
THE SWITCHER

OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF THE BALTIMORE SOCIETY OF MODEL ENGINEERS

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Bill Mitchell 1948-2001

This past March, within days of the issuance of the Spring SWITCHER, the president of the BSME, Bill Mitchell, passed away. For his family, this was and is an inestimable loss. And for us who knew him, some more, some less, his passing leaves a void in our hearts and spirits. We will miss him individually, and we will miss him as the BSME, for Bill was force within the club. Bill's vision and drive were taking the club through some very difficult times. And if now there seems to be renewed enthusiasm in the club, if more members are enjoying the camaraderie of fellow model railroaders and using the venerable facilities of the BSME, then we can thank Bill Mitchell in large measure. As we, the BSME, enjoy our club, we can remember Bill and what he meant to us as a friend, as a fellow model railroader, and as BSME president. And further, we can bear our tribute to his memory by resolving to make the BSME worthy of its distinguished history, and of its distinguished president, Bill Mitchell.

In this issue of the SWITCHER, Rich Randall reports on the East Penn Traction Club Meet held this past May outside of Philadelphia, and Doug Albrecht has written an article about the Lionel Operating Train Society (LOTS) annual convention to be held in Baltimore this year. Doug also brings us up to date on the Time saver project. Ben McKnew reports on the BSME light rail fan trip, capped by a guided tour of Carvey Davis' "O" scale empire, described by some as the Glenn Burnie Model Railroad Museum. Nick Costanzi shares his visit with his grand daughter to FLYER TOWN in South Jersey, and Ted Leach and Doug Albrecht share personal remembrances of Bill Mitchell

Calendar

Aug 4, Lionel Operating Train Society (LOTS) – 11am to 4pm
Aug 3, Business Meeting
Aug 12, 17, 26, Club Open
Sept 7, Business Meeting
Sept 16, 21, 30, Club Open
Nov 18, Boy Scouts
Dec 30, Open House
Jan 1, 6, 13, 20, 27, Open House

East Pen Traction Meet

by Rich Randall

The bi-annual East Penn Meet was held on Saturday, May 5, at he

Pennshauken Trade show Center in New Jersey. This meet is possibly the biggest trolley meet on earth. It was attend by 6 members of the BSME: Dick Manning, Ed Moninger, Roger Buckholz, Joe Weyraugh, Charles Edlow, Kevin Hunter, Bob Stein, and Rich Randall. What other non-BSME function draws so many members?



The hall was filled with dealer tables offering model trolleys and model parts of all descriptions, and books, magazines, photographs, collectibles,



and other items. And of course there were plenty of the world famous modules in scales ranging from HO on 3 to 3/4 inch. East Penn pioneered modular railroading over 30 years ago, and today the EPTC standards for traction modules are used everywhere. It is a lot of fun to bring your own modules, hook up to the others, and run cars and trains over the huge layouts. Some of us helped set up modules Friday night and saw some vintage trolley movies. Saturday was a full day of buying, selling, operating, and in general enjoying the great camaraderie of the event.

On Sunday, Dick, Roger, Bob, and Rich went on the fan trip that has become a routine of the meet. This year we rode the 20-year old SEPTA (South East Pennsylvania Transit Authority) Kawasaki LRV cars, two of which were specially MU'd together for the trip. (Although the cars were made capable of operating in trains, SEPTA never acted on this capability fearing it would put busses out of business.)

The day was sunny and mild, a beautiful day for a trolley ride. The trip initiated at Philadelphia's 69th Street Terminal and covered the Sharon Hill and Media suburban lines in toto. After some street running near 69th Street, both lines transition to

private, tree-lined right of way, in what seems like very rural conditions.

The Sharon Hill line ends at a large 6-lane parkway, I forget the name, but



probably Route 1, while the Media line ends with about a dozen blocks of street trackage in pretty, quaint, downtown Media.

The story of the procurement of the Kawasaki cars was told to us at one of the many interesting clinics on Saturday by the very gentleman who was chief engineer at SEPTA for the project. We saw movies, and obtained



specifications for the cars. These cars were the first and last trolley procurement for Philadelphia since the last of the WWII era PCCs. Also, they were the first and last LRVs procured

from Kawasaki by a US city, although that company makes many types of heavy traction and railroad cars for US customers, and LRVs for non-US customers. They are fine cars, pleasantly air-conditioned, very

comfortable and smooth running, with truly astonishing suspension systems, very fast acceleration, and big picture windows. True to the fashion for traction equipment, we can expect these fine machines to last another 20-years virtually trouble-free.

