription
Cliniques & vidéos
Inscrip.concours mod. & photos
Exposition (À l'hôtel) (Congressistes seulement)
Visite Château & Bateau-mouche
Excursion Cour CN et Vallée
Jonction (Musée Québec Central)
Exposition (À l'hôtel) (Grand public)
Cinq à sept
BANQUET
"Y'en aura pas de conférencier"

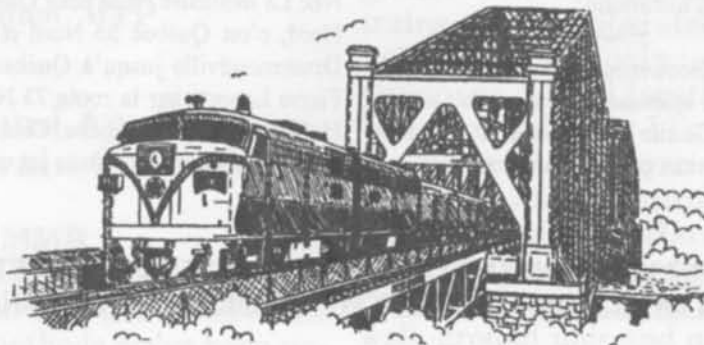
Après Banquet (Musique & Dance)

Dimanche le 28 mai

DIVISION ALOUETTE QUÉBEC
Assemblée annuelle
C.A. R.N.E.
Visite de réseaux (Voir horaire)
Exposition (À l'hôtel) (Et ça continue)

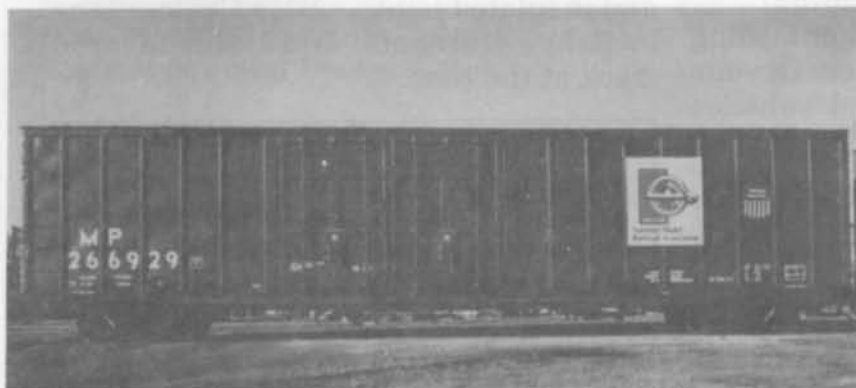
Timetable subject to change.

Horaire sujet à changement.



p. 3 >>> NMRA Plans 60th Birthday Bash

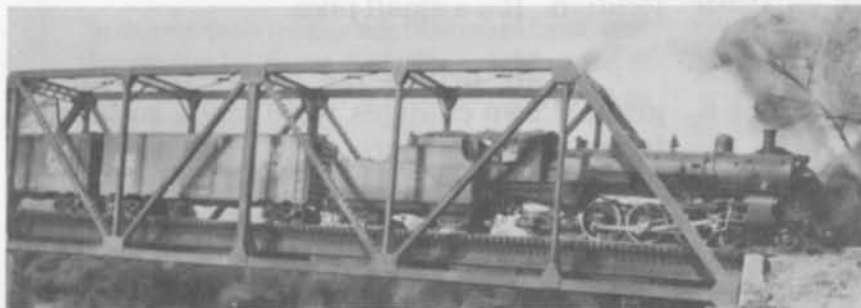
Amtrak can bring you. Everyone who spots the car will receive a color certificate which can be framed. The Grand Prize Winners will be the guests of NMRA at the 1995 Train Show and Convention in Atlanta in July for five days and four nights.



The National Train Show and Convention will be **July 21-23** at the Atlanta Market Center's Inforum. The last time this show played Atlanta was 22 years ago. Both manufacturers and retailers, numbering about 375, will complement 20 operating model railroad displays. Conventioneers will be able to watch an HO layout being built and qualify to win the finished product valued at \$1,500.

The Great Train Race, featuring local radio and television personalities, will run a specially designed course. The G-Scale layout may be operated by young and old engineers alike when not used for the race. You can find more program details in the *NMRA Bulletin*.

