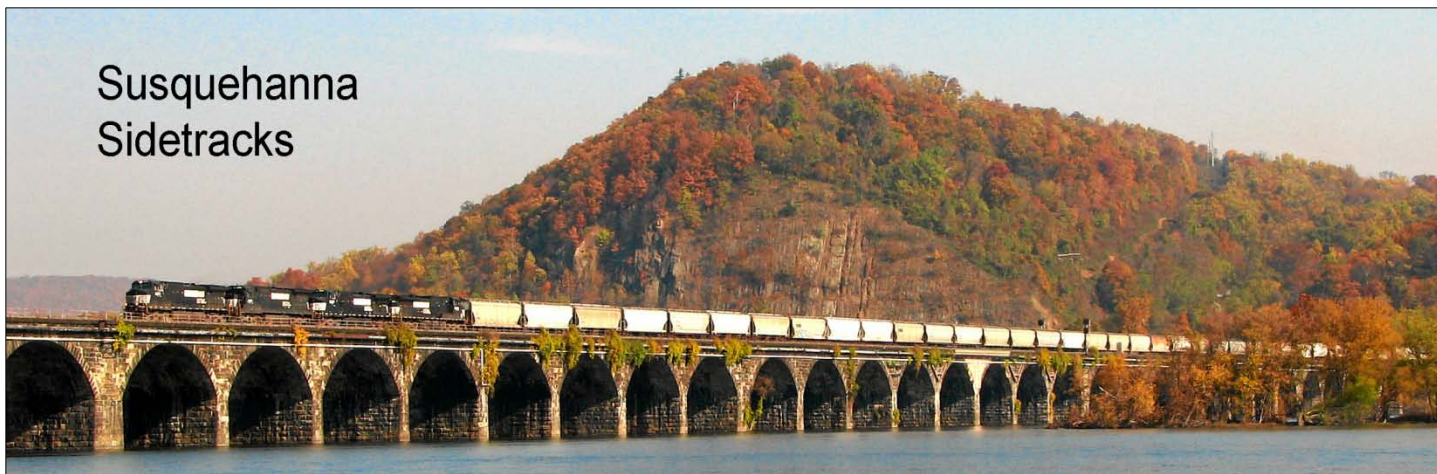


Susquehanna Sidetracks



Official Publication of the Susquehanna Division 11 of the Mid-Eastern Region of the National Model Railroad Association
<http://www.susquehannamra.org> April 2010 Volume 18 Issue 1

2010 Susquehanna Division 11 Events

Saturday, May 22, 2010, at 1 PM. MER general contest chairman Martin Brechbiel will present 2 clinics on judging contest models using AP guidelines. The first will be oriented towards becoming a judge and the second will be oriented towards modelers entering contests. The clinics will be at one of two locations, depending on the number of interested members, in the York-Harrisburg area. **YOU MUST REGISTER FOR THIS EVENT IN ADVANCE.** Register by emailing Jeff Warner at jwarner@susquehannamra.org or by calling (717) 932-9929 between 10 AM and 9 PM. If you call, make sure you leave a return number so I can contact you with the location of the event. More information on the clinics can be found on page 3 of this newsletter.

Saturday, June 5, 2010 at 9:30 AM. We will host a joint meet with the Chesapeake division with morning clinics at the Camp Hill Giant Food Store and afternoon open houses. More details will be presented in a future issue, but there will be two or three clinics and tentatively six open houses.

Saturday, Sept 25, 2010 at 9:30 AM. We will host a joint meet with the Philadelphia division with two morning clinics and afternoon open houses in the Allentown area. More details will be presented in a future issue.

Friday, October 1, 2010, and Saturday, October 2, 2010. We will co-host with the OPSIG the Lehigh-Susquehanna Operations Weekend 2 (LSOPS 2). This will give members and visitors a chance to operate some of the fine layouts found in the division, with a group in the Lehigh Valley (Allentown area) and a group in the Susquehanna Valley (York-Harrisburg area). No experience will be required to participate, but you will need to register for the event. More details will follow in a future issue, including how to register.