Some of us will attend the East Penn Traction Meets as long as they are organized, I can guarantee that!

LOTS of Visitors

By Doug Albrecht

The Lionel Operating Train Society (LOTS) selected Baltimore to host its 2001 national convention. Mike Solly, this year's convention coordinator, expects upwards of 150 members to attend the various events from Wednesday August 1 through Saturday night August 4th. LOTS selected Baltimore because the area's many railroad attractions. Among those already on the agenda are layout visits, Penn Station, the B&O Museum and a tour of Mike's Train House. In addition, the society will have clinics, a 2-day swap meet on Friday and Saturday, an annual business meeting, a banquet, and a keynote address by a representative of Lionel, LLC. All activities will center around the ballroom on the 4th floor of the Convention Center.

Mike was kind enough to think about the BSME for one of the stops on the convention tour. Unfortunately, his message sat on our answering machine for several weeks before someone accessed it. We missed an opportunity to be included on the official agenda. However, if enough BSME members are interested, we could still fit into their plans on Saturday August 4 from 11am or noon till 3 pm. A short walk (or ride) along the route of the Light Rail will put them at our doorstep.

We would announce our presence by providing copies of our usual Open House flyer (with the date changed, of course) and visitors' copies of The Switcher to be included in each attendee's convention packet. Also, we would place additional copies at the swap meet on Saturday when it opens to the public.

There are many mutual advantages for the BSME and LOTS linking up for this event. (Coincidentally, LOTS' quarterly publication is also called The Switcher.) First and foremost, LOTS members like to operate their Lionel collectibles. They will likely enjoy seeing large operating layouts, complete with scenery and long trains. The BSME will benefit from a much-needed fund-raising opportunity. This will conveniently fill in idle time for the convention attendees since most of their trading activity will take place on Friday and early Saturday morning before the swap meet opens to the public. Looking at it from an O-scale perspective, I have often theorized that the survival of O-scale depends on the conversion of "tinplaters". Lately, there has been much more scale-awareness within the Tinplate Community, mainly due to the manufacturers producing many full scale sized models. Of all the tinplaters, The Lionel Operating Train Society members will be – by their nature – the most interested in what the BSME has to offer. Let's help to make their visit to Baltimore a little more memorable.

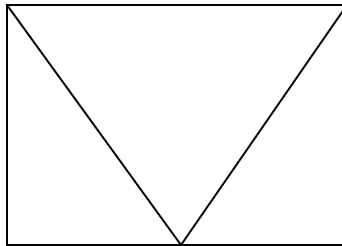
Timesaver Project – Progress Report

By Doug Albrecht

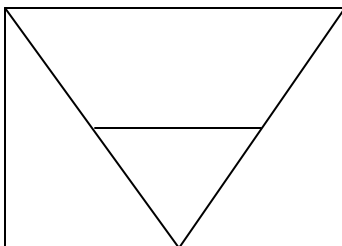
Since the March issue of the Switcher, progress on the Timesaver project would have to be characterized as

"refinements". Milestone progress has been minimal; however, the recently completed refinements will make the final product better. Much of the delay is due to time availability and time for ideas to formulate and gel.

The need for the first refinement became apparent after placing the foamboard deck on the completed frame. The open end of the "V" truss was too large of a distance, thus allowing the foamboard to flex and sag. The solution was to change the "V" to an "A" by adding a cross-member to bridge the distance. Thus, the frame went from looking like this:



to looking like this:



I also learned that attaching the cross-member directly to the truss-members using sheet rock screws doesn't work. Remember that these sheetrock studs are made from sheet metal no heavier than tin can stock. The sheetrock screws easily stripped the holes as soon as I tried to tighten them. The

solution was to back up the attachment area with a 1 by 4-inch wooden block nested inside the channel.

The second refinement came when I tried to attach the foamboard deck to the frame. I had hoped that foamboard-compatible Liquid Nails would do the trick, but it didn't. The two materials separated even after leaving them under compression for more a week. The solution was to use 2-1/2-inch sheetrock screws with 1-1/2-inch washers. With washers under the screw head, I pushed the screw through the foam until it touched the metal frame, then I drove it into the stud with a power drill until I pulled the screw head below the plane of the foam board's surface. I used 13 washer/screw combinations on each of the two frames. They will disappear under the ground cover or roadbed materials.

