

The Switch Tower



Seacoast Division of the Northeastern Region, National Model Railroad Assoc.



The Contest Room

Some of you may have entered model contests held by the NMRA at the Divisional, Regional or National level. A smaller number of us have helped judge those contests. Working on the judging will teach you a better understanding of what kind of modeling is needed to produce the higher scores that result in Achievement Program (AP) Merit Awards and contest awards.

The recent Syracuse Northeastern Region, NMRA convention had several really good models and at least two that could hold their own in National Convention judging: over 115 out of 125 possible points. One was by a first-time contest entrant. But there is more than judging and scoring happening in the contest room. It is a classroom for entrants and for judges.



Contest model at NER Empire Junction convention in September.
Photo by Terrence King

structively how to improve their modeling. While you can't re-enter an improved model at the same contest level, the AP allows models to be improved and re-judged for Merit Awards that count toward the A

Certificates. Explaining the guideline often involves coaching people how to fill out an entry form in a manner that gets them full consideration of the efforts that have been put into the model.

It also means as a judge you need to take the time to make constructive comments on the entrant's portion of the judging sheet. Point out what can be improved on the model if it is possible that improvements can be made and the model re-judged for a Merit Award. Also constructive criticism of modeling flaws allows

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Deadline for the next issue is

December 12, 2008

Send your article & photos to:

tpking@roadrunner.com



The Spate Award was won this year, by Jack Alexander of the Hub Division.

Pictured above is Jack Alexander (left) being presented the award by Larry Cannon of the Seacoast Division at the awards banquet at the Empire Junction convention in New York.

Photo by Terrence King

Entrants can learn what it takes to produce a good model. Judges learn how to judge better, model better, and how to be educators. Being an educator is a more important part of judging than your judging precision. Granted, you will take flak if your judging skills are flawed, but you can improve the hobby and people's enjoyment of the hobby if you turn a contest into a positive learning experience for most people.

All it takes is a little bit more personal effort to explain both the judging guidelines and tell people con-

What's Happening To Our Railroads?

I have been meaning to write this article for quite some time. It has been six years in fact since I took the original photos in 2002. That was on a trip west to attend the annual convention of the Union Pacific Historical Society.

I was traveling the interstate in Nebraska when I was passed by a flatbed eighteen-wheeler who was flying down the highway like he was going to miss his train. I did a double take when I saw his load was train car wheel sets. How could this be? The railroads certainly

were not using their archenemy, the trucking industry to transport their railroad parts! I was flabbergasted! The truck must have stolen the wheels and was making a high-speed attempt at getting away. It was a good thing I was heading to a train convention because it guaranteed I would have my camera with me and I did.

Now here is the tricky part. The camera is in the back seat and I am traveling alone at 80 mph being left in

Minutes of October Meeting

Present: 18 members; 6 Officers.

Bruce Robinson called the meeting to order at 10:00 AM. The meeting began with clinics and show-and-tell presentations

Arthur Rounds showed the group his working model of an H.O. switch stand. He also discussed some of the digital camera and computer techniques that he uses to develop plans from prototype photos. Arthur briefly discussed some of the useful features of Photo Shop Elements for modeling work.

Joel DiTrollo shared a technique for making deciduous trees from peppergrass. Trees in several stages of production were passed around. It was noted that peppergrass is available from Scott Mason and Dave Frary. Check their websites for pricing.

Rich Breton presented some of his method for scratch building structures. He discussed duplicating peeling paint and rusted metal signs as well as attaching roof rafters with diluted Plioboard. Finally, Rich shared his vinegar and steel wool/metal screws formula for aging wood.

Paul Lessard discussed converting ready-to-run "toy like" rolling stock into presentable models for his layout. He talked about replacing trucks, couplers, and grab irons as well as a more realistic paint job.

Lastly, Larry Cannon reviewed the tools that he uses for making plaster scenery and painting backdrops. Larry also talked about his use of angle irons and his method for keeping track of his rolling stock.

Bruce thanked all of the presenters and then moved into the business meeting. The Treasurer, Newsletter, Secretary, and Webmaster reports were submitted. The minutes of the 7/12/08 meeting were reviewed and approved. Bruce took a moment to remind the group of the Pepperell Siding Show and the Tour De Chooch.

Under Old Business, Larry reported on the upcoming convention, its location, and dates. The format of the meeting was discussed and it was agreed to continue to utilize the format of today's meeting.

