
❖ Call Board ❖

Volume 41 Issue 8

April 2002

Super Saying

"So long, and thanks for all the fish."

That is what the dolphins in Douglas Adams' *Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy* said, as they abandoned a doomed planet Earth just as our blue-green globe was about to be demolished to make way for an interstellar bypass.

This is my last Super Saying. I am not running for Superintendent in the elections this year, due to a variety of personal reasons. John Smith is running for Superintendent and I have no doubt he'll do an excellent job. He is conscientious in all that he does, and he's dedicated to the organization. Rich Davoust and Mark Stiver are running for Asst Super, and John Reck for Chief Clerk. All are tremendous people, and I look forward to seeing what they do in their new positions.

While I'm sure that the Division won't be demolished in the near future, as was Earth in Adams' book, I am concerned about its direction. With the exception of a core of dedicated individuals, we seem to be stagnating.

We have nearly 200 members on the books, but nor-

mally only draw twenty to thirty at our meetings. My question last issue garnered three, count them, three responses. The answers seem to indicate a very basic difference - either you have fun at NMRA events, or you don't.

The one positive response talked about the ability to share knowledge, learn modeling skills, and share a love of model railroading. This is the reason I am a member myself, as I have shared with you before.

The two negative responses share a very different viewpoint, one in which the NMRA is an organization that is not particularly welcoming to newcomers and is more concerned with the details of scale model railroading than with having fun with the hobby.

What this tells me is that the NMRA is perceived, even here at the local level, not as a place to go and have a good time, necessarily - but as more of an organization dedicated to furthering the fine art of rivet-counting. To me, that is sad, because that is certainly not what I had hoped to hear. The rivet-counters and detail-oriented modelers are happy - but it does not appear that many others are.

Of course, I may be far off-base. We have a grand total of three responses to work with. But it does mirror a trend and a theme I have heard many times before.

If this is true, it appears to me that the challenges to the NMRA, the Mid-Central Region, and the Division are clear:

- 1) Make certain that everybody is welcome - from tin-plater collectors to Sn3 modelers who measure with a micrometer; from garden railroaders to N-scale empire builders; from newcomers with a Tyco train set to master model railroaders. It is all model railroading.
- 2) Demonstrate that the NMRA includes all segments of the hobby. Provide a wide variety of programs that appeal to the various segments of the hobby. Include clinics on garden railroading, tin-plate collecting, and Lionel restoration along with the "100 variations on the PS-1 boxcar" and Penny prototype slide clinics.

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3) Reach out to hobbyists who are not members through train shows, clinics in hobby shops and coordinating activities with other model and prototype railroading groups. We have a lot to share with each other that can enrich our enjoyment of the hobby. George

Mueller saw the importance of this, but without his leadership it is fading into memory. It is time to resurrect it again.

John, Mark, Rich, and John, along with the rest of the board, cannot make these changes alone. It requires your help. If you are a member of the NMRA, but

not active in the Division for one or more reasons, I challenge you to help them make the NMRA into an organization in which you are proud to be an active part. Share your ideas. Dedicate your time to make those ideas a reality.

After all, this is **your** NMRA.

Ray

The following article was originally posted to the RRModelers discussion group on the internet. It has to do with the perception that non modelers have of the hobby. It is reprinted here with the permission of the author.

Perceptions of the Hobby

By Paul Kossart

I have chosen this forum to present my views, as I could think of no other which would allow me to reach such a conglomerate majority of Joe modeler types, editors, writers, manufacturers' representatives, and "names" within the hobby, in one place. My regrets to the moderators for subjugating their intended use of this list, and its audience, to serve as my personal soap box, but I make no apologies, either. I am prepared to accept whatever consequences they feel are appropriate due to my action, as is their right. However, be advised I consider this matter of such paramount importance to the future of our hobby as a whole, that I feel it's posting transcends any forum's limitations on appropriate subject matter.

My observations and conclusions will not be popular with many, but know they are sincere. I don't expect everyone to agree, but I also KNOW now, that many DO. I submit they are voices

which at least need to heard and considered. As someone recently said, "I have been silent long enough!" . . . And so have I.

A situation has been brewing for quite some time which has been causing grievous concern for myself and many others I have been in contact with. The average age of the model railroad enthusiast continues to rise, readership of some of the hobby related periodicals has been dropping, and new entrants into model railroading are apparently not optimum. "How can we get others, especially the youth, to come aboard and join our ranks?" is the common question heard lately. We continue to shake our heads and wring our hands as to why this is happening, as we desperately try to find ways to reverse this trend. One major effort in this endeavor is the creation of Kalmbach's "World's Greatest Hobby" campaign. I have high hopes for this effort and wish them great success; indeed it is in ALL model rails interest to do no less. However, I also feel they must proceed in this effort with eyes wide open, if they sincerely

wish to encourage participation in this hobby by EVERYONE.