The last structural pieces of the basic frame are the two end boards, which provide the clamping surface for adjoining modules. These I cut from 1 by 8-inch pine to a length of 30-1/8 inches – 1/8-inch over the original specification. No big deal. I turned the frame upside down on a table to ensure the top of the end-boards would be flush with the top surface, and then attached them from inside the frame using woodscrews.

What next? The next task is to butt the two frames together and use the track plan to place the track centers and switch frogs. Instead of being straight forward, this task has been complicated by the revelation that other O-scale module-building groups are using standards other than NMRA for mainline backset and track centers. Our choice of a standard will depend on which group this module will most likely interface.

A Ride on the Light Rail

by Ben McKnew

“May 20 – cloudy, cool, with periods of rain.” That was the forecast we faced as we gathered at the Cromwell Metro Station. There were about 20 of us. While some posed for photos, Doug Albrecht handed out the passes. We climbed on board just before 11am, and took our places in the front part of the first car, poised for photos and video (since these cars are double-ended, front is relative to the direction you are going). We departed Cromwell Sta. on time, with a two-car train almost half full. After stopping at Ferndale we arrived at the Linthicum station where we detrained to transfer to the Penn Station - BWI Airport trolley. Although the sky was threatening the rain held off as a south bound trolley for Cromwell Sta. stopped and departed. Our train was next. As it approached, my son Patrick and I ran to the wrong end of the platform. Realizing our mistake we hurriedly returned to the South end and scrambled aboard. At this point our group got a little separated as most sat up front and a few in the back but all in the same car. Departing Linthicum southbound we switched off the main line and slowed down to a crawl as we squealed and groaned through what must be one of the sharpest curves on the railroad. We picked up speed again as the trolley got close to the airport. Along the way I noted a crossing signal that had no crossing – obviously someone planning ahead.

Arriving at the airport, a few members got off to check out the station. They had to look fast as our trolley reversed direction and departed after a layover of only five minutes. Backtracking through Linthicum we noticed there seems to be a pocket where the branch joins the main. We all speculated on

why there would be such a pocket here, but I don't think anyone really had a good answer.

The ride northbound to Baltimore was interesting, running parallel in many places to the old Baltimore and Annapolis – some bridge pilings and abutments still visible – passing next to, over, and under the B&O. The viaduct over the Middle Branch of the Patapsco is very much reminiscent of a roller coaster. I would like to take a small boat up there some day just to look around.

After passing the stadiums we stopped at the Camden Yards station. There sitting looking for all the world like an abandoned building was the B&O's Camden Station. We looked, we stared, we reminisced about the good old days – sitting on the platform at 11pm on a Friday night, sharing a Harvey's sub with the night watchman, while B&O freights rolled through the Howard Street tunnel. We wondered if the club would ever move into the station, and what would it be like.

Off again we charged up Howard St. surrounded on all sides by people, cars, and trucks. It is this part of the Light rail that is the biggest bottle neck of the system. During rush hour on any weekday it must be a small miracle to move something as big as this trolley between Pratt and Mount Royal without having an accident. Is it any wonder the motor person seemed a little on edge? Was it this bad during the heyday of the trolley?

After making all stops on Howard St., we arrived at Mount Royal where we noticed the motor person open a side window and push a button on an electrical box next to the car, after which we proceed at a crawl through

yet another very sharp curve and down a steep incline to Penn station (I had read in the Sun that this was no small engineering feat). Arriving at Penn station we detrained amidst the on going construction of the Charles St. overpass. I wondered if I would live long enough to see the platforms fixed up and looking good. Some found the stairs, and I and others the ancient elevator. After playing with the buttons awhile, we got to the right floor. Most made a beeline for the bathrooms and the restaurant. I was disappointed the steam table was not up and running. I was looking forward to roasted chicken for lunch. Instead I got cold roast beef.

I don't know what the other folks had, but when we all ate our fill of whatever, Doug took some on a short tour of the station.

Regrouping on the Metro platform, we all boarded a waiting trolley, and subsequently backtracked to Mount Royal, detraining here to await the next northbound trolley for Hunt Valley. Naturally, as we waited on the open platform, the weather gods decided to make good on their treat – cold, wind, and some rain – and for a few minutes, we thought we were going to get soaked. Fortunately Thor was mostly bluster, and we remained dry for the most part.

While waiting for our train, several members pointed out that the north end of the Howard St. tunnel was right next to and below the platform.

