

The Passing Track

June-July 2012

Newsletter of the Rogue Valley Model Railroad Club

PO Box 1362—Medford, OR 97501

Home page is <http://rvmrc.net>

Board Elections

Greetings fellow RVMRC Members,

For those members who have not met me, my name is Bruce Kelly. This past May I was elected President of the RVMRC. Along with Larry Tuttle (Vice President), Jerry Hellinga (Treasurer) and John Gerritsma (Secretary), we look forward to serving you, the members of the RVMRC to the best of our abilities over the next year.

We want to extend an invitation to those members who live in the area that have not attended a board meeting in a long time or who have yet to attend a meeting, to come to the meeting and be part of the decision process for the future of RVMRC. Whether you are full member or an associate member your voice is important. We have a number of goals to accomplish this year: a new roof for the clubhouse, completing scenery and structures and monthly operating sessions. If you cannot make meetings, your input very important to us, Please feel free to email me at wilmingtonnorthern@sprynet.com or call me at 203-247-4846 (cell phone) with your ideas, concerns or just to let us know that you are still out there.

As this board looks forward to the upcoming year, we would like each of you to consider what part you can play in helping run the RVMRC. No, this not a plea for money (though every cent counts). As an individual, think about what things you can do on a small scale to help improve the Club:

- making trees
- weathering cars
- building structures
- serving on a committee
- helping out at the Railroad Show

- participating on Operation Saturday (second Saturday of the month)
- lending a hand at Public Runs (second and fourth Sundays of the month)

We hope to see you at an upcoming meeting, event or Saturday work session. Speaking of work sessions, there is usually someone here on Saturdays (after 9:00am) with plenty of conversation, refreshments and work (fun). I look forward to meeting you in the near future.

Club Contributes to Convention Success

The combined convention for the PNR and PCR regions is now history. Many happy folks attended a variety of clinics, tours of Train Mountain, Micro-Trains and Campbell Scale Models, model contest, operating sessions, and more. Our local model railroad manufacturers (Kadee, Micro-Trains and Campbell Scale Models) had displays and visited with the conventioners. There were 301 attendees ranging from Canada (BC & Saskatchewan) to Southern California, Idaho, Nevada, Colorado, Arizona and three from New Zealand.

The Rogue Valley Model RR Club had op sessions on Wednesday and Friday nights which provided a number of rookies and seasoned operators a chance to see the club's layout and experience challenging sessions of running trains. It was a bit crowded in the club house, with sometimes 30+ "operators" on hand, which also included a few "watchers". Ron Harten and George Booth had op sessions at their homes, which were also well attended and enjoyed.

The Saturday afternoon open house at the Medford Railroad Park for conventioners was well attended. Over 110 conventioners signed the Club guestbook, though many more attended without signing! In appreciation for the Club's efforts, the convention donated \$250.00. For a more extensive coverage of the convention activities, visit <http://www.pcrnmra.org/conv2012/index.html>



Signups Before Op Session



Operators and Onlookers



A Little Advice from Jim

June Board Meeting Notes

The Board met on June 13 with four board members and seven Club members present. As usual, the Club remains in excellent financial standing.

We have been having problems and/or issues with the system at times and have leaned towards replacing the PM42's with a different circuit breaker such as the SRX4. However, PM42's are not the issue so much as not having a full grasp on the settings we need to use or rather the combination of settings we need to use. For a while we have leaned towards making the breakers trip quicker to protect units but would recommend that we use the slowest setting possible as this setting is designed for heavy lamp loads (also heavier loading capacitors that are in some sound units). Last Sunday Jay's passenger train tripped the Siskiyou block with only 3 sound units parked in standby. After resetting the block from standard to slowest break speed eliminated this issue. We had no further problems for the day.

Ron Harten and Dick Stark were selected as Board Members At Large. The Ashland Museum thanked the Club for participation in the National Train Day event at the museum. Members from Eugene area clubs will be having a joint operations session at the Club on Sunday, June 17. A BBQ and train rides in the park will follow. The National N Scale Convention will be at the Club on June 28 from noon to 3 pm. Train operators are needed if you are able to attend.

