

The Semaphore

North County Model Railroad Society (NCMRS)



The Saturday, September 27, 2008 club meeting will be held at 10:00 am, at Boney's Marketplace, 1820 Oceanside Blvd., Oceanside

Work Schedule

Thursday and Saturday are work days.

There are plenty of tasks to perform.

Visitor Schedule

Thursday 3-8:30PM

Saturday 9:30AM*-4PM

*11:00AM meeting days

Upcoming

Operation Dates

Tuesday, Sept. 9

Tuesday, Oct. 14

Tuesday, Nov. 11

Setup time 1:00 pm

First Departure 4 pm

Last Departure 7 pm

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President's Message

NMRA

I had never given much thought to the NMRA. I own and I use the NMRA Track Gauge. I appreciate the standardization associated with couplers and wheel sets. I take it for granted that coupler pockets meet a common standard and that they will accept a Kadee #5 coupler without modification. That certainly wasn't the case when I entered the hobby in the late 40's.

After I became president I decided maybe it was time for me to become an NMRA member and see what this association was all about. After a year and a half of reading Scale Rails, NMRA's monthly magazine, I am impressed by the scope of NMRA. Scale Rails has evolved from a black and white publication into a very good, full color publication with excellent technical articles. Most of the articles are written by NMRA members who have reached the level of Master Model Railroader (MMR) through NMRA's Achievement Awards Program.

NMRA, through its Digital Command Control Working Group, has worked to create comprehensive DCC standards. This working group which is made up of manufactures and NMRA members who continue to develop and extend the standards. We complain about the lack of DCC standards, however, without their effort I expect there would be no hardware and software compatibility among DCC manufacturers.

NMRA is involved in some things that I expect you never hear about. For example, they are currently involved in a lawsuit challenging a patent which gave Real Rail Effects, Ltd. the rights to sound technology for DCC that they claim they invented. NMRA has evidence that prior art exists that negates RRE's patent. It's nice to have NMRA in our corner.

Then there are the regional and national conventions that are sponsored by NMRA and hosted by NMRA members. I attended this year's convention in Anaheim as a first time attendee. I attended the conventions on Wednesday and Thursday, and the National Train Show on Friday. I made the trip each day with Al Cuevas (our driver) and Howard Levine.

There were lots of offsite layout, prototype and special interest tours. There was something for everyone, even a clinic on how to make an "Oreo" Cookie Train. For me the big attraction was the clinics. They were conducted every day starting at 9:00 AM and continuing until as late as 10:00 PM in nine different meeting rooms. For clinics, I focused on scenery, airbrushing, and prototypical railroad operation. There was a series of seven scenery clinics given by Connery and Lloyd. I managed to attend six of the seven. These guys were very entertaining and informative. If you ever have a chance to attend one of their clinics, by all means, do it.

(continued on next page)

The National Train Show was simply the best I have ever attended. I managed to find a few things that I couldn't do without.

All the movers and shakers in our hobby were in attendance. During the week I had a chance to spend some time with Mary Barstow, and to thank her for her help on our Scale Rails article. I had a chance to say hello to Terry Thompson, the Publisher of Model Railroader. I met Loy Spurlock (Loy's Toys), who is now enjoying retirement. During the convention and train show I crossed paths with NCMRS members John Stevens, Charlie Tucker, David Frost, and Bill Daly. I hope I have not excluded any other members who were in attendance.

What a great convention! The NMRA people did an amazing job of organizing and presenting the convention. There is a lot more to NMRA than the standards we use every day. You can check the many benefits of NMRA membership at www.nmra.org

If you are not an NMRA member maybe you should consider joining.

All aboard
Dick Miller

The Editor Reminisces by Howard Levine

Here I am with 3/4 of a page to fill and no submissions from my reportorial staff. What is an editor to do but fill in the space himself? So, I open my files and pull out New York Central stuff from the 1940's — when I was in college.

Did you know that back then you could ride the NYC's crack coach streamliner "The Pacemaker" from New York to Chicago, or vice versa, for only \$22.75! If you bought a round trip ticket it was only \$34.60 — all of \$17.30 each way (plus tax). For that price you got air conditioning, reserved deep lean-back seats, big windows, a superb diner, and Tavern-Lounge and Observation cars. The trip was advertised as 17 hours, but it often took longer, because of that peculiar eastern weather phenomenon called "snow," that some of you may

some of you may have heard about.