Alouette Members are Born Model Makers



This S Gauge Pacific class J-3-b (Montreal Locomotive Works) was essentially scratch-built by Simon Parent of Val-Belair. The Sagami can motor uses a Dynatrol receiver. Building and rebuilding took 6 years.

News from the Northeast

HUB Division. The Division's Spring Show will be April 8, at the Westford Regency Hotel & Conference Center on Rt 110 in Westford, Massachusetts Time: 10-4; Admission is \$4 for Adults, \$1 for kids & \$3 for members. Bill Parker (508-586-0271) is in charge

Sunrise Trail Division. Sorry our publication schedule missed your April 1st Spring Convention at the Baldwin Methodist Church on Merrick Road in Baldwin, New York. Keep in touch with Cark Cascone at 516-754-2790 for info on future meetings.

Green Mountain Division. The new Division scheduled six meetings for the 1994/95 season. Still coming up are meetings in Richmond, Vermont (April 15) and Burlington (no date yet). Call Glenn for information at 802-434-3316, or Mike at 802-524-4429.

In the GM Division, the annual Model Train Show is traditionally sponsored by the Northwestern Vermont Model Railroading Society. The March 11 show was the eighth; it attracted about 1400 model rail fans and a full-house of 85 exhibitors and modular layouts.

Mid-Eastern Region. Our neighbors have scheduled their spring meeting (White Rose '95) for 18-21 May in York, Pennsylvania. The site is the Holiday Inn Holidome, 2000 Loucks Road, next to the West Manchester Mall at the junction of US 30 and PA 74. Don Yingling of 2420 Heather Rd., York, PA 17484 is in charge of arrangements.

The Circus. Interested in building a scale model circus which travels by rail? Write Sally C. Weitlauf at 347 Lonsdale Ave., Dayton, OH 45419.

Train Control

An Historical and Functional Look at Layout Control

Unless you have a live-steam layout in your back yard, an on-board hamster cage, or a trolley pulled by a midget pony, you depend on electricity to make the rolling stock on your pike move.

The traditional method of feeding DC current to the electric motors in your locomotives or other powered vehicles has always been through the two tracks. A pioneer in the "toy train" department of model railroading, Lionel used a third rail for the "hot" line in order to offer a simple snap-together track system.

If you want to operate more than one train at a time, chopping the layout into blocks (as described below) offers one approach, but real train control depends on modifying current delivery to receivers on board the locos which respond to just one kind of "juice" or signal. Another, more recent, system of control is to have on-board power and deliver movement instructions by radio in much the same way that radio controlled model airplanes utilize digital-proportional control.

Without any intention of insulting your intelligence, this series of articles is written for the broadest possible audience, assuming you know virtually nothing about the subject.

This introductory article on train control is written as a kind of reminiscence by one of the *Coupler's* most faithful, competent contributors, NER President Brian Whiton. **JTP**

The History and Application of Model Train Controls

by Brian Whiton, MMR

Let's examine both the history and application of the methods we've been us-

ing to control our trains. In the course of this, you might find some level which meets your needs and get some direction regarding your future needs.

I started in the hobby with a layout where there was one block only, meaning all the track was "live" all the time. Even the sidings could not be turned off without using a toggle switch and insulated joints. Atlas Custom Line switches (turnouts) were the favored track at the time.

Harold Horner, long-time friend and mentor, showed me how to add a ground wire to the case of the walkaround unit and make it the return circuit for the turnout controls.

This method really worked just fine for a modeler new to the hobby and generally operating alone. For a controller I used a variable transformer type current supply, the windings being such that the center position was "off" and movement of the handle would make the train go forward or back in relation to handle position. This power supply is still with me as a bench test unit after 34 years of continuous use. I've operated it on such layouts as recently as two weeks ago. All the fun was still there, since the owner chose to be the conductor and no two trains were moved simultaneously. Like my first layout, his controller is fixed in location. It's a small pike.

