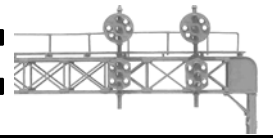


# THE SIGNAL BRIDGE



Volume 14

NEWSLETTER OF THE MOUNTAIN EMPIRE MODULAR RAILROADERS CLUB  
AUGUST 2007 ISSUE

Number 9

## From The Conductor's Desk...

### CLUB OFFICERS

**President:**

**Fred Alsop**

**Vice-President:**

**John Carter**

**Secretary:**

**Mary Doran-Bleck**

**Treasurer:**

**Duane Swank**

**Newsletter Editor:**

**Ted Bleck-Doran**

**Webmaster:**

**John Edwards**

### LOCATION

**ETSU Campus, George L.  
Carter Museum**

### HOURS

**Business Meetings are held the 3<sup>rd</sup> Tuesday of each month. Meetings start at 7:00 PM at ETSU Campus, Brown Hall Science Bldg, Room 312, Johnson City, TN.**

**- A social gathering is held prior to the business meeting at EL TORITAS on State of Franklin near ETSU in the Kroger Plaza starting at 5:45 PM. Visitors and those interested in joining MEMRR are invited to attend.**

**- Work nights are held weekly on Thursday evenings starting at 5:00 PM and lasting until ???**

**- Open viewing and operating layout is available every Saturday from 10:00 AM until 3:00 PM.**



View of a CSX Trailer Train  
From The Etowah Station

For my \_ \_ \_ th birthday Mary took me on a railfan's dream outing - a trip to Chattanooga to ride trains. There's lots to see and do in and around Chattanooga. The "Big Boys" (CSX and NS) play down there. With Chattanooga's history linked with the railroads it's not surprising that the city remains a rail center today. A large part of the tourist trade centers on railroading with the Holiday Inn's "Chattanooga Choo Choo" Hotel complex to the Tennessee Valley's Museum and excursion trains to the Lookout Mountain Incline. Rail related activities can fill a weekend.



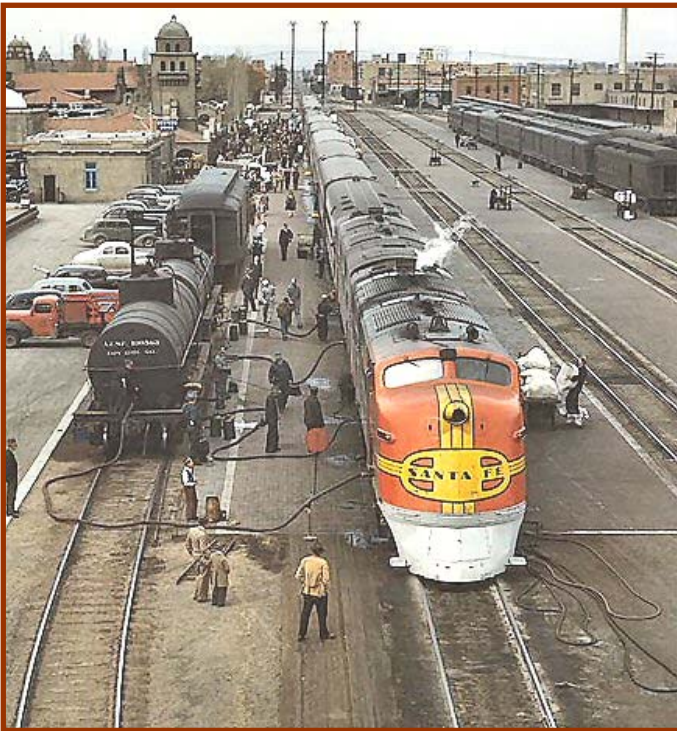
Watauga Chapter National Railroad Historical Society's Streamline lightweight Coach on the Hiwassee Loop Train



Shortline equipment abounds with Columbus & Greenville and Chattooga & Chickamauga units berthed at Chickamauga Station GA. The TVRR Museum has two coaches from the NC&StL "City of Memphis" as well as a caboose from the same road. They have a small but interesting collection representative of the transition era rolling stock found across the south. TVRR's biggest concern is with acquiring additional passenger cars. They have a couple leased from WC-NRHS.







