

The Switch Tower

**Seacoast Division, Northeastern Region,
National Model Railroad Association**

**Bruce Robinson, President -- Paul Lessard, Vice President
Terrence P. King, Secretary -- Tom Coulombe, Treasurer**



Volume Fifteen

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Number Two

President's Message

Help Wanted: Great Opportunity Awaits

The Seacoast Division is what you put into it

*by Bruce Robinson, President,
Seacoast Division,
Northeastern Region, NMRA*

This is my first column writing from the President's position and I had another idea for a heading. The other idea went: "Hello, Houston. We have a problem." You see, Darlene and I were in Houston, Texas on January 12th when the Seacoast Division Board of Directors was meeting in South Portland. We were touring the 1914 built battleship USS Texas when the nomination for President of the Division was put on the floor for discussion. I figure it was about the time we got to the boiler room six decks down that the vote was taken to name me the new President. So, I guess I get to do this job for a while thanks to some of the greatest modelers I have had the pleasure to be around. Thank you all for your confidence in me and, by the way, when does the instruction book for this job arrive?



HELP WANTED

Now, for the meaning of the heading of this column. We have all seen the Help Wanted phrase before and usually react to it in similar manner. This time the phrase has a little different meaning. What do you, the member, get out of belonging to this Division? Like everything in life you derive gains from the effort put forth. In other words I usually derive the most from my hobby by helping out with someone else within the hobby.

This is a hobby that thrives on helping. The basis of the NMRA is to make available information, standards and people that thrive on helping the hobby be enjoyable and grow. There are conventions and Division meetings where there are presentations and clinics given to share knowledge. There are friends that are willing to help another modeler build that next project

MR CLASSROOM

The Division ran its second 8-week course on the Introduction to Model Railroading (Model Railroading 101) at Timberlane Regional High School in Plaistow, N.H. starting February 19th. Seven members of the Division answered the Help Wanted ad and devoted their time to helping others become modelers and begin a life long hobby.

People serve as members of the Board of Directors or offer their special talents as web master or instructor or just support for some activity. By answering that ad they extend the knowledge of this great hobby and derive the benefit of helping another modeler enjoy the hobby.

If you would like to answer the ad, let one of the Board of Directors, or me, know what you would like to do. There is always an opening for the position in the ad.

A little effort put in by answering the Help Wanted ad has vast rewards. Try it.

HELP WANTED, PART II

The next Seacoast Division quarterly meeting will be May 3, 2008 at the Community Center in Rochester, N.H. The meeting will be 10am-2pm. The morning session (10:00-12:00) will be devoted to clinics and show-and-tell activities. A break for lunch will be followed by the quarterly business meeting (1:00-2:00). All members are encouraged to participate and to bring models for display and discussion. Rich Breton has extended an invitation to visit his Baltimore & Ohio-inspired Potomac Valley Railroad layout after the meeting. Directions will be given at the meeting.

Now for the Help Wanted part: We need your help in putting this program together. Now is the time to put something into the Division. Bring your models, your questions or your curiosity and share them with us. The rewards are great.

This column will continue to be closed with the phrase Rich Breton coined and is so appropriate: "*Share the fun of model railroading*". Thanks, Rich.

Meet Bruce Robinson

I wanted to take just a moment to introduce myself to the members of the Seacoast Division. I have been nominated to be a Director of the Seacoast Division for a three year term at the Divisional meeting held in Auburn, Maine on September 15th.

My model railroading roots go back to 1958 when I asked for and received a Marx HO train set for Christmas.

I joined the NMRA around 1969 (NMRA #2114) while I was stationed in Biloxi, Miss. After discharge, I moved to New Hampshire and started to participate in a round-robin operating group. In 1977-1979 this group ran three successful annual model railroad shows

(Continued on page 6)

Where's the fun in Ballasting?