In recent days and weeks, I have become more and more aware and troubled by the situation, and so have sought out the opinions of others in the hobby as to what the problem(s) may be. I am at the point where I firmly believe, then, that these are legitimate concerns which need to be considered, addressed, and overcome, in any serious attempt to promote - model railroading - to EVERYONE. In fact, I feel this consideration is vital before any real infusion of new blood into this hobby, as well as the long term retention of many current modelers, can occur.

The following editorial points out a couple of existing trends which, I feel, have hurt the perception of the model railroading hobby by the masses, AND indeed by many within the hobby itself. Here, then, is what has been eating at me for many months, and offered with the sole intention of helping to make this "World's Greatest Hobby" truly available to ALL.

Keeping the goals of Kalm-

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bach's recently implemented "World's Greatest Hobby" campaign in mind, that of aggressively promoting the hobby to ALL people and ALL age groups, the following excerpts from a local newspaper's recent article on the subject of model railroading is especially troubling. The statements made in the article, unfortunately, ring true, in my opinion, as an example of an existing and growing situation which needs to be addressed, before this hobby can effectively be promoted as one having wide-spread appeal to the general public.

The "News Tribune", which is the daily newspaper serving the north central Illinois area, ran an article in the March 9, 2002 edition, concerning a local Lionel aficionado who regularly sets up his "layout" at a local farm toy show to share with the public. I should also mention, a Rose Buckley whose byline reads "Mendota [IL] Bureau Chief", authored the story. The article recounts the gentleman's start in the hobby as a boy, gives his current level of involvement with some personal quotes, and then goes on to talk about the hobby in general. The author writes about how toy trains of times past were a traditional present for so many children, and how these children derived much enjoyment while developing a love for trains which has lasted a lifetime. But it goes downhill from there as the article states: "model trains are no longer 'child's play' ". In fact, the previously mentioned hobbyist, a Mister Richard Sorenson, is quoted as saying, "It's not a toy anymore, not with \$1,500.00 locomotives." The article proceeds to emphasize the collective side of the hobby, even to

the point of calling the gentleman's layout a collection, to the disparagement, I feel, of the other aspects of the hobby.

Ms. Buckley then writes about the history of Lionel and the hobby in general. She winds up her essay on the history of model railroading with statements on the eventual decline of interest among youth in trains, as starting in the 1960's. I then came to the statement that finally prompted me to compose this message - Ms. Buckley declares, "In recent years, model trains have become popular again, but ironically, they are not for children any longer." [emphasis mine] The article then continues to talk about the hobby in terms of collecting and money - How aging collectors, "with free time and money, are driving up prices of the models" and "who are nostalgic for the romance and excitement they remembered as children", are demanding more "intricate details" and the "latest innovations". Ironically, and sadly, I find her statements to be true -

One example: I don't recall seeing any kits put out by Kadee. Do you?. I have no complaint, per se, with those of the collector mentality and those who support them, ours is a hobby with many facets. However, it does contribute to higher prices and the (mis) perception by the general public that model railroading is only for collectors and too expensive to be of any interest to them. Articles containing statements like that above certainly imply this and illustrate my point.

But it's not just this (mis) perception of model railroading as a collector's hobby being implicated in the quotations above. In my and others opinion, the feeding

frenzy of those whom many model railroaders derisively label as "rivet counters", searching for the Holy Grail of "prototype fidelity", has also contributed to driving the cost of participating in this so called, "World's Greatest Hobby", to astronomical and outlandish proportions. If this were a simple matter of letting "them" do their own thing, and paying the accompanying higher prices which go along with that decision, while we were free to do ours at a much lower cost, there would be no problem - those who wished could purchase the highly detailed and/or ready-to-run equipment, while the rest of us could happily make do with the "good enoughs". However, this is becoming less and less achievable, as the wishes of this one segment of the hobby seem to be driving the direction the entire cost of participation in the hobby is taking as well. I dare say, the majority of participants in the model railroad hobby, and I count myself among them, could care less what kind or size of door a boxcar has, or even if it is prototypical for that particular car, on that particular railroad, in that particular year, ad nauseum. We just want it to look like a boxcar and stay on the track, while we pursue our interest of running or switching them around the layout.

I'm afraid the manufacturers are duplicitous in this situation as well, again in my opinion, as more of them continue jumping on the highly detailed (read highly priced and profitable), ready-to-run bandwagon. I certainly have no problem with them making a profit, I realize, in fact, that is their ultimate goal and reason they exist, and that is fine. However, there is

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more to the "big picture" here, that I feel, needs to be considered - and addressed.

