



# UP THE HOLLER

Newsletter of Division 9  
THE COAL DIVISION  
Mid Central Region NMRA  
December 2013



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## HEAD OF THE HOLLER Bob Weinheimer MMR

The Bluefield meeting was well attended although a pall of sadness muted the event after hearing of the passing of Charlie Venable only hours before the start of the train show. Charlie was, of course, a member of the NMRA and the Coal Division. He was also a member of the Pocahontas Chapter of the National Railroad Historical Society and the organizer of many of its activities including the train show. It is a credit to Charlie's organizational skills that the train show continued smoothly without him. Dan Mulhearn has much more to say about Charlie in his "My Word" column on page 3

At the meeting I mentioned that Matt Goodman from Division 6 in Columbus had created a video of Mark Maynard's layout during our visit to Portsmouth in September. That video has been uploaded to YouTube and can be seen at [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GS6xw2XvD\\_E](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GS6xw2XvD_E).

The December meeting will be back at the St. Albans Depot, Paul Lapointe will present his clinic on operating a steel mill. From what I have read elsewhere this clinic was well received at a steel mill modeling meeting in Kent, OH in August. The raffle will return from its short hiatus and the contest should be interesting as well.

Time is running short in our election process. If you want to run for Superintendent or Assistant Superintendent see Bill Wadsworth. Nominations from the floor can take place at the January meeting after which nominations will close; the mailed ballot process will then begin.

I will close by extending my best wishes for a Merry Christmas, Happy New Year, and generally joyous holiday season. May your travels be safe and your stockings full of coal for live hopper car loads.

## MEETING NOTICE

The next Coal Division meeting will be Saturday December 12 at the St. Albans Depot, Fourth Street and Fourth Avenue, St. Albans, WV. The clinic will be presented by Paul Lapointe, the title is "Operating a Model Steel Mill: Ore and Iron". The clinic is in two parts: Ore: Set up realistic shipments of raw materials to a blast furnace ore yard using a loads-in, empties-out layout design with little or no paperwork. Iron: Switch the Walthers blast furnace slag and hot metal bottle cars using removable loads and an event-driven jobs list. The contest will be Modeler's Choice show us anything that you didn't bring earlier in the year or didn't fit any of the previous contest categories. The raffle returns so you should come prepared to grab a goodie. The meeting starts at 2 PM with a social hour at 1 PM.

## FROM THE OFFICE DOWN THE HALL

### Gary J. Burdette MMR

The fall Train Show Season is in full swing. I received a schedule recently that listed dozens of events from the Atlantic coast to the Mississippi River. Many of us look forward to attending as many of these gatherings as we can to see the train displays, pick up deals, see friends, and renew old acquaintances. Perhaps, a favorite for the guys in the Coal Division is the annual show in Bluefield, W.Va.

As the time approached, several of us looked ahead with anticipation. We were anxious to attend a great event, conduct our monthly business meeting in a different venue, and visit/support our buddies from the area who are faithful in attending the typical division meetings at the St. Albans depot, a good two hour drive for them.

We communicated, planned, and ventured to the extreme eastern reaches of our division by caravan on a beautiful Saturday morning.

When we arrived, we went straight to the main table to pay our admission and begin the adventure. Kelley Massie was at the booth as we pretended we were a family, receiving special rates, with Dennis in the role of “dad” and Bob Mershimer. and I as the “boys.” Of course, we were busted, but the fun had started.

Entering the main arena, we saw the many displays and vendors. “Where to begin,” is always the question. I slipped down the side aisle, catching a look at a few displays, as I wanted to head over to the second room to see our NMRA booth and the modular railroad operated by the local club and manned by our friends Charlie Venable and Dan Mulhearn. Upon entering, I expected to see a tall, slender gentleman with his N&W attire running the layout. No Charlie. I figured he was around fixing something. So, I went on over to our table, visiting Bill Bartley at the Amtrak booth on my way.

Arriving at the Coal Division set up, I noticed a strange look on, our superintendent, Bob Weinheimer’s face. He informed me that Charlie had passed that morning. The old saying that the “wind was knocked out of me” was ever so true. The complexion of the entire day changed in that instant.

