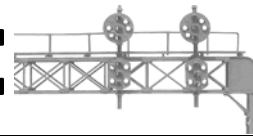


# THE SIGNAL BRIDGE



Volume 14

NEWSLETTER OF THE MOUNTAIN EMPIRE MODULAR RAILROADERS CLUB  
SEPTEMBER 2007 ISSUE

Number 11

## 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 TORITOS** 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 4:30 PM and lasting until ???

- Open viewing and operating layout is available every Saturday from 10:00 AM until 3:00 PM starting in October 2007.

From the Conductor's Desk...



## "Doodlebugs and Brill RDC's"

On a recent trip to the Tennessee Valley Railroad Museum in Chattanooga I got to talking with the conductor while riding the Chickamauga Turn. The consist that day was a Geep pulling a CoG coach, a Budd RDC-1 and a former Southern RY coach. Passengers were light with the train barely half full. The conversation turned to how the TVRR hoped to make the train a bit more financially successful. It seems that they are taking a lesson from the Class 1's 1950's playbook... run self-propelled passenger cars!

As passengers dwindled in the 50's many a Class 1 turned to the Budd RDC for profitability. The cars were economical to run, multiple units could be mu'd together to accommodate the ebb and flow of passenger volume; and they came in several configurations to support head end baggage and express freight. In consist, if one unit failed the other RDC's could provide power.



Above: A RDC-1 Below: A RDC-3



The only obstacles facing the TVRR in running a fleet of RDC's are availability of parts for the transmissions, the need for additional coaches, and public acceptance. There are three RDC's on the property in varying states of repair. Parts are difficult to obtain. With the Hiwasee Loop service expansion the TVRR has stretched it's passenger car fleet almost to a breaking point. There is little room for pulling equipment from the schedule for routine maintenance. The public has not yet embraced a locomotive-less train as a real train (perhaps this is a reason we see few RDC's on our layouts). They still like the sights and sounds of a steam locomotive and will reluctantly embrace a first generation diesel as being a "real" train... but a Budd RDC? Well that's another story...

**Budd Rail Diesel Car**

From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

The **Budd Rail Diesel Car** or **RDC** is a self-propelled diesel-hydraulic rail passenger car. During the period of 1949–1956, 398 RDCs were built by the Budd Company of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. These cars were primarily adopted for passenger service in rural areas with low traffic density or in short-haul commuter service, and were less expensive to operate in this context than a traditional locomotive-drawn train. The cars could be used singly or several coupled together in trainsets and controlled from the cab of the front unit.

service between Dallas, Texas and Fort Worth are currently using RDCs for commuter passenger during off-peak hours, with connections available at various points to Amtrak and the DART system. As well, the Alaska Railroad possesses five RDCs, with four in service and one for parts cannibalization. Three were from SEPTA, two were from the former New Haven Railroad, and one was from Amtrak. RDCs are typically coupled and used for the railroad's Hurricane Turn service and the annual Fair Train. The Hurricane Turn is the last remaining flag stop service in the U.S. and is the only transportation to many summer (and year-round) cabins on a stretch of track between Talkeetna and Hurricane Gulch. (The Parks Highway, the nearest road, is several miles to the west on the other side of a mountain ridge.) The annual Fair Train takes fairgoers from Anchorage to the Palmer stop next to the fairgrounds. RDC's are also still used in tourist train service by the Cape May Seashore Lines, the Wilton Senic Railroad, and the Portland and Western.



Canadian National RDC-1 Coach

The Boston and Maine Railroad owned by far the largest number of these units, but they were also very popular for commuter and short distance service with the passenger heavy railroads such as the New Haven Railroad, New York Central, Reading Railroad, Pennsylvania Reading Seashore Lines, Baltimore and Ohio, and Jersey Central and Canadian railways such as the Canadian Pacific Railway (where they were known as *Dayliners*), the Canadian National Railway known as *Railiners*, and the former BC Rail. VIA Rail still uses RDCs for scheduled services on Vancouver Island and in Northern Ontario, and the planned Blue22 service connecting Toronto to its airport will use refurbished RDCs as well. Since 1994 three RDCs are being used for the OnTrack commuter rail line in Syracuse, New York. The Trinity Railway Express (TRE)



British Columbia Railways RDC-1 Coach

The basic car was adapted from a standard 85 ft (26 m) coach. They were powered by two Detroit Diesel (then a division of General Motors) diesel bus engines, each of which drives an axle through a hydraulic torque converter, a technology adapted from military tanks of World War II. RDC trains were an early example of self-contained diesel multiple units, an arrangement now in common use by railways all over the world.



Modified Amtrak RDC-2 with Cowled Crew Safety Cab



British Columbia RDC-3 RPO/Baggage/Coach





MARC RDC-1 Coach

Budd manufactured five basic variants of the RDC:

The **RDC-1** – an 85 ft (26 m) all-passenger coach seating 90 passengers.

