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# ❖ Call Board ❖

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## Super Saying

The auction at the February meeting was great fun. People bought everything from card-board buildings to locomotives and a Digitrax DCC starter set. At the next meeting, John Reck will be able to tell us the dollar value of the goods bought and sold, but it seemed like it was more than in the past several years.

In March, Steve Hood will tell us how to do DCC decoder installations, and show us photographs of some of the several dozen that he's done. His photos are close-up and clear. You'll enjoy his presentation.

After the meeting we'll go to Lebanon (in Ohio, not the Middle East) and see Bob Bartizek's stunning Pennsylvania & Western RR. It's a 3-rail basement-filling fictional subdivision of the Pennsy, including the Horseshoe Curve. The layout is fully scened, and includes a working signal system. It was the cover article in the December 2003 O-Gauge Magazine. Don't miss it.

Last November I mentioned in this column that I had installed DCC on my fledgling layout, and had installed decoders in a couple of locomotives. Recently I installed a Soundtraxx DSD-LL110LC decoder and a speaker in a Lifelike GP-7. I wish

I could heartily recommend that decoder, but I can't.

Installation only took a few minutes, since the decoder is designed as a drop-in replacement for a diode circuit board that is original equipment in the geep. The diode board turns on the forward or reverse headlight, depending on which way the loco is running. The decoder assumes that function when it is installed. It's necessary to replace the bulbs or add resistors, because the original bulbs need 1.5 volts, and the decoder delivers 12 volts or so to the bulbs. I installed 14 volt bulbs. No soldering was necessary.

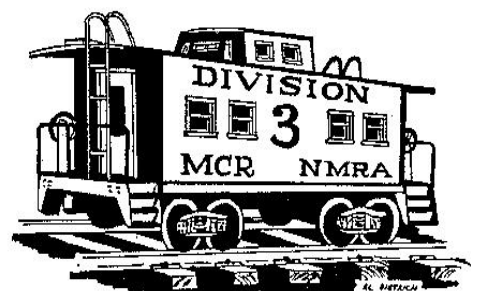
With the Soundtraxx decoder installed, the GP-7 sounds nice. When stationary, it sounds like it's idling, and when you add throttle, it gets louder and revs up. As you slow down, it sounds like the prime mover is easing off. It sounds pretty good; however, not as good as it should. As you probably know, DCC decoders operate the motors on pulse power: short duration pulses for low torque, and longer pulses for more torque. With this decoder, the resulting motor buzz is clearly audible over the desired sound, and detracts substantially from the desired effect. I tried the decoder in three of the Lifelike GP-7s, and the motor buzz was

about the same in all, so it does not appear to be a motor defect, as one person speculated. The decoder pulse frequency is adjustable, but only over the range of 19 Hz to 190 Hz. The buzz is annoying at all frequencies, more so at some than at others.

NCE and others make decoders that drive the motors silently. I tried one in one of the Lifelike GP-7s, and they really do eliminate the motor buzz. However, they have no sound generation capability. I'd like to have at least one GP-7 with decent sound, so I'm in the process of attempting to install both the Soundtraxx decoder and an NCE decoder in one. The NCE decoder will drive the motor, and the Soundtraxx decoder will drive the speaker. The weight casting in the loco leaves enough space for only one decoder, so some surgery is required. More on this later.

See you in Xenia Sunday, March 21<sup>st</sup>.

John



## Layout Visits

**March 21: 3 Rail O-Scale.** Bob Bartizek's Pennsylvania and Western occupied the cover and 9 pages of the Dec 2003 issue of O-Scale Railroading. The layout is 40 by 50 ft plus staging and is located near Lebanon.

**April 18: On30.** Bill Benysh's layout is located in Xenia and is still in the construction phase. Bill promised me that something will be running.

**May 23: HO/HOn30.** Jim Foster's layout is located in Oakwood very close to our meeting place at the Wright Library.

**June 13: HO.** Allen McClelland's new V&O in Miamisburg. Covered in the Jan 2004 issue of Model Railroader. This layout will be open after the joint Div3/Div 7 meeting in Franklin.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank everyone who has opened their layout to the membership after the meetings. It's my intention to have as much of a variety as possible in the layouts we visit and still keep the layouts close to the meeting sites. Large or small, completed or under construction, and all gauges are sought. I would like to have a bank of layouts available for scheduling as soon as meeting locations are set. I welcome any comments you have about what we've done so far and what you'd like to see in the future.

Bruce Albright  
Membership Chairman

# Contest

## March Steam Locomotives

You are allowed up to 3 entries per contest. You do not have to be a member of the NMRA to participate in the popular vote contest.