Later, when we gathered for our meeting, Kelley offered up some comforting words. He told us how much Charlie loved our group. He loved his friends and family. Because he was so involved with the show, they only considered cancelling it for a moment, then, realized that his dedication and hard work was part of the success the

event has always enjoyed. He noted Charlie could fix your refrigerator, your automobile, and your small scale locomotive.

This was evidenced through the clinic Charlie presented on the division and regional levels concerning the wiring of the Oregon brand signals. I was reminded of how delicate the work was. I remembered him in the corner at the Dayton MCR convention working on the laser-cut church during a Modeling with the Masters clinic. He assembled it with ease and skill and with a big smile on his face. He was an artist. A couple of years ago several of us judged one of his modules, for Master Builder-Scenery certification, at the Dunbar Train Show. The layout, structures, terrain, and other items were excellent. He had many little techniques with which he accomplished this task. One was the use of the sedum blossom to make his trees.

A number of us enjoyed an informal discussion on this subject that Charlie presented during the show a couple of years back. We sat around him as he distributed the hand out telling about the plant so typical in a flower garden and a sample of the “weed” he fished out of a big trash bag. He described painting the stalk, then gluing on the Woodland Scenics ground foam. When we left, we all knew about a simple process by which we could make realistic trees. When Dennis went home, he found that his wife had dozens of “trees” in her garden. For months, at various meetings, bags of the “sticks” would magically appear for all who needed them.

On the way home, Dennis and I talked about that “mini-clinic” that was so informal, yet so informative. Dennis went “crazy” making trees which populate and give life to his layout. There was no PowerPoint or major presentation, just a cluster of modelers gathered around our friend as he showed us how he did something to improve his model railroad. Charlie’s easy-going manner set the tone for this little sit-down, and may have been the ground work for more of this type of presentation/discussion. A couple of months back, Bob Osburn arranged us around a table down the center of the room and sent examples of his animated models down the line in a manner similar to the clinic mentioned above. Everyone was gathered in a circle (sort of) and could lay hands and eyes on the object. In both cases, things were “up close and personal”.

Charlie just did things with no fanfare. I can’t think of a better way to remember him than to adapt some of our clinic time to this

Continued on page 3

Continued from page 2 informal, matter-of-fact style. We could put the table in the middle where we can see things, gather around, and even share in the discussion. One topic might be track cleaning. Several members could bring in their favorite track cleaning car, fluid, scouring pad, and tips for a general discussion. We could talk about the pros and cons of each, and have fun learning and sharing in the process. It was noted how being shown something and being able to try it is so helpful. As Charlie did things, so might we.

Though saddened at our loss, I still enjoyed the show for I

spent time talking to many friends. Again, at the recent show in Huntington, I spoke with those I see only once a year and renewed some acquaintances (and offered an invite to the depot) who were former Coal Division members. The people are more and more important to me as time passes as I know was Charlie's philosophy as well.

In my mind's eye I can see Charlie extending a firm handshake and warm smile, saying "hello," and showing he was truly glad to see you. So, I will reciprocate, saying "Good-bye my friend, I was privileged to have known you!"

## RAFFLE REPORT

**Paul Lapointe**

After skipping the Bluefield Train Show in November, the raffle is back in St. Albans for the December meeting!

We've got a mixed bag of books, kits, and other items to raffle off and we're always looking for more donations!

## MY WORD

**Dan Mulhearn, Editor**

Division 9 has lost a good man, a good modeler, a good friend. Charlie Venable spent all day Friday, November 8<sup>th</sup>, along with his fellow members of the Pocahontas Chapter NRHS, setting up our 25<sup>th</sup> annual Bluefield Train Show. The show was one of the most important things in Charlie's life; after his Church and his family. No one knows the months of planning and doing that Charlie put into each show; he was literally the spark plug that made it happen. Friday night Charlie went home to bed after everything was in readiness and he never woke up Saturday morning.