## MEMORY LANE ...

### New York Central and Santa Fe Adventure

*Jack McWhirter*

I was fourteen when my great train adventure took place. My grandparents moved from Buffalo New York to retire in Venice Beach, California. Ever since my grandparents moved out to California I kept dreaming of ways to get there. I must have "bugged" my mom so much that she figured out how to get me out there too.

Maybe some of you remember the days when the bowling pins were set up semi-automatically. A pin boy would clear the gutters and put the pins into a mechanical pin setter and the pin boy would set the ball on the track that would return it to the bowler. The pin setters earned ten cents a line (or game). It would take all the money I had saved setting pins in the bowling alley near my home to make the trip.

I don't know or remember how much money my mother put into the trip. But I don't remember carrying an extra suitcase was filled with food for the trip. After finding the car and then my seat, I realized I would be sleeping sitting up for the next five nights.

I boarded the train in mid-afternoon. I was so excited that I didn't check out the train. So I don't know whether or not this was the 20<sup>th</sup> Century Limited of the New York Central. But, I imagined it was and enjoyed the ride as such.

When the train got to Chicago, I had more time to examine the train that I would ride for the next four nights. The engine was missing but would return to take these cars to California after the clean up crew got their work done. If I recall correctly there was a baggage car, two sleepers, three coaches, a lounge car, a dining car, and an observation car (not in that order). This Santa Fe train was known as the "Super Chief."

Our second night was spent crossing Illinois from Chicago to St. Louis, Missouri. I could not even imagine that I would go to college, Concordia Teachers College, in the Chicago area in three years. And when taking my first call as a teacher in a Lutheran school, it would be in the St. Louis area.

We followed the Missouri River basin until we reached Kansas City, then across the Kansas Great Plain. The third night carried us into the Rocky Mountains and we woke up as we came into Santa Fe, New Mexico. A stop in Albuquerque, New Mexico brought a number of Native Americans on board the train trying to sell some fruits and handicrafts.

We slept through most of the Western New Mexico desert and part of the eastern Arizona desert. The closer we got to California the more excited people got. Many had troubles sleeping once we crossed into California. It was still early in the morning when the train came to a final stop in Union Station, Los Angeles. That was our fifth night on the train.

Because this all happened in 1951 there are things I did then which could not or would not be permitted today. I had a cousin named George who was about one and a half years younger than me. We were both adventuresome kids and wanted to go see the trains coming and going at Union Station. So we asked our grandmother if we could take George's bicycle and go on a picnic. She must have thought, "How far can they go? Besides that, they have only one bike between them" At any rate she packed some food for us and off we went.

So that day I peddled, George balanced on the handle bars, and we went a distance of about 43 miles. We went to Union Station, then to Hollywood and saw the famous footprints in the sidewalk, then on to Santa Monica which was only three miles from home.

It would be virtually impossible to do today because of the danger of gangs and the protection of their turf. Another danger is the many super highways that would need to be crossed or avoided.

When school started again, a friend of mine started bringing cars from his HO train set. I was getting hooked on the HO hobby. After Christmas, when train sets went on sale, I bought my first two Hobby Line train sets.

Today George has retired from his astro-physics job with NASA. I am also retired from having been a Lutheran pastor for twenty years and twenty years as a teacher in the Lutheran Church. And I am getting involved again in a hobby that had long been a favorite of mine.



*Let's Build a Pond*  
by Fred Alsop

**Let's Build a Pond –**  
Fred Alsop

- Materials List:
- |  |                    |                |
|--|--------------------|----------------|
| Wood base  | Foam Board         | Hot Glue & Gun |
| Sculpt-a-mold  | Water-based Paints |                |
| #25 insulated wire                                   |                    |                |
| Groundfoam: in various shades, sizes, textures, etc. |                    |                |
| Tall Grass   | EnviroTex Lite     | Wax paper      |
| Hole Punch   | Tree Armatures     | Paint Brushes  |
| Modeling Knife                                       | Wire Stripper      | Figures        |

Cut out the pond's shape in ¼ inch foam board with modeling knife.