Two trolleys going the wrong way came by before the Hunt Valley car showed up. Happy to get out of the weather we quickly boarded and were off again. Now the tracks followed the right of way of the old Northern Central. Passing the Metro shops, the old produce terminal, what used to be the textile mills, conjured visions of

K4s, K5s and E9s, L1s, and I1s, charging up the Jones Falls with mail, passengers, and freight. WOW, what a sight it must have been! The history would probably provide volumes of interesting reading.

After passing Union St. you'd think you're out in the country with the Jones Falls on the right and the wooded hillside of the valley on the left. On and on we rode passing Northern Parkway, Kelly Ave., Falls Rd., Lake Roland, Bellona Ave., Joppa Rd., Seminary Av., Kilmarnook Ind. Park, Timonium Fair Grounds, Padonia Rd., Warren Rd., Metropolitan Industrial Park, and Hunt Valley Business Commons. After last major road crossing, Shawan Rd., we arrived at the end of the line, Hunt Valley Mall Station. I remember years ago the President's initiative to eliminate at grade railroad crossings – wonder how Metro got around that?

Not much to see here, so we stay on the trolley and wait for the car to reverse direction. Shortly, the Motor person appears and ascends to the car. Apparently this was the same person that brought our trolley North to Hunt Valley, for she scolded us for standing in the aisle behind the operator's compartment blocking her view to the rear of the car. While we could see her point, she wasn't very nice about it, and we expressed as much trying to explain who we were. She calmed down a little, but still insisted that as long as there were seats we should use them. OK? Ok. And away we go southbound to Cromwell Station.

If ever there was a crowning touch to an otherwise great day, Carvey's railroad was it. I can remember in my youth visiting peoples homes where some part of it was like walking into

another world full of fun and surprises. So many trains waiting to run on the mainline. Steam, diesel, electric locomotives, boxcars, flatcars, gondolas, hoppers, passenger cars etc. all in O scale, all over the basement layout. The railroad makes a loop around the wall and in the middle there two double track whys connecting the mainlines. Trains ran, members goggled, and drooled. Cold cuts, chips, and drinks were served, while a WM articulated steamer parked against the back wall, and blocked by at least 3 other steamers was dug out, double headed with a WM decapod, and hooked on to a long train to take its turn around. Clickity clack, clickity clack. I'm old enough to remember jointed rail, so this was music to my ears. Western Maryland, Pennesy, and the Baltimore & Ohio were all represented here. Trolleys? You bet! PCCs, Brills, work cars, etc. all very fine looking equipment.

Around 5pm we thanked Carvey for his hospitality, and went on our way home.

All in all it was a great day.

DONATION:

Bob Lance's B&O E-27,
Built by Ken Henry

– Doug Albrecht

At the March 2000 Business Meeting, Bill Mitchell announced the donation of an O-scale B&O E-27 (2-8-0) #2831 built by Ken Henry, one of BSME's charter members. Ken delivered #2831 on December 23, 1936, to Robert R. Lance, also a BSME member. It was Bob Lance, Jr. who donated the model to our club in memory of his late father. Incidentally, Bob Sr. is also

responsible for Allegheny Northern Mikado (2-8-2) #440, which he built from a Hines USRA Mikado kit in April, 1940 (Hence the number 440). This latter model has been the backbone of the O-division's steam locomotive roster for as long as I've been a member, which is 20 years.

I recently took some time to examine #2831 more closely. According to Ken's roster, this was the nineteenth of 125 locomotive models that he built from June of 1933 until March of 1987. It was the first of five E-27s. Ken built this model 3 ½ years into his model-building career and it is probably typical state-of-the-art for its time

The first thing anyone will notice is that the model uses an outside third rail pickup. [BSME O-Division used this means of track power until the conversion to 2-rail in 1980.] Second, although there are few detail parts on the model, Ken always captured the essence of the prototype. Even without the decals and detail, you can recognize this as a B&O E-27. There is no rivet detail except for the smoke box wrapper. There are no lost wax castings, because there were none made in 1936. On the fireman's side, the twin single-lung air pumps are crude sand castings, probably from Ken's own patterns. Also on the fireman's side, one detail that I did notice is the steps on the boiler to get to the turret and sand dome. They are absent on the engineer's side, as per B&O practice. On the engineer's side, there is no power reverse casting, first and foremost because the real #2831 didn't have power reverse in 1936. Instead, a long flat metal strip represents the Johnson bar. There is some cab detail, including railings, roof vents, drip sill and arm rests, but there is no backhead detail, interior, rivets or window frames. The front

end has footboards rather than a full pilot. I would guess this is correct, because Ken probably saw it that way on the prototype.