Over the thirteen years I have known him, Charlie had become my very best friend. We rode together to meetings, conventions, operating sessions for literally thousands of miles. I will miss our laughter as we talked about trains, modeling, politics, religion, and generally solved all the problems of the world. In all that time I never heard a vulgar word out of him; nor did I ever hear him bad mouth anyone. I will miss his regular phone calls filling me in on what's going on in our hobby. I will miss sitting in Hardees on Bluefield Avenue, me with my coffee and

him with his Coke, watching NS coming and going out of Bluefield.

Charlie was an excellent modeler. He built his own five Covington HO modules as well as the big curve modules and several modules of other members. He was an excellent electrician; setting up the working signal system on his modules as well as setting up the Digitrax DCC system which controlled our modules. He was an artist; painting many of the backdrops used on our modules. Charlie and I became acquainted through our mutual hobby; but he grew to be my best friend not because of the hobby but because of the man he was. Charlie was a very devoted Christian, a husband, a father, and grandfather. Charlie has had a great effect on my life and his loss has led me to deep thinking about my priorities in life. I would urge each of us to deal with this loss by treasuring our families and friends while we have them.

I want to thank Bob Weinheimer and Gary Burdette for representing the Division at Charlie's funeral and John Harris for the beautiful floral piece.

**NMRA MCR DIVISION 9**  
***THE COAL DIVISION***  
**November 9 2013 Meeting Minutes**  
**Bluefield, WV**

Superintendent Bob Weinheimer called the meeting to order welcoming visitor Tom Hawkin from the Mid Eastern Region.

Tony Puccini moved to approve the previous meeting minutes as posted in the recent newsletter. Bill Wadsworth seconded it.

Kelley Massey, President of the Pocahontas Chapter of the National Historical Railroad Association, welcomed us to their 25<sup>th</sup> Annual Show.

On a sad note, Kelley announced the passing of NRHS Pocahontas Chapter Member and Division 9 Member, Charlie Venerable earlier in the morning. Thoughts and prayers were expressed for his family and Charlie's widow, Brenda. Charlie was recognized for his contribution to the Bluefield Show and his friendship to all fellow model railroaders.

Bob thanked Kelley and the Bluefield Show organizers for their hospitality. Bob also announced that Herb Parsons brother had also recently passed away.

In news from NMRA Headquarters, the Headquarters building had recently been sold. The facility constructed in 1983 was deemed to be expendable after the merger with the San Diego Museum and the relocation of the archives to the new facility in San Diego. The Tennessee Museum bought the old headquarters building. Additional information is included on the NMRA Website.

Bob announced that a video of Mark Maynard's layout in Portsmouth, Ohio has been posted on YouTube. Additionally, the recently published Walthers Catalog features photographs of Paul Lapointe's layout in Parkersburg.

The latest King Pin issue should be available soon. As editor, Bob has been working to get it published and available as soon as possible.

As the Mid Central Region will be hosting the National Convention, there will be no Mid Central Region Convention in 2014. Bob welcomed all members to attend the Board of Directors Meeting of the Mid Central Region. A joint Division 9 and Division 6 meeting will be held the 2<sup>nd</sup> Saturday in June.

Our "Steel is King" day has been moved from the 2<sup>nd</sup> Saturday in May to the 1<sup>st</sup> Saturday to avoid conflict with Mother's Day.

Assistant Superintendent Gary Burdette presented report on the C&O Depot and is preparing a handout "What can we do" to help foster the friendship with the stakeholders at the Depot. Gary reported that the New River train turnout went well and continues to provide educational opportunities. In a tongue in cheek moment, he noted that wearing a C&O uniform seemed to provide a "chick magnet" opportunity. He acknowledged, however, his wife was not impressed.

Bob Weinheimer reported on achievement and noted that nothing is new in the way of certificates to present; however, noted that Bob Osburn was close to making a submission and Paul Lapointe was working on documentation for scenery.

Newsletter Chairman was unavailable; however it was noted that Dennis McGeeney is presently working on an article for perhaps the next newsletter.

Clinics for the near future are yet to be announced; however, Gary is working on a what to do with the C&O St. Albans station and Paul Lapointe is projected to be the presenter for the December meeting.