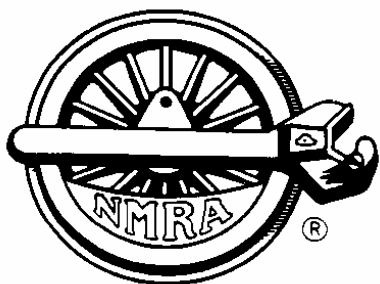
April	Thumbz or Whimsy	May	Non Revenue
June	No Contest	July	Scene (Any Size)

Date	Location	Contest	Program	Layout
21 March	Greene County Historical Society	Steam Locomotives	Installing DCC Decoders by Steve Hood	Pennsylvania and Western by Bob Bartizek
18 April	Greene County Historical Society	Thumbz or Whimsy	C&O in Cheviot by Mike Brestel	Bill Benysh
23 May (4th Sunday)	Wright Library	Non Revenue		Jim Foster
13 June (2nd Sunday)	Ramada Inn Franklin, OH	No Contest	Update on V&O By Allen McClelland	V&O by Allen McClelland
18 July		Scene		

**You are invited to the March meeting on Sunday the 21st at 2pm at the  
Greene County Historical Society  
Church and King Streets, Xenia, Ohio  
Visitors and Guests Always Welcome**



<b>Next Meeting</b>	
<b>When:</b>	<b>2 pm 21 March 2004</b>
<b>Where:</b>	<b>Greene County Historical Society King and Church Streets Xenia, Ohio</b>
<b>Program:</b>	<b>DCC Decoder Installation By Steve Hood</b>
<b>Contest:</b>	<b>Steam Locomotives</b>
<b>Visitors and Guests Always Welcome</b>	



## 47 Years of Lust.....

by Bruce Albright

### What will be missing (in addition to the stinkin diesels)

**Tunnels!** Despite the fact a high percentage of the main line Pennsy tracks will be hidden, very little of it will be in tunnels. A tall, thin, mountain ridge curving in a spiral of over 400 deg will provide a place to hide both the upper and lower level loops along with their passing tracks and the loop connecting helix. Once you duck under the edge of the layout you will be able to pop up in the center of the hidden loops and have light and headroom to perform the tasks at hand. Remember that the whole line will have catenary to work around and not break.

**Yards!** As much as I enjoy switching when operating on other modelers' layouts, the only yards on my layout will be a very small interchange yard between the Pennsy and the TMER and a very small yard at the far end of the branch line. Switching operations will be the exclusive property of the local on the branch.

**Engine Servicing Facilities!** Since the visible portion of the mainline is really just a long curving vignette with hidden staging loops at each end supplying the trains there is no necessity for having them. Anyway there will not be room to accommodate a turntable and roundhouse that could house the big steamers that I hope to have cruising the main line and I'm clueless about facilities for the GG-1s. How convenient! The branch line may have a small car barn for the interurbans and steeple cab, if it ever gets one.

**Rock solid scenery.** The intention is to build most, if not all, of the scenery in blue foam based chunks which will be held in place by some guide blocks/pins and gravity in such a way that they can individually be set on and off the layout, offering several advantages and opportunities.

1. The idea is to be able to do the scenery work on the bench then position it on the layout. Remember that we will be working around the catenary if we build the scenery in place.
2. Likewise scenery can be modified, improved, or repaired on the bench
3. Scenery can be changed by building new sections on the bench then swapping them in.
4. The possibility of having multiple sets of scenery depicting different seasons. .
5. The possibility of having totally different scenery depicting different areas of the country and two different prototype railroads that could be swapped over night. In some areas hidden and visible trackage could be swapped.
6. Easy access to modify or repair the hidden track (or clean up horrible wrecks).

Next month: Cold Feet



Photo by Bill Fearheller

Dear NMRA member:

The national NMRA ballot is about to be mailed to you. Among other things, it contains the new Regulations based on the Long Range Plan that we have been working on for some time.

Below I have enclosed a plain-English summary of the Regulations written by John Saxon, MMR, HLM, who is the former Australasian Region Trustee. I think it is the simplest, fairest, and most understandable summary of the Regs and plan that I have seen. It is reprinted here with John's permission.

John's summary understandably has an Australasian slant, but most of the information applies to North American members as well.

Please read this over, and when the ballot comes to you, take the few minutes needed to vote.

Thanks for your time.

Mike Brestel  
Mid-Central Region Trustee

Long Range Plan exposed!