The **RDC-2** – an 85 ft (26 m) baggage and passenger coach configuration seating 70 passengers.

The **RDC-3** – an 85 ft (26 m) variant with a Railway Post Office, a baggage compartment and 49 passenger seats. Some had no R.P.O.

The **RDC-4** – a 65 ft (20 m) variant with only the Railway Post Office and baggage area. Some were all baggage/express.

The **RDC-9** (also known as the **RDC-5**) – an 85 ft (26 m) passenger coach seating 94, a single engine and no control cab.



Boston & Maine RDC-1 Coach

Over the years, various railroads cars had slightly differing capacity due seating types and in some cases replacement of seats with a snack counter or even a galley.

The RDC-1 was powered by two 6-cylinder Detroit Diesel engines, each of 275 hp (205 kW).

Circa 1956, the New Haven Railroad ordered a custom-built, six-car RDC trainset named the "Roger Williams". It consisted of 2-single-ended cab units, and four intermediate cars to make a complete train. The units even were fitted with third-rail shoes, electric traction motors, and associated gear for operation into Grand Central Terminal, though this was short lived. In the New Haven's later years, the set was broken up, and used with regular New Haven RDCs, and by Amtrak into the 1980s. The two cab units and one intermediate car are fully restored and operational, and are on display at the Danbury Railway Museum in Connecticut.

In 1978, Budd offered a new RDC model, called the **SPV-2000** (self-propelled vehicle), but only 24 of them were sold, as they proved unreliable and did not gain marketplace acceptance. The few remaining in service have long been converted to un-powered, locomotive-drawn coaches.



Conrail RDC-1 Coach

Five cars were built under license in Australia by Commonwealth Engineering for the New South Wales Government Railways. They were smaller than the standard RDC in all dimensions. One car was built with a buffet/snack bar accommodation in one end. The five-car set operated the South Coast Daylight Express between Sydney and Nowra.



Canadian Pacific RDC-3 RPO/Baggage/Coach

**Unusual modifications**



Pennsylvania RR RDC-1 Coaches



New Haven RDC-1 Coach

In what was billed as an experiment toward high speed rail, the New York Central (NYC) fitted a pair of jet engines atop one of their RDCs and added a shovelnose front to its cab. This RDC, which NYC had numbered M497, set the United States speed record in 1966 when it traveled at just short of 184 mph (296 km/h) between Butler, Indiana, and Stryker, Ohio. Most sources agree, however, that this was purely a publicity stunt on the part of the NYC.

Three RDC-1s were exported to Australia to operate with the Commonwealth Railways. These cars ran between Port Pirie and various locations, and later by Australian National from Adelaide to Whyalla, Port Augusta and Broken Hill.

The buffet car built by Commonwealth Engineering for the New South Wales Government Railways was the only non-powered version of these carriages.



Reading Railroad RDC-1 Coaches

## JOIN THE FUN

THURSDAYS ARE WORK NIGHTS THE CREW GATHERS BEGINNING AT 5:30 OR SO...  
COME WORK ON THE LAYOUTS OR RUN SOME TRAINS  
THERE'S ALWAYS SOMETHING TO LEARN - SEE - OR - DO IN N Gauge - G Gauge - and HO

### From the Secretary's Desk:

Mountain Empire Modular Railroaders  
August 21, 2007  
Meeting Minutes

### Call to Order and Recognition of Guests

The meeting was called to order by Club President F. Alsop at 7:02 PM in Room 312, Brown Hall, ETSU. Eight members and one visitor were present.

### Officers' Report

**Secretary:** Minutes were prepared and printed in the Signal Bridge and were accepted as published.

**Newsletter Editor:** T. Bleck-Doran complemented the support received from F. Alsop and J. McWhirter who provided articles for the current issue of the Signal Bridge. Material for the October issue was solicited. Members were encouraged to provide anecdotes of their earliest memories of encounters with trains and railroading.



**Treasurer:** F. Alsop read the Treasurer's report provided by D. Swank. The month began with \$756.15 on hand with income of \$110.25 in donations and \$35.00 dues. Expenses were \$197.83 leaving a balance of \$668.60. Balance on hand after approved expenses is \$331. Report was approved as read.

**Web-Master:** J. Edwards reported that both web sites are up and running. Approximately 1/3<sup>rd</sup> of our members have computer access. Discussion regarding establishing a paid web server account followed. Advantages include: larger file swapping so that back issues of the Signal Bridge can be uploaded and archived; easier access (vice Yahoo account barriers); domain name for web address could provide easier access; inclusion of domain name in search engines (e.g., - my search, Google); no unwanted popup advertising. Disadvantages: multiple sites; cost. Several servers were identified with monthly cost of \$3.95. Question regarding whether annual or monthly payment would be required. Motion: J. Edwards to search potential web servers to determine costs for 1 year. Passed. Discussion followed to determine if web site could be hosted on ETSU server. Action: Tabled until after Club Museum dedication.