John Harris reported membership numbers are down slightly and acknowledged that several memberships had recently expired. John was contacting each privately to remind them of their status. John also announced he had received two (2) requests for name tags and would be providing temporary badges prior to placing an order. Anyone else needing additional name tags were to contact John as soon as possible so as to not hold up order.

Bob announced that last month's raffle brought in \$36. There would be no raffle this month due to the show; however, next month's raffle will continue at the Depot. Members were encouraged to consider buying items at the Bluefield Show and donating them for future raffles.

Nominating Chairman Bill Wadsworth noted that he is presently putting together a slate of interested parties to serve for the two (2) elected positions presently set to expire. Nominations for Superintendent and Assistant Superintendent should be forwarded to Bill. Bill anticipates preparing ballots for the January meeting.

Old Business: No old business needed to be addressed.

New Business: No new business items were noted.

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**Announcements:**

Next meeting scheduled for St. Albans Depot on 12/14/13.

The contest for next month will be modeler's choice.

With no further business, Bill Wadsworth made motion for adjournment with Tony Puccini seconding.

Following the meeting, modelers providing entries for the contest presented their submission.

- Gary Burdette provided a kit bashed Jeep.

- Paul Lapointe presented a model of a tractor.
- Larry Richards provided a model of three (3) modified Model T kits as well as a Mac Truck and Trailer Combination.

Voting was close but Larry Richards' Tractor Trailer won the contest by a one vote margin.

Minutes respectfully presented by John Harris, on behalf of the Division Clerk.

### NEWSLETTER DEADLINES

The goal of the newsletter team is to have this document reach you by email or snail mail at least one week prior to our meetings. We typically do the layout work the Wednesday 10 days before the meeting with distribution Thursday or Friday. For this to happen reliably, we need all items for publication by the Monday 12 days prior to the meeting. If we don't get it on time we can't print it. Please help us give you the most up to date information possible. Here are the deadlines for the next few issues.

January	December 30
February	January 27
March	February 24
April	March 31
May	April 28
June	June 2
July	June 30
August	July 28

### MCR Kingpin Bob Weinheimer, Editor

The first issue of the new Kingpin, the Mid Central Region newsletter, was sent out in early November. It was emailed November 2 via a service called Mail Chimp to every MCR member of record on October 31 who had an email address on file with NMRA Headquarters. It was snail mailed to members who had previously indicated an interest in receiving it. There was some overlap in those lists, we will work to eliminate that in the future.

If you did not receive the email version, that means you did not have a valid and correctly formatted email address on file at NMRA HQ. Several email addresses were incorrectly formatted and about 30 emails bounced but almost 1,000 emails were successfully delivered. Mail Chimp tells

me that only about 40% of the members to whom it was emailed actually opened the email; I was hoping more members would read it.

Please help us keep the cost of the Kingpin low by making sure your email address is correctly on record at HMRA HQ. You can do this by visiting [www.nmra.org/member/content/member-info-update](http://www.nmra.org/member/content/member-info-update)

In the meantime, you can read the Kingpin at <http://archive.midcentral-region-nmra.org/NewsLetterFold/Div00NL.html>

### LEAVING THE HOBBY SALE

This is not the sort of thing we like to see but former Coal Division member Greg Foster is leaving the hobby and is selling his goodies. Greg tells us the items for sale include all type of cars, some turnouts (curved and straight), buildings, scenery material, some older engines with and w/o sound, and even the bench work. It will all be at a fair

price. Greg will be around through the holidays, please call Greg at 304-736-6688 or 304-963-0327 to arrange a visit. In the meantime, photos of Greg's layout can be seen at <http://www.coaldivision.org/ovsd.html>. We wish Greg the best in his post model railroading activities.

**NMRA INFONET**  
**Tom Draper**

Welcome to the InfoNet-News For November, 2013

**Message from Dave Thornton, NMRA VP  
of Administration:**

**The NMRA in Europe**

There is ground breaking news about the NMRA coming from continental Europe. An effort is underway by a number of continental European NMRA members to establish a new NMRA region in continental Europe. This would be a separate region from the long established British Region. We have had a number of NMRA members in Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Italy, Sweden, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Norway, Russia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, and Sweden for a long time. There were a total of 101 as of June 30, 2013. I have had the opportunity to meet a number of them at several different NMRA national conventions over the last several years.