Banner photo courtesy of Christopher Muller, SteamPhotos.com

Susquehanna Sidetracks

<http://www.susquehannamra.org>

Superintendent/Editor/Webmaster

Jeff Warner

605 Hill Point Drive

Etters, PA 17319

(717) 932-9929

jwarner@susquehannamra.org

Assistant Superintendent

John Frantz

1126 Hanover Road

York, PA 17408

(717) 324-9449

jfrantz@susquehannamra.org

Chief Clerk

Paul Tice

6710 Moul Road

Thomasville, PA 17364

(717) 225-1688

ptice@susquehannamra.org

Director/Achievement Program Chairman

Alan Frame

2430 Opal Road

York, PA 17404

(717) 767-4998

aframe@susquehannamra.org

Director

Howard Oakes

301 Moulstown Road

Abbottstown, PA 17301

(717) 632-5990

hoakes@susquehannamra.org

Director

Wayne Betty

936 Wood Street

Mount Joy, PA 17552

(717) 653-9537

wbetty@susquehannamra.org

Previous Superintendent

Scott Turner

24 Yankee Drive

Mount Holly Springs, PA 17065

(717) 914-1336

sturner@susquehannamra.org

Division 11 Happenings

Jeff Warner

Hello again, and I'm glad to say we are back to the time of the year when we can plan division events. The front page of this newsletter lists four division events, and we will likely add at least one more later. I held up publishing the newsletter for these four to become finalized, but they finally came together. I will put out another newsletter in late April or early May with details for the June 5 event.

This issue also includes a call for nominations (page 5) for the offices of Superintendent, Assistant Superintendent, and Chief Clerk. Per division by-laws, these three offices will be elected this year to serve a two-year term.

I was very, very surprised when I heard that a good friend of mine, Division 11 member James Mattern had taken first place in the locomotives category at last year's convention in Hagerstown (he later told me he was just as surprised as I was!). After congratulating James (OK, first I asked him who made the models for him), I asked him to write an article on his experiences to be included in the division newsletter. You'll find the article on page 4 of this newsletter. It is a great success story about someone with no prior contest or AP experience.

Per our new advertising policy, you will notice that there are two advertisements at the back of this newsletter. PLEASE let these people know you saw the ads here and that their money was well spent. Their support will help off-set the costs of printing and mailing the newsletter, with any surplus going into the general fund. Please support them as they are helping to support us.

We are still waiting to hear from the IRS on the 501(c)(3) status...but they did cash our check...

Finally, I want to remind everyone that if you are reading this, but are NOT on the email list for notification of division events, please send me an e-mail and I will add you to this FREE list. Only division officers may send to the list, so you will not receive ANY junk mail or SPAM by signing up. Also, several members changed ISP's (providers) and didn't send me the updated email address. So, please send me any changes or updates.

MER Judging Clinic by Martin Brechbiel MER General Contest Chairman

As you might remember from a past issue of The Local, I stated that I would be initiating a required training regimen for all current and future Judges that would be made available to all members and Divisions this calendar year. A comprehensive program for training Judges for the AP program and Contest Room across the MER region that travels to all of the Divisions was approved by the MER Board of Directors. So, now that opportunity is coming to the Susquehanna Division!

This program includes a series of presentations and lectures accompanied by some hands-on practice sessions. The intention is to achieve uniformity, consistency, and to provide a level playing field for all modelers and entrants participating in the AP program and thus also generate trained and certified Judges for the entire MER Region. It's clear that we have a limited number of experienced Judges that are also well knowledgeable of the judging guidelines, and just what the really in those same guidelines. We'll review every category of judging, what is and is not in the guidelines, what the Judges look for and what they are supposed to ignore(!), and hopefully dispel more than a few myths. Your attendance will qualify you for apprenticeship in judging at the MER 2010 convention, September 30 - October 3, in Princeton, NJ where you'll be teamed up with an established Judge for the day. These sessions will serve as entry points for the certification of all Judges for the MER such that we can all have confidence in both the fairness and uniformity of Judging and the AP program across the MER not only short-term, but for the future of our region.