This brings me to my first upgrade. Two changes were made so that trains could be operated in sequence, but not simultaneously. The layout had grown, so a fixed location controller had become a liability. I bought walk-around "cabs" available from MRC and added them to my fixed controllers with six foot umbilical cables. Harold Horner, long-time friend and mentor, showed me how to add a ground wire to the case of the walk-around unit and make it the return

circuit for the turnout controls. The switch machines were twin coil type, so that they did not need continuous power to maintain position. A burst of 18 volt AC current was all that was needed. I wired the hot wire from each coil to a screw head on a route diagram panel at each switching location. When the corner of the grounded walk-around pack was touched to the node (screw-head) of choice, the turnout changed position. This eliminated toggle switches except for turning off the power to tracks. Now I could follow my train with the controller and have local turnout controls with meaningful diagrams.

I used toggle switches to turn off side tracks where trains made meets with other trains. Since I was still operating solo, I would run each train to the meeting point separately, make the meet, then continue each individually to their destinations. This was the first stage of real life operation.

A few years down the road I recognized that having the turnouts control the track power was better for multi-train operation. At this point I began to use such turnouts, then called the Atlas Standard Line. With this came the need for switch machines with power jumpers to insure that dirty turn-out points would not cause a discontinuity in the track circuit. Of course I experimented with ground-throw type turnout linkages with their attendant failures. I still do have them on some turnouts for which I am too lazy to add switch machines.

Now, with power-routing turnouts, walk-around controllers, and decent control panel diagrams, I was ready for multi-train operation. Or to read, "Block Controls"!

It was painless. I immediately recognized that common (single) rail blocking was hard to figure out, and had the poten-

tial for liabilities down the road, so I used double-rail blocking from the start. I installed DPDT (Double Pole Double Throw) knife switches to control the blocks on a board I called the dispatcher's panel, naming each block for that area of the layout. Then I cut the feeders away from the power pack and fed the taps to one end of the knife switches in parallel. I then added another power pack, a nice

...by setting the knife [switch] open I could isolate a block easily and visibly. Wow! Two trains running fully independently at the same time. I added two operators, and I was the dispatcher.

new rheostat type (never worked as good as that old Revell variable transformer) with its track power output directed to the taps at the other end of the knife switches. Obviously, the center taps went to the tracks somewhere in each block. I had added insulated joints at block limits. There was some difficulty choosing limit locations, which will make another article by itself.

Suffice it to say this system looked crude, being a bit like a 1920s layout, but I could put a meter on the knife switches easily to look for trouble, and by setting the knife open, I could isolate a block easily and visibly. Wow! Two trains running fully independently at the same time. I added two operators, and I was the dispatcher.

Well, operators beget operators, so I soon had four taking turns. I then realized that the dispatcher should have control only of the main line, not the yards, so I added a knife switch at each yard in series with the track wires coming from the dispatcher. Wiring the dispatcher to the end taps on one end, and a new power pack with walk-around control to the other end taps, center wires to the track, I had now achieved a priority block.

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p. 9 >>> Model Train Controls

The dispatcher had to ask for yard clearance, whereupon the yard master would throw his knife switch, taking him off line, preferably while his engine was hidden in a harmless position, and allow a train to arrive or depart by means of a dispatched main line cab.

A similar system at the other yard worked equally well. Incidentally, I was still capable of continuous running, as my yards were served by a single track lead, thence a series of branch tracks. These leads merely left the main line at the appropriate location to enter the yard. It made isolating the yard easy, though we had to learn the hard way how many car lengths of clear track were needed on the lead.

At this point I had a five-person operating condition which was very satisfying. It had been achieved with off-the-shelf electrical components and at little risk to my sanity or my limited budget. I only craved smoother engine performance, not any greater level of traffic control.

The next twenty years were spent fooling with power packs, transistor throttles, five- and then seven-pole motors, etc. All those fancy throttles, including the PFM sound system, are in the electrical graveyard now. In the end, the motor technology outstripped the power pack technology, making super-controllers meaningless in the search for smooth operation.

Today, I use a voltage regulator throttle circuit I found in the NMRA *Bulletin*. It can be built for about \$12 from Radio Shack parts, lasts two years between failures, which are usually caused by a worn out potentiometer, and is light and easy to use. I'm still on six foot tethers. Can motors love these controllers, and a few remaining open frame motors perform very well on them.