**Vice-President:** J. Carter was prepared to show selections of the latest Dream Plan Build videos for the meeting's program segment. September meeting theme will be "Garden Railroading." A. Bridwell has indicated willingness to present a program on the Tweetsie or Johnson Depot's Al Capone Days. J. Carter will check availability.

#### President

**Medical:** F. Alsop reported on several members facing major medical problems including: Mike Buster, Jane Fraser, Bill Hoover, Jim Pahr. All are home and recuperating.

**Johnson Depot Homecoming:** response to the Johnson's Depot Homecoming event was reported. The club had between 100-300 visitors throughout the day; F. Alsop complemented the membership for preparations and participation in the day's events. Thank you's to: H. Hyder for signs, Alan Bridwell for photos and prints; H. Swank for fascia painting and layout skirts; Gary Camron for loan of mini-cam and monitor, as well as, for loan of donation box, and the Watauga Chapter-National Railway Historical Society for loan of their display live stream locomotive..

#### Club Registry

**World's Greatest Hobby:** the club has been registered on [greatesthobby.com](http://greatesthobby.com). Promotional video and printed materials were received and shared. This is the hobby manufacturer's promotional venture.

**Johnson City Library Civic Club Registry:** Registration questionnaire has been obtained and will be completed this month. Question was raised as to whether the club needs to update registration with the library annually. M. Doran-Bleck will find out.

**Dream Plan Build:** Question was raised concerning how to be featured in a Dream Plan Build video segment; it was generally felt that the club's three layouts are note worthy and would present favorably as a video feature. T. Bleck-Doran will inquire with Kalmbach.

**State of Museum:** New doors have been ordered and are ready for installation; locations for new overhead lights have been marked over HO - N - G gauge layouts; work orders for electrical outlets in work room have been placed; 2-4 glass shelved display cases have been earmarked for transfer to the club room (for model and memorabilia display); Club room will be designated as the George L. Carter Railroad Museum; dedication of room may be held in September. Work orders are low priority with the start of the new semester.

**G-Scale Acquisition:** The G-Gauge layout has been acquired and moved to the club room. T. Mcgee purchased the layout and has placed it on loan to the university for 1-2 years. The intent is to donate the layout permanently to the university next year. The layout is a western logging theme and is highly detailed. Minor repairs to scenery are needed as well as fascia and skirting, but the layout is installed and ready for public viewing.

**VISA Procard:** F. Alsop has received a VISA Procard to facilitate club purchases related to the maintenance of the two university owned layouts and legitimate club expenditures from budgeted funds. This will allow the club to make tax-exempt purchases for appropriate expenses.

#### Old Business:

**E-Edition of Newsletter:** 12 members have opted to receive the Signal Bridge by e-mail. This has saved the club an average monthly mailing expense of \$6.00. Members receiving the e-version are able to print copies and enjoy the numerous errors and typos in full color. Hardcopy mailouts cost \$0.50 per copy. Printing and duplication are free but stamps and envelopes account for most of the cost.

**Club Brochures:** E. Lockett will update and duplicate the club brochure.

**Lettering Coaches (memorial & Presidents):** M. Buster is lettering club passenger cars for the Member Memorial train (N&W paint scheme with member names and car numbers reflecting date of death) and for the ETSU Express (L&N/ETSU colors with president's name and dual car numbers reflecting dates of term of office). To date the President's Express consists of 8 cars and the member memorial cars are dedicated for two past members.

**Berkshire:** The Berkshire 2-8-4 has been received from Walthers - repairs included new bearing and lubrication. The engine needs to be re-lettered as the "President's Express." M. Buster to do the lettering.

#### New Business

**Mini-cams & Monitor:** the mini-cam was a great hit at the Johnson's Depot Homecoming open house. Motion to purchase 1 mini-cam for the club (estimated cost \$50). Passed. J. Edwards to investigate frequency issues before additional mini-cams will be purchased. Suggestion to purchase one mini-cam to hardwire into layout was made. No action was taken. Suggestion to purchase a LCD monitor for wall mounting (possibly a second to be purchased for viewing second mini-cam). No Action taken. It was agreed that the monitor on loan can remain with the club for the time-being.

**Donation Box:** The loaned donation box was highly successful generating \$65 in revenue. Motion: to investigate the cost of purchasing a railroad themed coin bank with cross bucks and flashing lights and purchase if available. Passed.