The growing trend of manufacturers getting away from offering "good enough" kits at reasonable prices altogether, discriminates against those whom I feel are the majorative segment of the hobby - the rest of us. However, the saddest part is that this action may also ultimately prevent the very demographic we are trying to attract to this hobby, elementary school age kids, from participating in the hobby at all due to unnecessary, spiraling equipment prices.

Finally, it seems ironic that Kalmbach's "Worlds Greatest

Hobby" initiative, in attempting to promote model railroading to the general public, is partnering with these very manufacturers whose actions may be causing this hobby to become unavailable or unattractive to this general public they seek to entice. Make no mistake, I am not manufacturer-bashing; I realize and applaud the advances and efforts that have, and are continuing to be made in quality and fidelity to the prototype. However, lets keep an affordable option open and available for the rest of us, and especially the kids, as well. If we don't, I seriously fear that the "World's Greatest Hobby" will be quickly on its way to becoming the "World's Most Expensive Hobby",

resulting in ultimately keeping more people out of model railroading than attracting, as is the desired intention. And what a shame, and loss to us all, if that becomes the final reality.

Respectfully submitted,

Paul Kossart - Peru, Illinois, USA
Modeling the CB&Q & the fictional Illiniwek River Valley area in the 1960's.

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"Serving Agriculture and Industry in the Illiniwek River Valley since 1904."  
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Date	Location	Contest	Program
21 April	Wright Memorial Library Oakwood, Ohio	Thunbz Merit Judging	Tony Koester
19 May	Wright Memorial Library Oakwood, Ohio	Most Ugly Caboose	Operations, Modeling and Simulation By J. Hedge
16 June	Wright Memorial Library Oakwood, Ohio		Layout Tours
21 July	Wright Memorial Library Oakwood, Ohio	Scene	

Contests

April Thumbz and NMRA Merit Judging

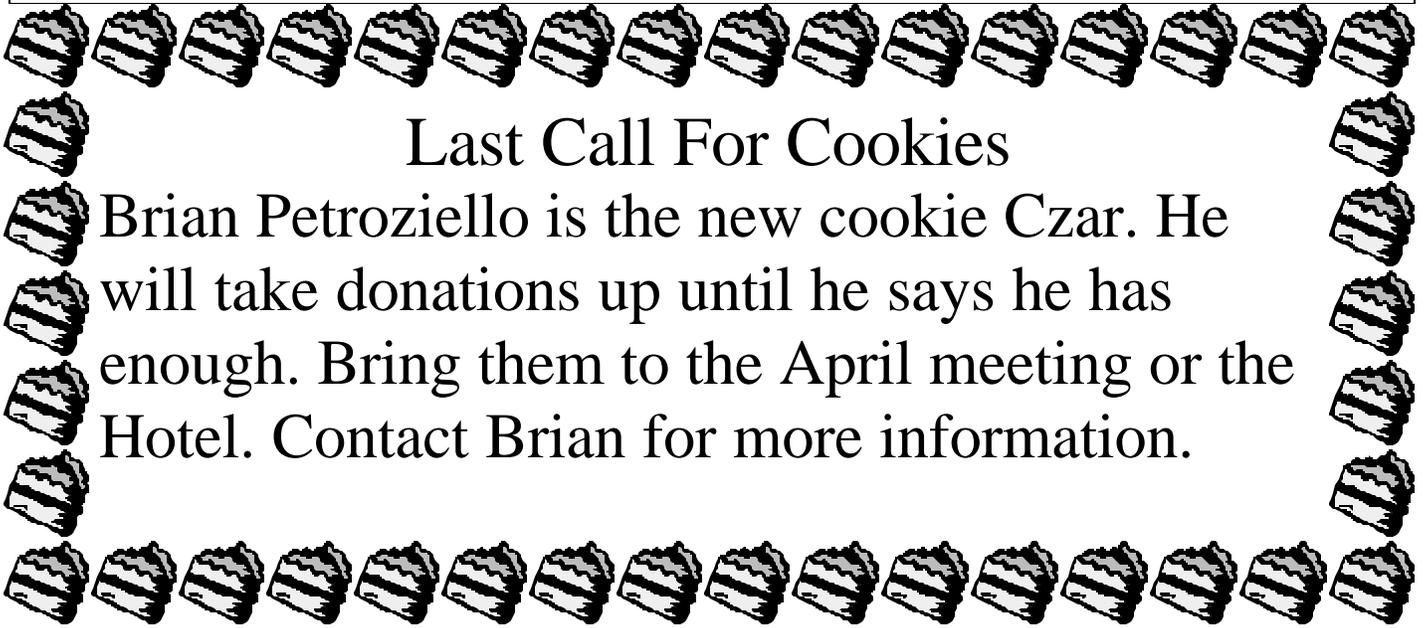
May Most Ugly Caboose
July Scene
You are allowed up to 3 entries per contest.
You do not have to be a member of the NMRA to participate in the popular vote contest.