Under New Business, Bruce noted that Ron Palmquist has retired and that Bruce had prepared a certificate thanking him for his effort. Terry King has agreed to take up the editorial responsibilities of the Switch Tower, and Joel DiTrollo has agreed to fill the position of Secretary. The filling of these positions was moved, seconded, and approved unanimously.

The schedule and location of the division's 2009 meetings were discussed with the following results:

- January 10 Portland ME
- May 16 Rochester NH
- July 18 Auburn, ME
- October 3 Concord, NH

Bruce updated the group on this year's upcoming, "Introduction to Model Railroading," at the Timberland High School in Plaistow, NH. A discussion was held on promoting this type of program as a way of expanding membership and participation in the hobby.

A motion was made, seconded, and approved unanimously to

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Former Providence & Worcester GE unit now owned by the Finger Lakes RR.

Photo by Terrence King

"Under New Business, Bruce noted that Ron Palmquist has retired and that Bruce had prepared a certificate thanking him for his effort."

What's Happening To Our Railroads Continued

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the dust by this evil purveyor of doomsday for my beloved Railroads. Do I slowdown or stop to get the camera and risk losing this thief or take life in hand to reach for the camera while increasing my speed to try and catch this guy and document his crime. I had to try. Luck was on my side that day and I succeeded in getting a picture of this culprit and even the company

he worked for, "American Allied Railway"*. He forgot it was plastered on the side of his cab door. Who does he think he's fooling he is no Railway. Now that I have the goods on him I am going to write a Pulitzer and tell the world about this.

Moving on to the summer of 2006. I was visiting Grand Junction Colorado and had just driven by the DRG&W railway station as

an Amtrak train was leaving. I had just driven into town from Denver and my bags (and camera) were still in the trunk. Darn, I thought to myself, I'll have to get a picture when it comes through tomorrow. Well, just as I got on the 4-lane heading to my motel I was passed by a fast moving flatbed eighteen-wheeler carrying you guessed it-stolen railroad car wheels! I was in the wrong lane as the highway

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Photo by Tom Jones

Presidents Corner by Bruce Robinson

Bits and Pieces

I was thinking of what to write for this column and came up with several topics that I wanted to share with everyone.

We have some changes to the line-up of dedicated officers of the Division. Ron Palmquist, our long time editor of the Switch Tower, is retiring after serving the Division for more than ten years. A hardy Thank You goes out to Ron and I am sure of two things regarding Ron's retirement. He will be missed and he will continue to contribute time and effort to the Division. Stay in touch, Ron.

Terry King will be moving away from his long time role as Division Secretary to become our new Switch Tower editor beginning with the fall 2008 issue.

I want to welcome our new Division Secretary Joel Ditrilio. Joel has been gracious in accepting the secretary position effective with the Fall Meeting. Welcome aboard, Joel.

There is still an open position that needs a volunteer to step up to the plate and take on. The Division has an opening for the position of Photo Contest Chairman. If you

are interested in filling this position please contact me.

There has been some discussion at the Board of Directors meetings regarding hosting a Northeastern Region convention in 2011 or 2012. Should the board decide to move forward on this there will be a need for a lot of volunteers to handle all the duties of putting on a convention. A convention doesn't just happen. It takes the efforts from a lot of people to make it happen. Don't be bashful. Volunteer early and often as the saying goes.

The model railroad show season has begun and the Seacoast Division display has been at the Concord MRRC show in September and will be at the Pepperell Siding MRRC show in October and the Bedford Boomers Show in November. Please stop by the display and meet the members that donate their time to man the display.

One of the goals of the Division is to provide an introduction to the hobby to newcomers. The show display is one way we do this. Another way the Division introduces new people to the hobby is through the Introduction to Model Railroading course that are given at the Adult Education classes at Timberlane High School in Plais-

tow, NH. The course will be given again this year during the spring semester. The course could use some instructors so if you are interested in participating please get in touch with me.

This is the year 2008. That is fifty years from the time I started to become a model railroader. My parents gave me my most wanted Christmas gift of a Marx HO train set in 1958. One car from that train set is still in revenue service on the Valley Junction Railroad in 2008.

"Ron Palmquist, our long time editor of the Switch Tower, is retiring after serving the Division for more than ten years. A hardy Thank You goes out to Ron and I am sure of two things regarding Ron's retirement. He will be missed and he will continue to contribute time and effort to the Division. Stay in touch, Ron."