By Ron Palmquist

One of the model railroading jobs that I dislike the most is ballasting – spreading your favorite HO-gauge, miniature crushed rock between the rails and ties and along the track and cementing it in place and remembering to leave enough space for uncoupling magnets and working turnout points. I am at that point on the Chicago Creek Branch of the Evergreen Central Railroad, a division of the Sandy River Lines. I have been unsuccessfully looking and looking through all my stuff for the correct ratio of Elmer's glue-to-



water to cement ballast.

I bought a pair of "Medicine Droppers," one straight tip and one bent tip (seen above), for \$1.99 at CVS in, South Portland, and thought I would be ready to go. Well, I experimented and failed. So, I hollered HELP and, here are some of the Email replies for your edification.

TOM JONES

I have been doing a lot of ballasting over the last month (a lot still to go) . I spray my ballast with 70 percent or 91percent isopropyl alcohol (drug store less than \$2 a quart). I pour it into an old pump hairspray container to spray it, but any sprayer should work. I mix my white Elmer's half and half with water in an old mustard bottle, the kind with a twist open top similar to the small glue bottles. I thoroughly spray the ballast with the isopropyl then drizzle glue until everything is white and soaked. I found eyedroppers too slow.

BILL GAVER

I use 50/50 formula...i.e. 50 percent white glue, 50 percent water pre-mixed before application by dropper. Too, I pre-wet ballast with

alcohol applied by dropper. The alcohol hastens and spreads glue/water mixture to all ballast surfaces including the base on which the ballast and track ties rest. Just plain rubbing alcohol sprayed or dropper applied to ballast will do the "trick." No need to use the more expensive denatured alcohol. I use push pins (those w/multi-colored plastic head) to hold trackage in place while applying alcohol and glue. Remove pins after 18-24 hour period. Helps retain track alignment during application and drying process.

DWIGHT SMITH

First, I spray the ballast until wet with denatured alcohol and water. Ratio? Heck, I don't know; I just mix the two ingredients in a spray bottle and let it go at that. Before this mix dries I use the medicine dropper to apply the Elmer's glue and water combination onto the ballast drop by drop. Ratio glue to water? Again I don't have an exact unit of measurement, just get the glue to a consistency that it drops from the dropper and spreads among the granules of ballast.

RICK SHOUP

Proportions do not need to be precise. My club (Florida) sprays denatured alcohol on the ballast and pours on diluted white glue with a drop or so of Dawn to keep the glue from beading up. It reduces surface tension. Let dry and vacuum the track, and then put on more ballast in the bare spots. On my (home) layout, I never bothered with the alcohol and just went from dry ballast to diluted white glue. Some times I sprayed the ballast first with wet water, but not always.

STAN JORDAN

Well, I use four parts of water to one part of Matte Medium plus a 'squirt' of clear (don't use colored detergent or your ballast will be colored) liquid detergent (to make the mix flow readily into the ballast). Probably the same concept would work with Elmer's instead of Matte Medium (which is sort of like a glue).

ROGER ROBAR

I'm sure you will have several replies and all of them will work. I thin my glue down about 50/50. This does not need to be exact. Instead of using water and a couple drops of dishwasher detergent I use 91percent Isopropyl Alcohol; you will not believe how well this works

(Thanks much to all who responded to my HELP message. RP)



The [National Model Railroad Association](http://www.nmra.org) is the largest organization devoted to the development, promotion and enjoyment of the hobby of model railroading. The NMRA was founded in 1935 in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, making this our 73rd year in service to the hobby of model railroading!

Share the Fun of Model Railroading . . . Rich Breton

If you're not having fun, then you must not be playing with trains!

Maintenance is an important job at Defern Depot, N.H.

Text and photos provided by Bill Gaver

I have a large HO layout (see www.deferndepot.com) and all the ingredients, solvents, tricks recommended and/or suggested I have tried on my layout and club layout; namely, Flitz polish, Wahl oil, masonite pad, alcohol, No-Ox, Goo-Gone, acetone, mineral spirits and CRC 2-26. I have no experience with Rail Zip. I have applied these ingredients manually with a rag, Centerline car and CMX from Tony's Train Exchange in Essex Junction, Vt.. (For information re: CMX, see http://tonystrainexchange.com/technews/clean_machine.htm)



To summarize, my experience is as follows:

1. Layout environment is critical to maintaining a high track-to-loco conductive field, which IMO is why some modelers report different results using different ingredients. Important environmental conditions:

a. Maintaining stable relative humidity c. 50 +/-.

b. Keeping airborne dust to a minimum;
2. Eliminate plastic and/or delrin wheels from all rolling stock. They are magnets for attracting dust, dirt and scum which imparts unwanted "dirt" on both wheel treads and railhead. Use metal wheels only.