Attach to base board with hot glue gun.

Using additional pieces of ¼ inch foam board build up terrain around your pond as desired. Fix in place with hot glue gun.

At the end of Step #1 your pond project should look like this.



**Step #1**  
**Shape and Design**



**Step #2** **Mold and Contour**

Use Sculpt-a-Mold to build up the ground to taper the different layers of foam board so they have a smooth, flowing profile, thus eliminating their "terraced" appearance.

I added additional Sculpt-a-mold in a thin layer to one end of the pond to make it shallower to provide a place where a stand of cattails might grow.

The contoured banks of your pond should now look like this.

Use a water-based paint with a ground color of your choice and paint the entire surface of the ground foam, Sculpt-a-mold, and the surface of the pond. This step will seal the foam board from the



**Step #3**  
**Background Paint**



EnviroTex "water" that will be added later that sometimes etches away at the foam.

Select a pleasing "earth" color that will also represent the "dirt" of the banks and the soil that will be visible between the ground foam "vegetation" that you will be adding later.

Your pond project should now look like this.



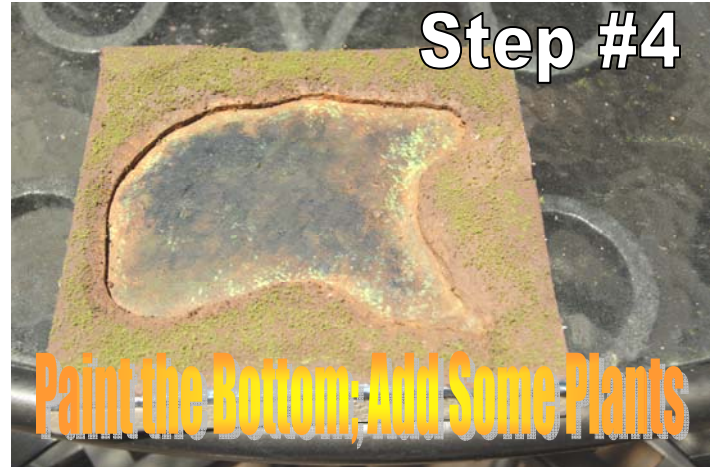
Using water-based paints paint the bottom of the pond. I use Payne's gray for the darkest color to simulate the deepest depths of the pond and blend in lighter colors of browns and greens (never blue) for the shallower sections. Use a pale brown for the shallowest water near the banks. I used a bright green paint dapped on in a series of small dots to suggest a few aquatic plants in the water. When you are satisfied with your pond's benthic zone add some sprinkles of ground foam "vegetation" to the ground around the shoreline and beyond.

Your pond should now look like this and we are ready to add the water.



areas with a little clear flat paint. Now add the scenery to make the final touches. I added lily pads by taking wax paper and painting a section green. Then using a hole punch push out the "pads". Snip a little "V-shaped" notch in one side and glue them to your pond's surface. A few small pieces of yellow ground foam will serve as blossoms. The cattails are made using tall grass and placing it on the banks and in the shallow end of the pond. The heads of the cattails can be created using very fine, single-stranded insulated wire. Use a wire stripper to remove all the insulation from a cut piece of wire except the last 1/8 inch. Paint the stripped wire green, the "head" brown and plant.

I added a couple of living trees and a dead snag or two using sage brush armatures. Black polyfoam fibers were stretched thin and glued to the branches and the "leaves" were sprinkled on and secured with liberal coats of hair spray. Be sure to cover the surface of the pond prior to spraying to protect its shiny surface. Now, add any additional shrubs, grasses, logs, debris, figures and other details and enjoy your pond.



First step to finishing your pond scene is to add the "water" using EnviroTex. Follow the directions in the package and mix the two reagents measuring them care-fully in equal amounts. Be sure your pond is level and pour the mix onto your painted pond surface and spread to a depth of 1/8 inch. You can use a tooth- pick, dowel, or small stick to spread the viscous "water" mix into all corners of your pond. Blowing through a straw onto the surface of the water will remove the air bubbles.