Turning the model upside down to look at the underside, I noticed that the four drivers on the fireman's side are bronze, while their partners on the engineer's side are iron. Using a continuity tester, I discovered that the bronze drivers are insulated. Probably the tires are made of bronze and pressed on to a cast iron driver center with insulation separating them electrically. This is more than a simple observation. This is REALLY good news. What it means is that with minimal machine work, this model could work on our 2-rail system!

So here is what I suggest for this wonderful, historical donation: First we should completely 2-rail the model by removing the 3rd-rail pickups, insulating the pilot and tender trucks, and rewiring -- as needed. Second, the model currently has an open frame K&D A/C motor with a rectifier. Together, they draw so much current that the model barely moves when power is applied. We should re-power it with a can motor. Next we should put KD couplers on the tender and pilot. At this point, the model will be full operational and compatible with our layout and rolling stock. Longer term, we may want to attempt to add some detail without getting too carried away. In priority order, I would suggest the following: Cab window frames, riveted firebox overlay, a new coal pile, lost wax air pumps with associated piping, radiator piping hanging under the running boards, and injector castings under the cab/ahead of the tender. If we get this far, we can talk about more.

Other Donations

Speaking of donations, Associate Member Joe Weyrauch (O division)

also donated some O scale equipment to the Club. He generously gave them to us with no strings attached, meaning we could keep them, sell them to members, or sell them at a show or on e-Bay – whatever – and keep the proceeds. He did this knowing the precarious financial position we have been in the past few years. The items are as follows:

- 1 Pair Carl Auel Pullman Standard 6-wheel trucks, fully assembled, fully sprung and equalized. Painted light gray
- 1 Pair Carl Auel Pullman Standard 6-wheel trucks, with lost wax brass castings for the journal boxes, journal saddles and (bottom) binders. 1 truck assembled; other truck, unassembled, no missing parts, some duplicate parts.
- 3 Pair Walthers Pullman Standard 6-wheel trucks
- USRA 0-8-0 switcher by Pearce Tool Co. Assembled and painted. Runs extremely well on outside third rail, through an open frame A/C motor with rectifier.

Regarding the Carl Auel trucks: I always knew that they existed, having been manufactured in the 1930s or 1940s; but in 20+ years of attending train shows, including many O-scale only, I have never seen them offered for sale. These are beautiful and – as far as I can tell – operate like the real thing. The unassembled truck contains at least 44 parts, not counting the wheels or the various pins and rivets used for assembly. If there is a draw back, it is that they are Q-scale, meaning 17/64ths, which is the proper scale for 4ft-8 ½ inch gauge track modeled using inch-and-a-quarter O gauge track. Despite that, they are almost worth owning just to understand how Pullman trucks operate. I'm no expert, but I would guess that they were rather pricey for

their time and were as rare then as they are today. Carl Auel (pronounced ALL) was one of the pioneers and real innovators in manufacturing accurately detailed parts and accessories for the fledgling model railroad hobby.

If anyone reading this has an interest in anything listed, please contact Doug Albrecht as soon as possible.

TRACKS AHEAD VIDEO – News update – Doug Albrecht

The producers of the Tracks Ahead program on Milwaukee Public TV filmed tape footage at the BSME on August 18, 2000. [For details about the filming, refer to Jim Berg's article in the Fall 2000 issue of *The Switcher*.] We recently received a proof of the videotape accompanied by a letter asking for comments and corrections. We showed the tape at the business meeting on June 1, 2001. Doug Albrecht, Carvey Davis, and Ben McKnew were featured prominently during the 10-minute tape. The rest of the tape showed excellent views of both layouts. The only problems we noticed were that the narrator pronounced Carvey's name with an "H" and that they showed footage of the HO layout while referring to the O layout. Contact Doug Albrecht if you would like to see the tape sometime when you will be at the Club.

Bill Mitchell

Bill and I worked together for a company called Office Products Liquidators in Arbutus in late '80s. The store specialized in "scratch and dent" as well as used office furnishings. We had row after row of desks, chairs, files and all the things that go into an office setting. There was so much

merchandise that often desks and file cabinets were piled 2 and 3 high. Sometimes the layout of the store resembled a maze; where you could only get your bearings by looking up at the ceiling to which row of overhead lights you were under. One day, close to Christmas time, a woman and her small son, a boy of maybe 6 or 7, came into the store and inquired about file cabinets. I took them both back into the rows of files and explained to the mother about different types of files and the advantages and disadvantages of the different types. While the mother was pondering her choices, I asked the boy if he had already talked to Santa Claus and told him what he wanted for Christmas. He sort of mumbled a response which I really couldn't make out. Then I asked him if he had been a good boy all year. I got a qualified "yes" from the child and when I glanced at the mother, she winced and shrugged her shoulders. I asked him again if he was sure he'd been good and I added, "You know, of course, that Santa always knows if you've been bad or good." At this point a "HO, HO, HO" came floating across the aisles. The kid's eyes got big as saucers and he shot over to his mom and held her tight. Mom winked at me and smiled. Bill had obviously overheard me talking with the boy; and using his best radio voice, brought Santa briefly to life in the ears of child.