**Club Expansion Issues:** F. Alsop opened discussion on club expansion concerns: Issues include: operations of multiple layouts and scales; youth members and university student club; probationary period, security, inventories of club and university holdings; possible loss of focus with modular HO members. Recommendations for consideration:

1. Expand officers to include new Division Coordinators for N-Scale and G-Scale layouts; coordinators to act as points of contact to identify needs and concerns related to these layouts.
2. Add student coordinator/representative if student organization organizes; student club can possibly open additional revenue streams.
3. Establish a probationary period for new members
4. Invite security personnel to special open house to increase awareness of club's presence
5. Use multi-scale availability as member recruitment tool
6. Inventories to Club are maintained by D. Swank; N-Gauge layout had fairly complete inventory at time of donation; G-Gauge layout has documentation (F. Alsop to review files)

#### President's Classroom:

September 4<sup>th</sup> 4:30 PM - 6:30 PM (possibly later)  
Open House for President's community support group  
20-40 attendees - focus on campus activities and programs  
T. Bleck-Doran to provide F. Alsop with Signal Bridge - Special Edition to print in color.

**Program:** Viewing of Dream Plan Build video selections was tabled in favor of inspecting the G-Gauge layout.

**Adjournment:** Meeting was adjourned at 8:51 PM

#### September Meeting:

Tuesday, September 18, 2007 6:00 PM  
Picnic: T. McKee's House  
Program: Garden Railroading  
H. Hyder to provide maps

**SIGNAL BRIDGE  
MEMBER OF THE MONTH**

**PAUL F HAYNES**

**E-mail** j  
**Home Layout** Yes  
**Occupation** Custom woodwork/Cabinetmaker  
**MEMRR Module** Yes  
**Favorite railroad** Clinchfield, Santa Fe, C&O  
**Favorite aspect of hobby**  
 Scenery, detailing and rolling stock.  
**Least favorite aspect of hobby**  
 I am least able to do electrical and am limited to what I can do with electrical related work  
**How did you get started in hobby**  
 Back in 1961  
**How long have you been a member of the MEMRR**  
 I have been a MEMRR member since the club was first organized  
**What got you started with MEMRR**  
 I got started when there was info at what used to be Serious Hobbies.  
**What dreams do you have for your layout or module**  
 For the module I'm looking forward to when the buildings are in place and scened. At home I want to build one in my basement.  
**What other model railroad or railfan activities do you participate in**  
 I go to different hobby shops when I travel. Taking pictures of railroad stuff. I sm a member of the Watauga Chapter National Railway Historical Society  
**What one thing would improve MEMRR**  
 I realize each member (no matter who) has other obligations, but I would like to see more fellow members participate in train running sessions, etc.

**PRODUCT REVIEW**

**Kalmbach Publishing Delivers A Sure Hit**

Kalmbach has produced a sure hit with the release of *How to Build Realistic Layouts: Freight Yards*. The issue is packed with layout and operations ideas. Several ideas are suited for MEMRR as we discuss and plan an operational engine facility and yard. *Freight Yards* contain the following articles:

- A Day In the Life of Waterbury Yard
- Realistic Buildings
- New York Central Oswego NY Yard Office
- Lessons from a Small Yard
- Ballast and Scenic Yard Tracks
- Build a Yardmaster's Tower
- The Evolution of a Freight Terminal
- Simple Unloading Ramps
- Details for a Working Yard
- Ideas for Yard Design and Operation
- High-intensity Freight Hub
- Add a RIP Track
- A Classic Penny Scale House

The issue is now available at hobby shops and news stand for \$7.95

**Next Meeting: September 18<sup>th</sup>, 2007**

**1<sup>st</sup> Annual Picnic**

**Time:**

**6:00 PM**

**Tom McKee's**

Directions will be posted on the  
Memrr.org website and available at the club room

**Program: Building and Operating  
A Garden Railroad**

**Picnic Menu**

Baked Beans  
 Potato Salad  
 Potato Chips (2 bags)  
 Deviled Eggs (1 doz.)  
 Cole Slaw  
 Cookies or Brownies  
 Fresh Fruit or Fruit Salad  
 6 Pack chilled Sodas  
 6 Pack chilled Bottled Water

Grills will be furnished but each family will need to bring their own choice of meat for grilling plus buns and condiments.

We are looking for 2 to 4 volunteers on each of the above items. Please plan on the covered dish you furnish to feed 6 to 7 people.

Mary Doran-Bleck or Harriet Swank will be calling each member to get the number of attendees for each family plus 1st and 2nd choice of items you desire to bring to the picnic. You will be recorded to bring your first choice item unless there are too many or not enough volunteers for any one item in which case you will be called upon to bring your second choice item instead.

Thank You and we look forward to a good turnout along with good weather.

Check out the club new web site at:

**MEMRR.ORG**

**Ask John Edwards for your own MEMRR Email Account while you're at it**