Now set the pond aside overnight to let the resin mix harden. The EnviroTex will tend to creep up the banks a little, so paint over those



**JOIN THE FUN**  
 THURSDAYS ARE WORK NIGHTS  
 THE CREW GATHERS BEGINNING AT 5:30 OR SO...  
  
 SATURDAYS COME WORK ON THE LAYOUTS  
 OR RUN SOME TRAINS  
 Doors open to the public by 10 AM Saturdays  
  
 THERE'S ALWAYS SOMETHING TO  
 EARN - SEE - OR - DO  
 IN N Gauge - G Gauge - and HO

**Next Meeting:** August 21<sup>st</sup>, 2007  
**Location:** ETSU, Brown Hall Science Building, room 312  
**Time:** 7:00 PM  
**Dinner:** 5:45 PM El Toritas  
 Near ETSU on State of Franklin in the Kroger Plaza  
**Program:** TBA

**PRODUCT REVIEW****Dream-Plan-Build Video Series, Vol. 10**

Coming fast on the heels of the Industries In Action Edition – Railroads And Steel Kalmbach Publishing Co.'s has released the 10<sup>th</sup> volume in the Dream-Plan-Build Video Series. This DVD contains the blend of modeling, rail history, layout tours and tourist segments in a format similar to that of the other DVDs in the series. Of interest, the DVD contains segments on:

**Model Railroad Techniques**

- Installing a DCC Decoder in N Scale
- Creating a River with Plaster
- Step by Step: Ballasting Track
- Weathering Cars with Oil Paints and Dry Brushing
- Multiple Ways to Cut O Gauge Track

**Model Railroad Layouts**

- Realistic Scenery on Herbert Lindsay's High Rail Layout
- Detailed Steam on Lou Sassi's HO Layout
- Spectacular Gardens on Wiinski's G Gauge Layout
- HO & Tim Plate Layouts by the Cuyahoga Valley RR Club
- Brad Nelson's Impressive American Flyer Layout

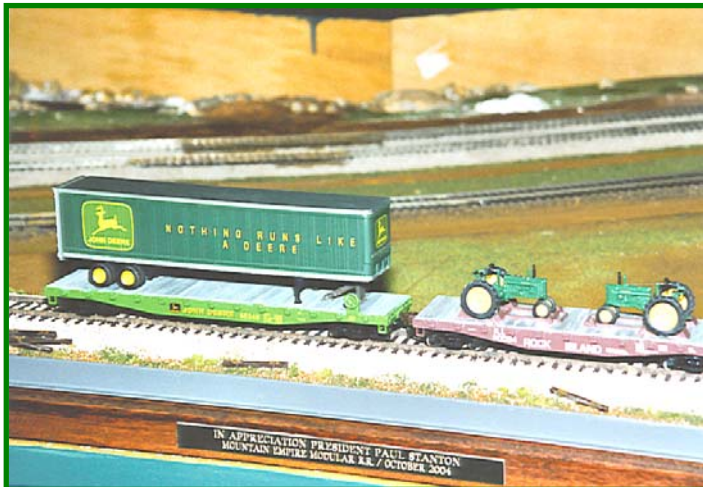
**Prototype**

- The Unique Functions of the Road Railer Trailers
- The Past & Present of the Terminal RR Association of MO
- A Ride on the Conway Scenic Railroad

This volume contains much of what we've come to expect in the series. Borrow the club's copy, sit back, and enjoy an hour or so of interesting ideas.

Cost: \$24.90 (S&H Included)

MEMRR History: Presentation Cars for President Paul Stanton – Oct 2004

**From the President's Desk:**

Congratulations to every member of the MEMRR who worked so long, so hard, and so many days and nights over the past few weeks to get us up and running for our first public showing on Saturday, 4 August. Your efforts are truly appreciated. We were part of the Johnson Depot Homecoming event, got TV coverage (Channel 5, NBC-Bristol), and had more than 100 visitors during the 5+ hour period we were open. Everyone heard lots of compliments and they were well deserved. Several non-members also contributed: Gary Cameron loaned us a minicamera and a 23" TV set to view our railroad on as the camera was pulled around the layout by our motive power. The camera was a great hit and we need to discuss getting one of our own. Gary also loaned us a great donation box that did its job by collecting more than \$65 for the day. Alan Bridwell gave us some publicity and also loaned us 3 framed railroad prints, by local artists, of Johnson City railroad historical scenes. Several people asked about joining the club, when we would be open again, and some offered to donate items to our museum. All-in-all it was a terrific day for our club. We operated the N-scale layout and our own HO-scale layout for the first time and through some effort were able to