Track cleaning has been supplemented by use of Rusty's track cleaning hoppers w/alcohol on hand-wipes drums. On-going weathering of rolling stock on layout continues. Lori Harten has agreed to operate the Kids' Layout on the Sunday public runs. Two signals have been installed at the new weathered McNeil Creek Trestle. Tim has been given the blessing to start construction of the lift bridge at Lake Ewauna. Dave S. is doing some amazing things with cardboard back in the corner with the mockups for Columbia Plywood. Bruce McGarvey has created a fine balance along the Cascade line between keeping trains and signals visible and installing vegetation.

Now You See Him, Now You Don't

The Club gremlin, that is. Note this observation from several weeks ago:

Saturday the track was cleaned (mainline). The two trains I set up for Sunday's run, performed without flaws.

Sunday all trains were running well until we open the door to the public. Trains began stopping and going and controllers were losing signal. At the time we had at least 4 trains running plus a shay on the logging run. Pulling operating engines one at a time to locate the problem did not work. The issue was finally determined to be a defective club controller (taken out of service). [Turned out nothing was wrong with the controller--ed.].

Trains were again running well.

Go figure. The Club's on again-off again swagger for getting it right with the DCC has certainly tried the humility and frustration of many of us. After each of the gremlin sessions, we seem to have "figured" things out, only to have another episode some days/weeks/months later.

However, we *have* discovered a number of issues over the years: improper wiring, incompatible turnouts, incompatibility with "blue-tooth" handless devices for phones, and improper DCC settings on the PM42's and the power units. In May, we thought the problem was fixed:

*Both PM42's have been installed per instructions provided by Digitrax installation guide. And the shorting problems continued. So.... E Don and I ran a sound unit around the layout (old section, upper and lower loops) and tried to stop the engine by shorting out the various blocks (power districts) attached to the different PM42's. What did we find out? The answer will surprise you. We were able to kill several power districts on the Summit Division when shorting out the Buck Lake Power District. No other power districts on the Summit Division affected any of the other power districts. On the Valley Division the Siskiyou Power District shorted out other power districts (White City Power District had been reset previously). As a result the Siskiyou Power District and the Buck Lake Power District have been reset from "Standard" break speed to "Faster". **So we had three power districts that were corrupting signals due to short circuiting due to derails or whatever.** After we reset the power district settings we were unable to provide a short that affected any of the other power districts on either of the PM42's. I feel confident that the issues we have been experiencing have been resolved. Watch the system make a liar out of me.*

It did. Problems are often cumulative, so while some of the issues were fixed, others remained. Now it is thought to be the older technology of the PM-42's, and a fix is being proposed (see *June Board Meeting notes*). The internet is full of chat rooms and discussion boards about DCC, so the technology, which adds incredible realism to railroad operations, can be a tad frustrating. But each time we are getting closer to DCC nirvana.

While the technological errors are more difficult to diagnose, the operator errors are not. Consistent issues include selecting power, programming consists, controlling one's train, not meeting equipment standards - wheel gauge, couplers, and matching power--, and forgetting to throw turnouts to their return position.

The club operators have lovingly instigated a "penalty" for leaving turnouts open or running into the back of someone else's train (i.e. "donate" a bag/box of cookies to the Club), a friendly reminder to help change our bad habits. E. Don is often available to have your equipment checked to make sure it meets the standards. The Club is planning on sessions to help each one of us learn more about the appropriate use of the throttles, where a number of errors are occurring. For instance, did you know that any options you select for your locomotive will not be "erased" when you dispatch/exit your engine? These things remain in the memory of the DCC power unit, thus taking up memory space that can lead to problems. Buying cookies, meeting equipment standards, and learning more about the DCC throttles are three ways we can cut down on the operator side of the error equation.