March Results			
		Models	Photos
1	Bill Spinks	1	LeRoy Clouser
2	Bill Spinks Dick Kehl	2	Fred Schneider
3	Dick Kehl Steve Hood Fred Schneider	3	LeRoy Clouser

Convention Contest Judges Needed

We are in need of judges for the model and photo contests at the Regional convention in Dayton. Anyone interested Please contact Dick Briggs at 614-277-0314 or e-mail at RBRIGGS261A@aol.com If you have not judged a contest and want to learn about NMRA contest judging there will be a 3 hour workshop offered at the convention on Friday evening by Marty Vaughn MMR, Howard Smith MMR and myself, which will offer hands on practice on contest models. This workshop will also benefit modelers who want to enter NMRA contests or who are working on AP certificates.

We also need Contest room clerks to help enter stuff, place awards, etc. "If Fred can do it anyone can." Contact Fred Schneider.



Last Call For Cookies

Brian Petroziello is the new cookie Czar. He will take donations up until he says he has enough. Bring them to the April meeting or the Hotel. Contact Brian for more information.

The Division needs a Modelers Aid contact person. They would be responsible for helping members deal with the National headquarters and local gurus. You don't have to know everything, a contact list will be developed for you. Contact a BOG member for more info.

The Division would like to develop a repository of kit directions and plans. These would be made available to anyone who acquires a kit without directions. Dick Kehl is the contact point for donations. This would be a good time to organize your archives and help others.

We are in the process of collecting information on workgroups and operating sessions. If you have a workgroup and would like to make it available to others, or have room for visitors during operating sessions, we would like to hear from you. Contact J. Hedge.

- April 6 Division 7 Swap Meet & Flea Market, Lakota West High School, 8940 Union Centre Blvd, West Chester, Ohio 10am-5pm \$3 adult, \$2 Ages11-15 www.cincy-div7.org
- April 7 Springfield Area Model Railroaders Flea Market and Model Train Show, Clark County Fairgrounds, Springfield, OH 11 am – 4 pm
- April 21 Bucyrus Model Railroad Association Train Show and Swap Meet, Crawford County Fairgrounds, Whetstone St., Bucyrus, Ohio, 10am-4pm, \$2 under 13 free.
- April 25-28 MCR Region Convention, Holiday Inn, Fairborn, OH
- April 27-28 Crossroads RR Club Open House, 304 N Dixie Dr., Vandalia, OH, Sat. 11am-5pm, Sun. 1pm-5pm

Election 2002

Nominations were held at the March meeting. The candidates are:

Superintendent
John Smith

Assistant Superintendent
Richard Davoust
Mark Stiver

Chief Clerk
John Reck

The ballots will be mailed to all voting members of Division 3 the first week of April. They may be mailed to the election teller or brought to the April meeting. The ballots will be counted at the April meeting and the new officers will take office in May.

If you are a Regular, Life, or Associate member of the NMRA assigned to Division 3, you should receive a ballot. If you do

not receive a ballot by 15 April, please contact J. Hedge so that arrangements can be made for a replacement ballot. No ballots will be available at the April meeting.

Write-in votes are not permitted under the by-laws of Division 3.

The following statement was received from John Reck, candidate for Chief Clerk.

I have been a member of the NMRA and Division 3 since 1972, and a Life Member since 1975. I have participated in or attended most Division Shows, a number of Regional Conventions

and all National Conventions beginning with Dayton's in 1975. Having just recently gone into semi-retirement, I now can devote more time to other interests where I did not have time while working (Yes, this will include modeling!). I have held and still hold the treasurers office in a number of organizations, including my church and

my home town's Community Chest (United Way). I have also held a number of organizational secretary offices, and still do corporate secretary work for my employer. I will be happy to serve Division 3 as its' Chief Clerk and provide what talents I have for your Benefit.



The *Call Board* is the official publication of Division 3, Mid Central Region, National Model Railroad Association. It is published monthly except in August. All comments and opinions are welcome. Those views expressed in the *Call Board* do not necessarily reflect the policies or opinions of the NMRA, the Mid Central Region or Division 3.

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Next Meeting	
When:	2 PM 21 April 2002
Where:	Wright Memorial Library 1776 Far Hills Dayton, Ohio
Program:	Tony Koester
Contest:	Thumbz and NMRA Merit Judging
Visitors and Guests Always Welcome	

April 2002