3. Determine means to reduce, slowdown or eliminate the tendency for oxidation to occur on trackage. Number 2 above is first step.

4. When cleaning trackage, it's important to use a cleaner that is a strong degreaser and does not leave residue on the track. Residue on the track, e.g. Goo-Gone, Wahl oil and others, attract airborne dust particles, thus hastening dirty wheel treads and dirty railhead while reducing track-to-loco electric conductive field.

5. The best track cleaning solvents in my

experience are strong degreasers and possess rapid evaporation rate, i.e. lacquer thinner, acetone...all used with utmost care.

6. Twice yearly on my layout, I clean trackage with acetone carefully inserted into CMX. I pull it with an A-A Hallmark twin-

powered diesel over the entire layout trackage two to three times.

7. Replace corduroy fabric pad with new pad and apply LPS-1, a greaseless lubricant, to pad and run diesel-powered CMX over entire layout three times stopping intermittently to re-apply LPS-1 to the corduroy pad.

Thew results of applying the LPS-1 Greaseless Lubricant is as follows:

1. The metal-to-metal contact of loco-to-track becomes highly conductive.

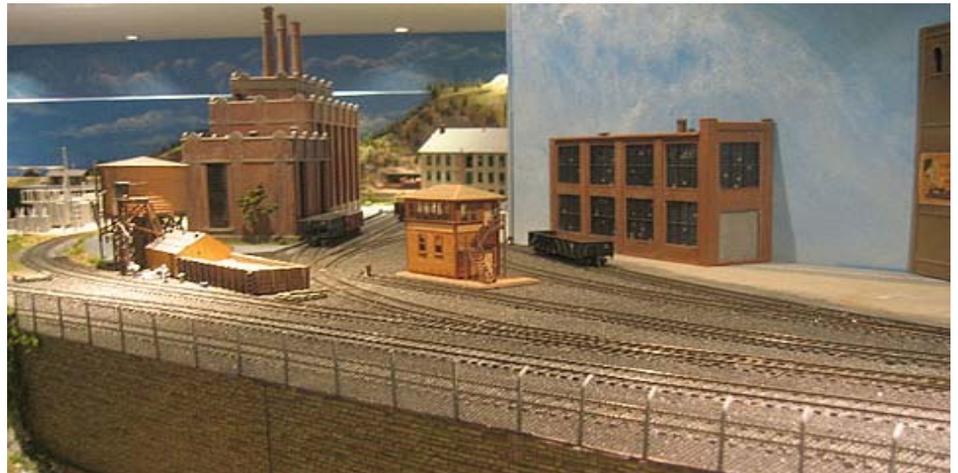
2. It leaves track railhead wet, but dries in a half-hour.

3. Dust is not attracted to railhead while lubricant dries.

4. On 2.5 percent grades, I have not experienced a loss of traction, e.g. steam loco BLI, Spectrum, LMB or Classic.

Brass pulling 18-car trains.

5. Between track cleaning as explained



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LPS-1 is safe on plastics, paint, and fabric. It comes in 11 oz. spray can, costs about \$9.00, and is available at Ace Hardware. If not a stock item, it's been my experience they will order. Some Ace stores stock LPS-2 and LPS-3, but LPS-1 is product formula desired for our purpose. This greaseless lubricant is designed for use on electrical contacts. The product can be found at NASA for use on space hardware. The LPS web site: www.lpslabs.com



Seacoast Division Spring Meeting
Saturday, May 3, 2008
10:00-2:00

Rochester Community Center
150 Wakefield Street
Rochester, NH 03867

All seacoast members and guests are invited to the spring meeting in Rochester, NH. The meeting's theme will be the NMRA's Golden Spike Award. If you are having trouble "getting going" in the hobby this is a way to get that ol' spark back. The Golden Spike Award is meant to inspire you to work on the eight requirements necessary to fulfill the requirements and get the hobby juices flowing (again?). There is no judging or competition to the Golden Spike merely to challenge yourself to get things done on the railroad and have something to show for your personal accomplishments. Larry Cannon, Division Achievement Chairman will show us what needs to be done to earn the Award. You won't believe how easy it is.