Passing of Member Jerome Haas

Jerome Haas passed away June 2, 2012. He was born November 28, 1941. He was diagnosed with polio at age seven. He enjoyed working concession stands at fairs and hunting. Survivors include his siblings, Victor Haas, of Florida; Charles Haas, of Pendleton, Ore.; and Nancy Johnson, of Shady Cove, Ore. He was preceded in death by his mother, Yvonne Haas; father, Dan Haas; and sister, Rosella Drake. A memorial potluck was held Saturday, June 16, 2012, 1:00 p.m., at Touville Park, where he enjoyed having his family "get togethers."

"Snuffy", as most of his friends knew him, contributed a lot to the club and the Annual Railroad Show. He was the owner of Medford Rubber Stamp for many years and made our two club banners, the downtown RR Show banner, and the street signs we use for the RR Show, many at a reduced price or free. He provided the dining car at the railroad show for a number of years and had swap tables at the last shows he attended. As one token of appreciation, he became an associate member of the club thru an anonymous sponsor and appreciated the club's support. Snuffy was "one of a kind" and will be missed.

Railroad Time Card

Jun 27-Jul 1 – 20th Annual National N-scale Convention, Red Lion Hotel, Medford, Ore. Presented by the N Scale Enthusiast (NSE) and Micro Trains Line. Info: <http://www.nationalscaleconvention.com/>

Jul 7-11 – Great Northern Historical Society Convention, Klamath Falls, Ore. Convention Headquarters will be the Shilo Inn in Klamath Falls. Info: http://gnrhs.org/2012_k_falls.htm

Jul 13 – “*Rolling Examples of Early 20th Century Sign Painters Art*” by Richard Hendrickson. Second Friday at the Ashland Historic Railroad Museum, 258 A Street, Suite 7 (upstairs), Ashland, Ore. Program starts at 6:30 pm.

Aug 9-11 – SP&S Historical Society Convention, Vancouver, Wash. Info at www.spschs.org

Aug 10 – “Shasta Division Railroading” by Bruce Petty. Second Friday at the Ashland Historic Railroad Museum, 258 A Street, Suite 7 (upstairs), Ashland, Ore. Program starts at 6:30 pm. (Bruce’s layout is modeled after Southern California during the early 1960s. It is built as a round the room shelf type layout, 14 to 18 inches wide allowing for close up photography. Enjoy a photo tour at http://lariverrailroads.com/train_layout.html)

Sep 14 – “*Deautremont, The Other Mountain*” by Scott Mangold. Second Friday at the Ashland Historic Railroad Museum, 258 A Street, Suite 7 (upstairs), Ashland, Ore. Program starts at 6:30 pm.

Sep 15-16 - Eastern Cascades Model Railroad Club Open House, Bend, Ore. HO club and 1½ inch railroads on 5 forested acres. Info: <http://www.ecmrr.org/default.aspx> or call 541-317-1545.

Sep 15 – Ist Div. PNR/NMRA Mini-Meet and Board meeting. Deschutes Public Library, East Bend Branch. Info: <http://pnr.nmra.org/1div/>

Nov 24 - 25 - Annual Rogue Valley Railroad Show, Medford Armory, Medford, Oregon. Sat 10-5, Sun 11-4. Info: mail RVRR Show, PO Box 8065, Medford 97501 or call Bruce 541-890-8145, Nancy 541-890-2546.

Looking ahead:



2013 PNR/NMRA Regional Convention in Boise, Idaho, June 26 - 30, 2013.

<http://pnr.nmra.org/3div/2013.html>

2015 NMRA National Convention in Portland, Oregon, August 23 – 30, 2015.

<http://www.nmra2015portland.org/>

You Might be a Model Railroader if:

-  *You've ever bought a freight car you had no use for, just because it looked so nice, and then bought more just like it, so it wouldn't look out of place.*
-  *You've ever been tempted to send flame e-mail to someone whose only wrongdoing was outbidding you for that special engine on eBay.*

06/11/2012 bhm