On Christmas Eve of 1995 my wife wanted me to get our son, Colin, out of the house so she could get some things done concerning his Christmas presents. In the early afternoon I took him down to the B&O Museum; one of his favorite places. We made the obligatory trip upstairs to see the HO layout and then went out into the roundhouse where Colin proceeded to climb on anything that didn't have a "Do Not Climb On The Equipment"

sign; with Dad waiting patiently. At one point we overheard some folks talking about getting on the last excursion trip (over the 1st mile of the B&O) for the day. Colin and I hurried to buy tickets and then set off to catch the train. As we went out of the roundhouse, who should we see coming the other way but Santa Claus. Santa stopped in front of us and wished us both a Merry Christmas. Then Santa said, "Colin, how would you like to ride in the locomotive?" I couldn't tell if Colin was dumbstruck because he was getting a chance to ride in a diesel engine or whether it was because Santa knew his name! Santa took Colin by the hand over to the engine (a B&O SW-9) and helped him climb the steps into the cab where he introduced us to the engineer and fireman for the trip. Several minutes later we were off. Colin was wide-eyed for the whole trip and grinning from ear to ear. After we returned to the Museum yard Santa helped Colin get off the engine and again wished us a Merry Christmas adding that he had to go and hitch up the reindeer for the upcoming night's trip. As we walked away, Colin remarked to me that it was really cool to ride in an engine and also that Santa knew his name! Of course, Santa was really Bill. Colin knew Bill from about the age of two, when I would take him to visit Bill at the store in Arbutus and Bill would amaze Colin by magically pulling quarters from Colin's ears. Bill had been doing the St. Nick shtick at the Museum for several years. Bill really wasn't chubby enough for the Santa suit and the fake beard didn't fit really well; but the eyes of my six-year-old he was Santa. After Bill died, I spoke with Colin about Bill and told him other things about Bill and my friendship with him. I mentioned that Bill was the Santa who got him the engine ride that Christmas Eve. I don't think that Colin believed me at first.

Bill was a good friend and I will miss him.

Ted Leach

The death of anyone that you know – or know of through friends or relatives – gives rise to predictable uncomfortable feelings. Aside from sadness, the other main discomfort is the reminder of your own mortality. This feeling is even more acute when the person is your peer and contemporary. I am writing this on July 21, 2001, one day after my fifty-third birthday. Bill Mitchell would have been 53 on June 28.

Bill was already a member of the BSME when I joined in 1980 or 1981. My earliest recollection is of him "holding court" sitting on the gold couch in the meeting room. His voice and laughter dominated the proceedings – traits that I would learn to recognize, accept, and appreciate over the years. About 5 or 6 years after that, he drifted away from the Club as his job and the B&O Historical Society absorbed his interest. Several times I recall seeing him working the table at train shows for Bruce Greenberg's publishing company. Sometime after he left the Club – maybe 10 years – I ran into him again at a train show where he was helping out at the B&OHS table. He expressed an interest in reactivating his membership. Not being one given to idle chatter, he did in fact rejoin soon thereafter, and the membership voted him in without the customary 3 readings. He quickly re-established his willingness to take on responsibility and as a result, the membership voted him on to the Board and the Board elected him President. He held this post until his operation in May of 2000.

I got an inkling of Bill's fragile health when a small group of us went to Steamtown for the weekend of September 18-19, 1998. We arrived Friday night and checked into our motel rooms. We gathered in Bill and Mary's room and decided to make a "beer run". Back in the room sipping our Killian's, Mary admonished Bill to go easy because the alcohol would upset his blood sugar. His advanced diabetes proved to be a factor that seriously complicated his recovery from his operation.

On the lighter side, I refreshed my recollections of that weekend by viewing the videotape I made. I recorded the trains, of course, as well as the ranger's lectures, which were actually quite interesting. But the funny part was Bill hamming it up as usual, playing the part of the roving (raving?) reporter for *The Switcher*, "on the scene in Steamtown USA".