Clinics on model railroad building will be next in the program and there is always the "bring it and show it" time. Members are encouraged to bring something they are working on or have built and share it with the rest of us.

Lunch will be provided and the business meeting part of the day's activities will be conducted while the sandwiches are consumed.

If you still haven't had enough of model railroading after lunch, you can head over to Rich Breton's house in Rochester and visit trackside on Rich's B & O Cumberland Valley.

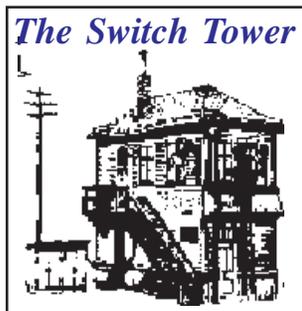
Come to the spring meeting and **Share the Fun of Model Railroading.**





Seacoast Division, NER/NMRA

c/o Ron Palmquist
16 Glen Avenue
Cape Elizabeth, ME 04107-1022



Address Service Requested

Share the Fun of Model Railroading

Calendar Planner

April 19, 2008. Eighth Annual All-Gauge Model Railroad Show, Veterans Memorial Gym, Sanford, Maine. FMI: Bill Catanese, 207.636.3842.

April 20, 2008. Hooksett Lions Club Annual Model Railroad Show, Hooksett, N.H., 10 am- 3 pm, Hooksett Cawley Middle School.

April 26, 2008. Spring Model Railroad Show, Mt. Ararat High School, Monmouth, Maine. FMI: The Great Falls Model Railroad Club. FMI: call 207.933.2477, or, on line, www.greatfallsmodelrrclub.org

May 3, 2008, Seacoast Division meeting in Rochester, N.H. Details - pages one and five.

May 3, 2008. Ammonoosuc Valley Railway Ass'n 2nd Annual April Model Railroad Show, N. Haverhill, N.H. FMI: call Dick Ekwall, 603.989.543.

Meet Bruce Robinson, our new president

(Continued from page 1)

called "Train Fair" in the Merrimack Valley area. During the 70's I was active in the Lawrence Model Railroad Club.

In 1988, the "basement-with-a-house-on-top" was purchased in Sandown, N.H. With the new basement came the space to build an operating model railroad. With drawings completed, construction began on the Valley Junction RR in January, 1989. The VJRR is designed and built to accommodate the waybill operating system I was familiar with for the previous 20 years. Trains are operated by a seven-man crew that includes a dispatcher, yard masters and main line crews.

I joined the Seacoast Division in 2004 but it wasn't until the 2005 Nashua convention that I became interested in seeing what the Division was all about. For the convention, I held an operating session on Friday night, did a clinic on Tour de Chooch (I have been involved with running this annual open house for the last 15 years) on Saturday morning and was part of the open house tour on Sunday morning.

I have taken on the task of promoting the Division by building the portable display that President Rich Breton and I have taken to shows for the last two years.

While serving for fifteen years in the Boy Scouts of America I have been and continue to be a merit badge counselor for the Railroading Merit Badge.

(Continued from Page 2)

ing were elected to three year terms; Paul Lessard, Bruce Robinson, and Terry King.

After the elections, the meeting was put into recess and the Board of directors convened as dictated by our by-laws. Bruce

Robinson was elected president. As he was out of town on business, he will make his appointments at a later date. These will then be confirmed by the Board of directors at the next meeting. Until that time, all past appointments will remain in office.

The meeting was adjourned at 3:35 p.m.