Largely due to the efforts of former Atlantic District Director Nobby Clarke, from the British Region, a core group of continental European model railroaders has been formed and they are in the process of petitioning the NMRA Board of Directors to form a European Region of the NMRA. This would form the 18<sup>th</sup> region in the NMRA and the third overseas region.

The NMRA has had a long standing relationship with MOROP, the European equivalent of the NMRA. Standards and technical information have been shared. You might not know, but DCC that we know today, originated in Europe by Lenz, and it was shared with the NMRA. Over the last dozen years or so, a number of NMRA officers have traveled to Germany to attend the Nuremburg Toy Show and represent the NMRA. Model railroading is a very popular hobby in Europe, maybe even more so than it is in North America. Many of the major world wide model railroad equipment and supply manufacturers are located in Europe.

Model railroading knows no borders. The trains in each country may differ, but the enthusiasm for railroads and model railroading is the same everywhere. It may be surprising to many North American members, but US railroads are modeled by many outside of North America. Conversely, we have a number of NMRA members in North America that model overseas prototypes. The NMRA has a significant percentage of it's current membership outside of the United States. As of June 30, 2013, there were 19,118 NMRA members living in 36 countries.

16,561, or 86.6%, are from the US. 1142 from Canada, 637 from Australia, 26 from New Zealand, 564 from England, 24 from Scotland, 14 from Wales, 6 from Northern Ireland, and 23 from Japan.

**Build A Memory Program**

As I write this, our "Build A Memory®" pilot program looks to be a success which we hope to expand next year into a broader effort. "Indeed, our new Marketing Department has been stellar in promoting the NMRA," Alan Anderson, NMRA Fund Raising Manager, writes.

Due to some unforeseen circumstances and timing challenges we have to suspend this year's (2013) Build A Memory® project. We will refocus our attention on this program during the 2014 National Convention in Cleveland for a NMRRM launch in 2014. We can however continue with three pilot projects to achieve key learnings in order to make next years roll out less encumbered. This years pilot programs will be the PSR Region in LA market, the PCR in Bay market, and the PNR in Seattle market. These test markets are being held in conjunction with other model railroad events (PCR & PNR with Great TrainExpos and PSR at Orange Empire Railroad Museum Thomas the Tank Engine Weekend)

I do ask the following of our other Division partners, the NMRA National would like to retain the name use "Build A Memory®" solely for the project rollout next year. I ask this because you may wish to continue with your own divisional effort on a "BAM" type of project. If you need any consultation in branding a project please feel free to contact me and I will lend a hand creatively.

I hope to have you all involved next year as I felt we were making great collective strides in this event.

Thank you  
Page Martin  
Director of Marketing  
National Model Railroad Association

*If you have any questions or comments about any of the above, please send them directly to a Director or Officer. You'll find those addresses at [www.nmra.org](http://www.nmra.org) on in the NMRA Magazine.*

Regards,

Tom Draper – HLM, DSA, FA  
Director – Support Services

## GOING HOME

### Dennis McGeeney

#### Reading Locomotive Engineer

Recently I planned a trip from my home in Summersville, WV to the anthracite coal fields where I was born, raised and worked as a Reading Lines and Conrail locomotive engineer. On the way there was a stop at the more than five mile long yard and locomotive shops at the CSX hub of Cumberland, MD. Next was a trip on the Western Maryland Scenic RR along with a visit to their facilities at the former Western Maryland shops at Ridgeway, WV. Steam and diesel locomotive as well as rolling stock maintenance is done at these shops.

My journey progressed to Enola, PA. on the banks of the Susquehanna River to observe Norfolk Southern's large yard and locomotive facility. This yard was a big hub for Conrail prior to the NS takeover. The day was completed at Bethlehem, PA as a guest of my good friend and fellow Conrail engineer, John McNevin. A good night's rest followed a genuine Philly cheese steak sandwich.