**PRODUCT REVIEW****Dream-Plan-Build Video Series, Industries in Action Railroad and Steel**

The Dream-Plan Build Videos from Kalmbach Publishing Co.'s has developed into several distinct lines with the release of yet another new sub-series: "Industries In Action – Railroads And Steel"

**Chapters:**

- A Historical Glance : Railroads and Steel
- Moving Iron Ore
- Gathering Limestone
- Making Coke from Coal
- Operations at the Blast Furnace
- Coordinating Locomotive Movement at the Plant
- Track Maintenance
- The Process of making Steel Coils
- Moving Steel on the Chicago Short Line Railway
- The Importance of Steel

There are useful modeling ideas from Coal, Limestone and Ore hauling to the actual modeling of a steel plant. There are an insider's view of how a short line operates in the presence of the big giants in the railroad industry.

This volume contains much of what we've come to expect in the series. Borrow the club's copy, sit back, and enjoy an hour or so of interesting ideas.

Cost: \$24.90 (including S&H)

MEMRR History: John Carter at the layout's old ETSU Quarters - 2004



keep the trains going round and round most of the day. I particularly appreciate the large numbers of members who came out in their green club shirts and spent the day making everything work and talking with our visitors.

Now that this deadline has passed we need to focus on the near future. We will work to get the museum officially open in the next 2 months. That will still require some work on the Bankus N-scale layout, but we also need to get back to our own layout beginning with all the problems we discovered in our trackwork. Several members need to get serious about bringing the scenery on their modules along to match the level of completeness of most of the other members' modules. This is especially true of the modules on the "mountain" side of the layout. Please, guys, create some time for this and get it underway. We shall be happy to help you in any way we can, but you have to get started.

A new layout, G-gauge and of museum quality, is being purchased from a widow, Joanne Troike, of Elizabethton, and will be on loan for display in our museum. The benefactor, Tom Mckee, will donate the layout to the



university so that it becomes a permanent display in our museum. We may be moving the 14 x 6 1/2 foot layout as early as the second week of August; but in any event we will be moving it after making careful measurements to determine that we can first get it into the building. A future discussion for the club should be centered on creating 3 divisions as we recruit membership; one for large scale (S to G), one for HO (the current heart of this club), and one for N-scale. We already have some interest in a "large scale" division.

On a medical note: Mike Buster has come through his surgery well, minus a kidney and adrenal gland, and as I write this Larry Fraser's wife, Jane, is scheduled for surgery on Thursday, Aug. 9th. Please include them in your prayers and let them know you are thinking of them.

See you all at the August meeting.

Fred Alsop, President MEMRR

#### From the Secretary's Desk:

The meeting was called to order Tuesday July 17<sup>th</sup> at 7:05 PM by Vice-President J. Carter.

#### Officers' Reports:

**Secretary's Report:** M. Doran-Bleck presented the minutes from the June meeting. Minutes were accepted as published in the July Issue of the *Signal Bridge*.

**Signal Bridge Editor's Report:** T. Bleck-Doran reported that the July Issue should be in members hands. Several members have offered to contribute articles for the newsletter. Members were encouraged to sign up for email distribution to save on postage and mailings. Club vote to distribute by email for those with accounts and to surface mail to the rest. Mailing the monthly newsletter is for 36 members at \$0.41 each plus envelope. Email versions are available on the two websites the club maintains. Email will allow members to receive a color version of the newsletter.

**Treasurer's Report:** D. Swank reported a balance on hand for the month of June \$590.75

**Webmaster's Report:** J. Edwards distributed card to members with the new club web site address (<http://memrr07.t35.com>). The website is currently under construction but hopefully will host *Signal Bridge* archives and other club related materials.