How unfair it is, not that fate removed this friendly, gregarious man from our presence, but that – being who and what he was – he should have to suffer on so many levels through the events leading up to his death. We can hope that the peace he now enjoys in Train Heaven makes up for his last year of Hell on Earth. I, for one, wish for him that peace and feel fortunate to have known him as a friend.

Doug Albrecht

A Visit to Flyertown

by Nick Costanzi

In 1936, at the age of one year, Joseph Jones was given his first electric train. It was the "Commodore Vanderbilt" toy train set manufactured by the MARX Co. Thus began a lifetime of fascination with and collecting of electric trains.

I had visited "Flyertown" about three years ago, quite by chance. I was driving along Rt. 9 in Cape May County, NJ, and saw the road side



sign and decided to stop and take a peek. I found it interesting – fascinating in fact. But at the time, I was absorbed in many other enterprises. I forgot about it. Then, on one of our periodic jaunts to Avalon, NJ, I noticed an ad for "Flyertown" in a local paper. Yes! I remember that place – nostalgia plus!

So I returned to "Flyertown," but this time armed with pad, pencil, and camera – and with my two and one-half year old granddaughter, who loves trolleys.

Ok, so what is "Flyertown?" As I said, nostalgia plus. It is certainly an incredible collection of S gauge trains and accessories. Everything that the A.C. Gilbert Co. made or imagined is there, along with Lionel, MARX, and

others. Along three of the four walls of the 36X24 ft. room housing an amazing layout, are floor to ceiling shelves occupied by locos, cars, animated buildings and the like – coal loaders, log loaders, water towers, crossing guards – the list goes on and on – and whole train sets, including Joe's original MARX "Commodore Vanderbilt." What's more, they all operate. Nothing goes on display unless it works! I would not hazard to guess how many hundreds of cars and locos Joe has on display, but each has a story, and Joe will be happy to tell you about it – when it was first made, how many were produced, popularity of the item, in which catalogues it appeared, and so on. Upon a special shelf along one of the walls is one of the rare 1958 American Flyer 13 car "Yard King Special" train sets. This set was touted by A.C. Gilbert in its 1958 American Flyer catalogue as "the longest train set in the world." It is but one of the treasures in Joe's collection. On another shelf, on another wall, is the oldest American Flyer issue – a 1947 vintage Reading switcher. But Joe also has some S gauge Lionel as well as a few very fine pieces of S Helper equipment, including a chuffing, smoking, model of the Pennsy K4s No. 3768 in its Raymond Loewy streamlining. Beautiful!



In the midst of all this, there is the beautiful layout – a three level chocolate layer cake right out of the American Flyer Christmas catalogue that we all spent hours and hours pouring over, turning each page over and over, until the pages began to part at the folds, each time carefully and intently looking at every drawing, every picture, and reading every word, as if by studying so intently, somehow, magically, this car, that loco, would appear on Christmas morning.



They're all there, the trains, the trolleys, the stations the crossing guards, the beacons, the coal loaders and block signals – and the smoke, yes the smoke, coming from a vintage 50-year-old NYC Mohawk!

Joe has built his layout with three independent levels, capable of keeping seven trains running simultaneously. Oh yes, did I mention that all – that's right *all* – the turnouts and all the power packs (remember when we called them transformers) are original American Flyer! And if that is not



enough, along the peninsula layout are a variety of buttons that operate everything from cattle pens to ice skaters. Lots of animation, lots of activity, lots of memories, and lots of fun – and trolleys too!

With trains to watch, buttons to push, and lots of memories to gather, “Flyertown” is a wonderful experience, but 20 minutes North of Cape May in Clermont, NJ.

O Division news

The excavation of the HO Division's cityscape has given the O Division an opportunity to do some track maintenance at the north (Piedmont) end of the layout where the loops of track pass through the dividing wall into and under the HO layout space. These tracks are probably seeing the light of day for the first time since 1952 or 1953 when our two layouts were first built. Beginning with the outer-most loop, the corresponding block numbers are 3, 3A, 7A, and 7.

A preliminary assessment using a track gauge revealed that our track wavers between too tight and too broad, with stretches of the correct gauge in between. [This could have been a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to use the word “undulation” in a sentence.] Track 3 (outermost) seems to be worse than 3A. 7A and 7 have not been checked yet. Another shortcoming is that every other tie is missing from parts of the curves. Visually, this is not a serious drawback, since the public cannot see these tracks. Operationally, it could be a problem to keep these curved tracks in gauge if there are not enough opportunities (i.e., ties) to spike the rails. Given the extreme temperature and humidity fluctuations at the Club, this is likely a very real problem.