Share the fun of Model Railroading.



Finger Lakes "LV Heritage" unit..

Photo by Terrence King

What's Happening To Our Railroads Continued

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divided and he was able to successfully make his escape before I could get his name. Dang it! Now for sure I have to warn everyone. I will write an article for all to see – just as soon as I get home.

This brings me to the winter of 2008. A friend asked me to drive his car to Ohio for him while he drove a rented truck. He was relocating for his job. The first day

from Maine to Pennsylvania was uneventful with decent weather. The second day began OK but quickly deteriorated as we approached the western end of Pennsylvania and got off the turnpike. A bad accident held us up for a couple hours and it began to snow heavily. Finally crossing the border into West Virginia visibility had reduced and the snow was now becoming a nuisance. Wouldn't you know it that that this is

when the thieves would strike again. With windshield wipers going constantly, I was in the left lane climbing a small hill passing slower truck traffic in the right lane. Out of the corner of my eye I glimpsed our elusive thief, and he had expanded his operations. He was now stealing "couplers"! Well I told myself "He's not going to get away with it this time!" I made my way into the right hand lane

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Photo by Tom Jones



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Model Railroading is fun!

The Switch Tower On Line

Seacoast Division Home Page

[http://www.trainweb.org/seacoastdiv/NER
Home Page](http://www.trainweb.org/seacoastdiv/NERHomePage)

[http://pages.athome.net/kenmay/NERHOME.HT
ML](http://pages.athome.net/kenmay/NERHOME.HT
ML)

NMRA Home Page/Web Site

<http://www.nmra.org>

Deadline for the next issues is Dec.12, 2008

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and looked for my camera. I slowed down (not hard to do in the bad weather conditions) and waited for a series of cars and trucks to pass. I have now lost sight of my friend in the rental truck ahead but knew he would understand once I caught up with him. I finally saw the culprit in my rear view mirror and as he inched passed me I tried to take his picture. The snow was making it hard to see let alone get a good shot. The windshield wipers were getting in the way and I was going to have to turn them off momentarily to be successful. I didn't relish that in a snowstorm but it was important I document this dastardly act. I crept back into the left hand lane and after several minutes caught up with our criminal friend and after several attempts was able to snap his mug shot. The sly dog that he was however disguised the company he worked for and I was unable to identify it. No matter, my third sighting and the evidence were now insurmountable. I will turn him in to the newsletter editor just as soon as I return to Maine.

*For those interested Allied was bought by Greenbrier Industries in January 2008 and you can find info about the company at:
www.americanalliedrailway.com

by Tom Jones

Minutes Continued

make a \$50.00 donation to the Sandown Historical Society in appreciation for letting the division meet at their facility.

Bruce presented a certificate to Rich Breton to thank him for his effort as Division President. The award was approved by acclamation.

A discussion on where the division is going was deferred to the next meeting due to the lateness of the hour. The meeting adjourned at 12:35 PM.

Members had a chance to visit three layouts after the meeting on their way home.

Respectfully submitted,

Joel DiTrollo

Contest Room Continued

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the entrant the chance to avoid the same mistake in the future.

This time around I judged Conformity. Most people either bury you with information or do not document Conformity which is a stiff 10 points off the score. One of the recurring mistakes is using plans that are not documented to a prototype or prototype practice: 1) I or someone drew these plans. OK, but what were prototypes? 2) Built from XYZ Company's kit plans. Same problem if prototype information is not supplied.

The phase one picture is worth a thousand words is what Conformity is about. If there are no pictures, can you take one? If there are no pictures, are there

plans that can be tied to the prototype? Technically, the plans for the Wiscasset, Waterville & Farmington 2' caboose that was never built would be darn good documentation. Planned it, just ran out money!

By Larry Cannon

WELCOME

Welcome to the new "Switch Tower".

As you have read in the President's Corner, Ron Palmquest has retired as your Editor. The main reason for his retirement was a computer crash that wiped out his hard drive, along with his copy of the publishing program that he was using.

My name is Terrence King and I am using Microsoft Publisher© to produce this.

I do not have the extensive background that Ron has in the print media, but I hope that you will enjoy the new look..

E-mail any submissions for "The Switch Tower" to me at tpking@roadrunner.com.