**Vice-President's Report:** J. Edwards requested ideas for the August Program. A viewing of one of the **Dream-Plan-Build** clinic segments was recommended.

**President's Report:** See "From the President's Desk" column above.

#### Old Business:

**Donation of 2 N&W coaches:** C. Causey has donated 2 N&WE coaches commemorating deceased members (Bill Harr and Earnie Van Huss, M. Buster) to letter them.

**New Purchases:** Digitrax Super Chief DCC set with 5 receptacles, a Bachmann Heritage Berkshire 20408 by Broadway LTD and the 8 L&N passenger cars for the "President's Train" have all been purchased and received. The 2006-07 ETSU budget dollars have been received.

#### New Business:

**Membership:** D. Swank noted that several members had dropped or lapsed membership in 2007. With new members added the new membership on the rolls is unchanged. General discussion re: membership followed. **Motion:** to create a membership class to receive email edition newsletter only at \$5.00/year. Passed. **Motion:** to have members contact lapsed members to determine reasons for lapse in membership and encourage membership to receive e-mail edition of newsletter. Passed.

**Allison Tweetsie home layout:** Several members visited the Allison layout depicting the "Tweetsie". Layout was built by a former ET&WNC employee. Layout was not to museum standards though locomotives and rolling stock could be used for static displays. Possible donation of photos and memorabilia for display. **Motion:** not to accept layout as is.

## SIGNAL BRIDGE MEMBER-OF-THE-MONTH WILLIAM S. HENSLEY

Email:

Home Layout: **No**

Visitors Welcome: **Yes**

Occupation: **USAF AND FEDERAL AVIATION  
ADMINISTRATION**

MEMRR Module: **No**

Favorite Railroad(s):

**Clinchfield RR - Rio Grande - Milwaukee RRs**

Favorite Aspect of the Hobby:

**Running Train - Building on the Layout**

Least Favorite Aspect of the Hobby:

**Don't really have a least favorite other than the expense**

How Did You Get Started In the Hobby:

**Got started in 1968 after returning from SE Asia**

How Long Have You Been a Member of MEMRR:

**About one month**

What Got You Started with MEMRR:

**Charlie Causey recommended the club**

What Dreams Do You Have for Your Layout of Module:

**I want to do a Clinchfield RR layout in N Scale**

What Other Model Railroad or Railfan Activities Do You Participate In:

**None to date**

What One Thing Would Improve MEMRR:

**Ask me sometime in the future**

**MOUNTAIN EMPIRE MODULAR RAILROADERS  
NEW WEB SITE  
<http://memrr07.t35.com>**

**Donation of RS2 ETRR:** Jim Millhorn has donated two custom painted RS2's to the club in ET RR paint scheme.

**ETSU Door Installation:** The University has ordered two new doors for the room, will add additional 2'x4' fluorescent lights and fix the power strip on the wall in the workroom. Work will hopefully be scheduled for completion before the Fall Open-house.

**Bankus N-Gauge:** Update on the reconstruction and repairs to the N-Gauge layout was provided. Electrical repairs, scenery additions to the mountain division and repairs to structures were noted. University photographer to take photos of the layout and J. Carter will take to Mrs. Bankus.

**Johnson Depot Days:** Plans for the Johnson Depot days were discussed Gary Cameron from "Hands On" Museum was present to discuss expansion of railroad theme at the museum. H. Swank with help from Duane has painted the green trim on the HO layouts. She will also hem and apply the green fabric skirting. E. Lockett has provided some B&W historical photos for display. #1 Gauge Live Steam loco of the Southern RR will be available for display.

**New Location for Pre-meeting dinner:** Motion: to try different area restaurants for pre-meeting dinners since Ruby Tuesday's changed menu and prices. August pre-meeting dinner to be at El Toritas in Kroger Plaza..

**Program:** A clinic and powerpoint presentation "Weathering with Acrylics" was presented by T. Bleck-Doran

Meeting Adjourned at 9:15 PM.

**Next meeting,** Tuesday August 21<sup>st</sup> at 7:00 PM ETSU 312 Brown Hall.