A complementary clinic/program for modelers that want to participate in the AP program and enter their models for judging in contest rooms is also part of this package deal. Paperwork & forms are perceived as an impediment to entering models into the Contest Room. As has been noted before, Judges only have ~7-9 minutes per category per model. Having the "right stuff" on your paperwork can only help you, and I want you to get those Merit Awards! One thing we're going to try to do is to establish a "Help Desk" to provide guidance to entrants with their paperwork at the MER Convention to have someone read over your forms, make constructive suggestions, etc. This is not to "pre-Judge" entries or to prepare the paperwork for others. I'm also making a number of operational changes to the MER Contest Room regarding overcrowding, excessive noise, and safe operations in general which we can also talk about since good ideas are always appreciated. I've also initiated a new MER Yahoo Groups – the MER Mailbag -- <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/MERMailbag/> to replace the prior site. I encourage you all to visit, join, and make use of the site. If you have any questions, I'm generally available on-line for far too many hours per day ☐ martinwb@verizon.net Hope to see you on the 22nd of May!

Contest Experience Surprise by James A. Mattern



I studied the judging section of the achievement program to see how the model would be judged. I took a few close-ups with my digital camera to see how many defects I could see. I started to cringe a bit examining the photos. With so many defects from repairs, construction defects, and normal handling of the locomotive over its years of service on the Stiegel Valley (Model railroad club located in Manheim, Pa), I had some apprehension about entering. I scored my model based off the AP judging guidelines and thought it would fall in the range of seventy five to eighty five points. However, I've never judged a model contest or entered one. I knew all the problems and shortcomings, but it was time to really see what others thought of my work. I also wanted to gain insight on how I could improve my modeling skills, so I began filling out the necessary paper work to enter the contest.

I started writing down what I did for construction and found that I had filled almost three pages of information down. With All the photos and drawings I was going to use, it was about ten pages of information. I knew I had to condense it down, after all the judges are not just looking at my entry they're looking at all the entries. To be courteous to others, I broke the information down by the sections on NMRA form 902 and some of it was omitted. I had condensed it down to about a page of written

material with enough photos and to convey how I followed the prototype and built the model. I also followed what Norman Frowley, MMR, wrote in the September 2009 issue of SCALE RAILS and organized everything into a small three ring binder. It was time to enter the contest.

I got up on a cold and wet day and made the trek from Lebanon to Hagerstown. When I got to the convention, I found things to be warm and friendly. After registering, I headed for the contest room. I was asked a couple of questions, which got the model judged for two additional awards, Clyde Gerald Kit-Bash Award, and The Philadelphia New Modeler. I thought O.K. this would increase my chances of achieving something for my effort. I would visit the contest room over the course of the day to see what else was being entered. Chuck Hladik's beautiful and massive O scale Rutland RS-3 arrived first. I thought wow! No glue marks or any visible construction marks. It was one pristine RS-3. Later in the day P.J. Mattson critters showed up. I forget how many he did enter, but the construction was near perfect on all of them. Since construction carried the most points (forty), I thought one of the critters would be the winner. I put the contest in the back of my mind and enjoyed attending the clinics, and waited till before the banquet to see how I did. I was pleasantly surprised when I checked my score of eighty-nine, four more points than I had given myself after studying the photos. What amazed me more is when I checked Chuck Hladik's, and P.J. Mattson's scores mine was the highest. It was a surreal moment, I think I checked the scores three or four times till it sank in that I won, but even more surprises were coming.

The awards were given out for the first place winners in their respective categories, and I accepted for the diesel locomotive. I sat admiring my plaque, when they announced the Philadelphia New Modeler Award. After receiving this award, I started heading back to my seat. Martin Brechbiel said, "Wait a minute James, I have another one for you." I had another surreal moment and wanted to pinch myself to make sure I wasn't dreaming. I then turn around and accepted the Clyde Gerald Kit-Bash Award. I was overwhelmed and honored by all the awards. Although the model wasn't perfect in my eyes it was a very good model to others. Now that I know what the judges are looking for I can improve upon my modeling skills, and start pursuing my MMR.

Susquehanna Division 11 Officer Nominations

Per division by-laws, the positions of Superintendent, Assistant Superintendent, and Chief Clerk are open for the term of July 1, 2010 to June 30, 2012. All nominees MUST be NMRA members residing in the Susquehanna Division 11. You may nominate yourself for any position. Please send nominations to jwarner@susquehannanmra.org or call (717) 932-9929 between 10 AM and 9 PM. Nominees will be voted upon in a future edition of Susquehanna Sidetracks.



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