The Pacemaker left New York's Grand Central Station or Chicago's LaSalle Street Station about 3:00 P.M. every day, for arrival the next morning. The westbound trip was my favorite since it would travel up the beautiful Hudson and Mohawk River valleys during the late daylight hours.

Being a railroad "nut" I would, immediately after boarding, leave my one unchecked bag at my seat, and head off to the sofa at the very end of the Observation car, where I would spend hours watching the action on the receding tracks. A beer would be my primary companion (in those days you could drink alcohol in New York state at age 18), and of course chatting with fellow passengers was fun too.

After dark, it was time for dinner in the diner, and NYC did a great job there. I don't remember the prices exactly, but I believe that \$2.00 or a bit more would provide a marvelous meal.

Then it was back to the Observation car until bedtime (or more accurately, until recline time). This was the hard part, because I wasn't good at sleeping in a seat, and besides, there was too much interesting railroad action just outside the window. But morning would come soon, a fine breakfast would follow, and then before long — the steel mills of Gary and the final run into Chicago. Then, back to school.

The eastbound trip was similar, except that Indiana doesn't match New York scenically, The Mohawk valley was before sunrise, and the Hudson was in the early morning. But it was vacation time.

Comparing the price of this trip to that of the present is always interesting, but we must not forget that everything was different, including wages. At the University of Illinois I paid \$88.00 per semester tuition, and \$200.00 for room and board. In the end, the New York Central, a business powerhouse back then — didn't survive!

So now, what is YOUR railroad story?

Nebraska Railroads by Burton Gray

On June 27-28 I flew to Omaha for my high school reunion in Crawford, Nebraska. Crawford is 498 miles from Omaha in the western part of the state. I did this to see parts of the state where I lived as a child.

Crawford is situated on the BNSF line that runs coal unit trains from the Powder River basin in Wyoming. I took Highway 2 north from Grand Island to Crawford and saw one after another of these coal trains. Returning to Omaha I went to North Platte, where the Union Pacific Bailey Yards are located.

An 8 story observation tower named "The Golden Spike" had been opened two weeks earlier. It gives a panoramic view of how big the yards are. They have 114 "bowl" tracks divided into east and west "hump yards".

3,000 cars are processed each day into eastbound and westbound trains. The entire yards are 8 miles long.

The locomotive shop building, which runs 24-7, has stalls for 13 locomotives.

Along the side of the yards are brilliant greenish yellow signs that read "Attention - remote controlled locomotives operate in this area. Locomotive cabs may be unoccupied". Modern technology, similar to our DCC, is being used!

The next day I drove Highway 30, the old continental road that was there before I-80. It follows the UP tracks for 100 or so miles. I saw many unit coal trains – they were hardly out of sight of one another. In this area UP has three mainline tracks with signals at each interval. While there I only saw three mixed freight trains. I also saw an ex-CNW loco with the "Operation Lifesaver" on the side of it.

I drove on to Omaha and spent the next day at the old train depot where the Big Boy 4023 and Centennial Locomotives had been. Now they are about a mile and half south on a bluff overlooking the Missouri River and I-80.

Their position makes a magnificent display.

Nebraska is a great state to see railroading; if you are there, follow Highways 30 and 2 for outstanding railroad views.

Here are some pictures.



The Golden Spike.



A view from the Golden Spike.

DID YOU CHECK THE POSTED LOCO LIST LATELY?

The member (that's me!) responsible for maintaining the list often has trouble reading the handwriting of the new entries. He does his best but there can be (and probably are) errors in the printed lists posted near the fiddle yard. Why not check the list for errors and let him (me) know of any that you find?

— Howard Levine



The locomotive shop.



The lights were flashing but he didn't stop!



Operation Lifesaver on the Nebraska prairie.



A Big Boy and a little boy.

Bad Railroad Jokes (Members: If you **DON'T** want to see this column again, contribute an article!)

What is the difference between a schoolteacher and a steam locomotive?

The schoolteacher says "Spit out that gum," while the locomotive say "Choo choo."

NOW will you contribute that article?