The Long Range Plan is coming to you real soon. If you receive ScaleRails (the former Bulletin) you may know something about it by having read some of Charlie Getz's lawyer-speak explanations. However, if Charlie's prose left you cold or if you are an Associate member (no ScaleRails) you are likely to know little about what is being recommended by the Board of Trustees and will be confused as to whether you should vote at all, or if you do, Yes or No.

What follows is a layman's attempt to condense 50 odd pages on the web and 5 articles in the ScaleRails/Bulletin into plain English. Here goes and wish me luck!

The LRP is a plan for future development of the NMRA. It is intended to re-emphasize the organisation's position as leader of the hobby and to meet the challenges of the new century. After more than 10 years in development the Board of Trustees has adopted the LRP but to implement it, it is necessary for the membership to adopt new regulations. These run to 28 pages but will replace the 1935 Constitution (as amended from time to time), the Bylaws, and the Executive handbook. A vote of in favour by a simple majority of those members voting will be required to make the change.

Why is a change necessary?

Some reasons given have been that the NMRA has lost its focus; non-members see it as serving no useful purpose; it's too political; it's top heavy; lack of perceived value for the dollar; numbers are declining; 90% of serious model railroaders see no benefit in being a member; membership turnover has sometime reached 15%; the hobby is dynamically progressing and we need change to meet the new challenges.

What does it do?

Rededicates the NMRA to its primary purpose of setting and enforcing standards. (Remember, the NMRA set the standards for interchange, propulsion and lately, and even now more relevant, DCC.)

... Encourages manufacturers to adopt the NMRA conformance warrants program

... Allows Introduction of product testing and reporting

... Expands the consumer protection role of the association

... Re-emphasizes the NMRA as the voice of the hobby

... Re-emphasizes the NMRA as the repository and source of information for the hobbyist and others

... Allows expansion of the headquarters record keeping facilities to serve other organizations for a fee

- ... Strengthens the national convention and train show organization allowing a second annual train show in a location other than the convention area
- ... Improves the profit making abilities of the Kalmbach Memorial Library
- ... Continues development of the Howell Day Scale Model railroad Museum

#### What changes are proposed?

- ... New members will automatically also become regional and divisional members. Existing members may continue to decline regional and/or divisional membership if they wish they will be designated Legacy members
- ... There will be a small increase in fees, which will be then paid to the regions towards the cost of running National programs such as membership and the achievement program. Regions will still be able to charge extra independently for additional benefits, such as the AR's MainLine
- ... Ordinary (in future to be called Standard) members (our \$A100, US \$45 classification) will continue to receive ScaleRails, including an insert Bulletin containing operational NMRA news and information
- ... Affiliate (in future to be called Basic) members (our \$55, US \$23 classification), currently ineligible for ScaleRails/Bulletin, will be able to download the Bulletin in electronic form
- ... The 17 member Board of Trustees will be reduced to 9 directors.
- ... The Australasian region trustee will become the Pacific Division director, responsible for Asia, Australia, New Zealand and the Far East. (Note that the directors, as for current trustees, are not personal representatives of the regions and act in the best interests of the NMRA itself, not their individual home regions.)
- ... The other 8 directors are the Atlantic (Europe, Mexico, Central and South America, Africa and the Caribbean); West, Central and Eastern North America: one elected by members world-wide; one elected by North American members; NMRA Canada and one elected by Regional Advisory group representing the continuing 17 regions to take their proposals and concerns to the Board. We will be entitled to vote for 3 directors, not just the Pacific director.
- ... Future Pacific director balloting and regional balloting will continue to be run independently of the US but obviously there will be a wider spread of candidates available
- ... US-based directors will be elected for a maximum of 2 consecutive terms of 3 years each; non-US-based directors will be elected, as always, according to applicable law.
- ... A referendum and recall process will be introduced. This is new to the NMRA.
- ... Dues will be indexed to the cost of living index. Only increases above the index will require a membership vote.
- ... There will be additional classes of membership but the 2 basic memberships we have now will continue as before with a name change only.

#### What if the ballot fails?

Then it will be business as usual. However, the Board of Trustees has worked on the new concept for over 10 years and has voted to accept it. They are all volunteers and have the interests of the NMRA and its members at heart.

It may not be perfect but mechanisms will be in place for the board or the membership to fine-tune it when experience in its operation warrants it.

After all the years of work it is unlikely that there will be enough enthusiasm left for another attempt to streamline the NMRA and make it more meaningful to the Hobby for many years to come.

In conclusion, I have done my best to summarize the LRP as best I can. I leave it up to you, the members, to decide if you will support it or not when the ballot papers arrive. Good pondering!

John Saxon MMR HLM