Doug Albrecht began the tedious task of pulling and pushing spikes on Track 3. He filled in the gaps with new ties and realigned the rails by driving spikes into the new ties, thus avoiding any weaknesses and spike

holes in the older ties. So far, he has completed about 2/3rds of 3A and half of 3 – in terms of what he can reach easily from the excavation site. We need to finish this work soon before the HO Division covers over this site for another 48 years. Any other O Division member who wants to lend a hand is welcome to do so. He will come away with a new respect for Carvey Davis's trackwork skills.

Shov'lin' Coal

Those of us who have been down to the Club lately have noticed that the “HO” side looks as if Hugo came through again, and this time stayed for dinner. Pieces of lumber, track, plaster, buildings, spikes, and wires are scattered everywhere. Bins and boxes of torn, broken, and discarded “stuff” lay about. If you're there on a night that Kevin Hunter is manning the sawsall or the pneumatic nail gun, the scene is somewhat reminiscent of classic B movie “mad scientist” at work. But amongst all this chaos, progress is made. New track has been laid for both the mains and the leads to Wilson Yard, thanks to the efforts of Ed Kroart and Ben and Patrick McKnew. In addition, Ed is relaying the interurban, and the throats on both ends of the station have been reworked extensively. The list of what is now working that has not worked, or worked poorly, for some 20 years is extensive. Real progress, no doubt about it.

“But wait, there is more!” What is more, is more members participating. And what would be more still, would be those of you who have not been down to the club lately to join us. Come and be a sidewalk superintendent if you like, or if you feel inclined, pick up a tool and lend your talent – not just on the HO side either. As Doug mentioned in the O

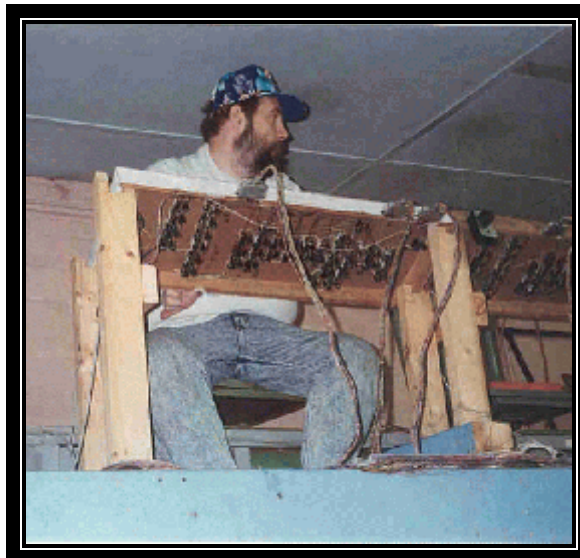
Division report, there is work being done, and work to do, on the O scale side as well.

Sure, we're going to have to move – someday. But who knows when? Meanwhile, new life is being breathed into the layouts and the Club itself. Come down and see. August 4, the open house for the LOTS, between 11 and 4, would be a good time. Also, remember that the Club is open on the first, third, and fifth (if there is one) Friday evenings, 7:30 to 10, and alternate Sundays, 1 to 5. See you there!

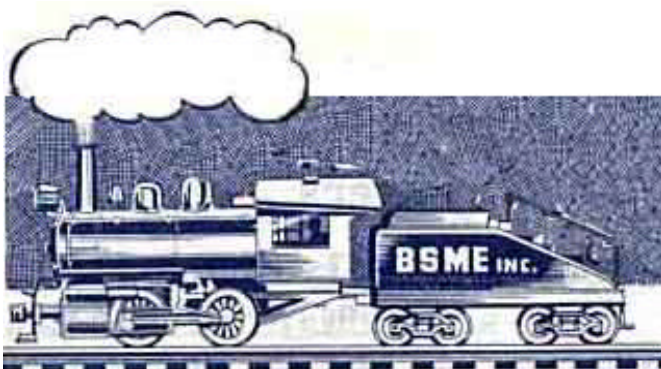
Nick Costanzi

Editor's note: If you would like to receive the SWITCHER via e-mail – member or non member – please send me an e-mail to that effect at

facjec@flash.net. Also, the SWITCHER can be downloaded or read on-line at the BSME website: www.modelengineers.com.



Bill Mitchell
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