I'm still using block controls, but they changed to rotary switches so I

could have up to six cabs. Priority blocks at yards use toggle or slide switches, but the principle is unaltered. The layout is #4 now, and it's point to point. I have experimented with many turnout linkages, all power-routing types. I still use a lot of common ground nodes on some panels, though my operators like toggle-operated Tortoise machines best. All I have really done is add user convenience and cosmetic improvements to a system of wiring and controllers developed in 1966, and fully functional in 1995. In a well-staffed operating session we use seven to fourteen operators, run 32 train movements in four hours, using three mainline cabs and three yard cabs.

Enter Bob Derkin. He has really opened my eyes with a monster personal pike capable of club-size operating conditions, with long trains, long runs, numerous meets, and intense yard operations. Would my system work on a layout of this size? Yes. Would any of my most competent dispatchers survive setting blocks for a layout of that size in a high-density operating session? Yes. Would they have fun? Maybe. Would the potential for disaster be high? Yes.

Bob uses ONBOARD*, one of the most capable carrier control or command control systems. This reduces the liability of the dispatcher to directing train movements, not setting blocks. That's a big move toward sanity. Furthermore, it means two trains can work in very close proximity to each other for coordinated switching, meets or helper moves, without the old-fashioned block control problems. Realism is high.

With Bob's guidance I could convert my layout to such a system in less than a day, but the locomotives would require a lot of work to install the receivers. The latter is the threat that keeps me in my present configuration. I have 51 locomotives.

The tangible benefit to me is an issue too. Operationally, it is mild, due to my layout being much more congested

than Bob's. Operating two or more trains in close proximity to each other on my pike is difficult physically. The Addison Railroad had 1/32 of the traffic I am presently inflicting on the system, so I could be prototypically incorrect in making things more complicated.

I do find it difficult to dispatch for intense sessions with the old block system. That alone might justify a conversion to command control at a future date. Such a move would make my controls less **user-fiendly** and more **user-friendly**.

At this point, I will defer to those who know what they are talking about. We can probably get Bob Derkin to share his experiences with us in setting up and using command control systems on a huge personal layout. Stan Ames is going to get technical with us, resulting I hope, in fear diminished by knowledge.

** The ONBOARD system is no longer manufactured, but is being replaced by a digital version of this analog system. (Ed)*

Stay tuned for the next installment.

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Odds-BOD-Kins

Every member should have the opportunity to be an NER officer, which requires service on the Board of Directors, more fondly known as the BOD. On 19 February 1995, a dozen working stiffs listed on the BRASS page (2) gathered in Albany, New York to tend to the Region's business. President Whiton called the meeting to order at 11, and accepted the move to adjourn just before 4 PM. Here are some highlights:

NER Coupler. Since the two biggest problems confronting any editor are convincing members to contribute materials for publication, and getting the copy to the editor by issue deadline. For these reasons, the Board decided to continue publicizing conventions in the

newsletter, but to use direct mail from the Convention Registrars and the Convention Chairman for time-sensitive materials such as registration and reservation forms. A review of each convention will continue for the convenience of the 80% of members who aren't able to attend. The issues (averaging 12 pages) will continue to be mailed first class, based on a study by Mike Saunders. Editor Popecki asked board members to think about the value of soliciting ads.

Trustee Report. Jim Heidt, recently pronounced "cured" of a past serious illness, presented the board a 17-page report on the January NMRA Board meeting in Phoenix. He highlighted these issues and decisions: the hiring of a full-time, highly-qualified executive director, Peter Jehrio; over-budget financial distress caused chiefly by a hemorrhage of members (non-renewals, recruitment problems, deaths); a decision to become a participant in the Internet communications network; approval of NMRA standardization of digital command control (DCC); a program to commission and market new books and technical manuals. The single dues structure (national and regional) is still under discussion. Our Frank Dietz continues to work on revising region boundaries based on postal zones.

The board approved a motion to request of NMRA that the Trustee be a member in good standing of the region represented by that trustee.

Other Business. The NER model contest rules are now alligned with national requirements. Bob Boudreau resigned as Achievement Program chairman after five years and was succeeded by Paul Alard of the Green Mountain Division. A new edition of the *Executive Handbook* was circulated, but since members did not have a chance to review it in advance, its approval was tabled to the next meeting (Quebec). Dorothy Collinge was appointed chair of the Crafts Contest and Diane Salvatore agreed to continue as advisor for non-rail activities. Jim Heidt has a new phone and Don Howd a new address.

Thanks for your notes, Diane. JTP

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