The next morning began a week of railroad fun for John and me. Our first visit was to the Reading Lines Museum at Hamburg, PA; a wonderful place with over 85 pieces of rolling stock. One of the locomotives on display (photo 7) was one I had run many times and it brought back wonderful memories. On display were locomotives, Budd cars, cabooses, rolling stock, a 250 ton wreck crane and indoors a great display of railroad memorabilia. Only two miles down the road at Port Clinton, PA is the headquarters of the Reading & Northern RR on property of the former Reading Lines. This is quite a place to see with operable steam locomotives, refurbished passenger cars including a full length dome car, a loco shop, a car shop, turntable and roundhouse.

A visit to a double decked HO scale model railroad depicting the Allentown, PA area where I worked for Conrail was on the next day's agenda. This layout, located in Bethlehem, PA, was featured in the September 2013 issue of *Model Railroader* in a six page article. The day was topped off by a wonderful meal prepared by my friend's wife, Fran.

The following morning found us in Schuylkill Haven, PA, the town where I grew up. After paying my respects at my parent's gravesite we looked over the Reading Lines passenger station in town. It is now the town hall and police station. We then drove the Mine Hill Yard to Cressona, PA; the town of my birth. We took a tour of the

Yuengling Brewery which is the oldest in the United States opening in 1829. The brewery survived prohibition by making ice cream.

Another day found us at Minersville, PA to see Jersey Central #113, an ALCO steam locomotive produced at Schenectady NY in June of 1923. This locomotive was rebuilt over a fifteen year period and recently ran an excursion from Minersville to Schuylkill Haven and return. The rest of the day was spent driving around the anthracite coal area of the old Reading Shamokin Division that I worked as an engineer. One of the things we saw was a Marion drag line stripping for coal. Near Frackville, PA is the St. Nicholas Coal Breaker which was the largest anthracite coal breaker. It is now being torn down, but I have a picture of it when it was open. I shoved and pulled many a car in and out of this breaker in my Reading days.

Ashland, PA was our next day's destination; where we visited the underground anthracite coal mine. The mine cars took us about a mile and a half underground and we saw all the coal veins including the 50 to 200 foot thick Mammoth Vein. From Ashland we traveled to the National Park Service Steamtown facility at Scranton. This is a place where you could spend a week. On display is Reading Lines T-1 steam locomotive 2124; one of 25 built at the Reading Shops. The 1.2 million pound Union Pacific Big Boy 4012 built by ALCO at Schenectady may also be seen. We saw Reading Lines Electro Motive Corporation FP7A 902 which was built in May of 1950. This diesel locomotive along with sister 903 were often used to pull the Reading Lines business train. There are numerous other pieces of rolling stock to be seen on the grounds. Steamtown has a crew of full time employees who do a fabulous job of rebuilding and maintaining the exhibits. The capper is a forty three stall roundhouse with an operating turntable. The stalls are filled with steam and diesel locomotives which are operational or being made operational.

The last day saw a visit to the Amtrak passenger car shop at Bear, DE to finish a fine week of nothing but enjoying railroading.

*Editor's note: As you might imagine, Dennis took many photos on this trip. We've chosen a few that can be found on page 8.*



Here is Dennis reunited with a locomotive he ran many times. Photo by John McNevin



And here is Dennis with the FP-7A used in passenger and executive train service. Photo by John McNevin



Saint Nicholas anthracite coal breaker, once the largest of its kind, being dismantled. Photo by Dennis McGeeney



Roundhouse at Steamtown in Scranton, PA. Photo by Dennis McGeeney



Reading 4-8-4 2124, built by the Reading in its shops in 1946. She finished her work for the Reading as power on the Iron Horse Rambles of the 1960s. Photo by Dennis McGeeney



Dennis at the throttle of ICRR 790 at Steamtown. Photo by John McNevin

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**John Harris, Chief Engineer**  
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## **Upcoming Coal Division Events**

**December 14**

**St. Albans Depot**

**Fourth Street and Fourth Avenue**

**St. Albans, WV**

**January 11**

**St. Albans Depot**

**Fourth Street and Fourth Avenue**

**St. Albans, WV**

**February 8**

**St. Albans Depot**

**Fourth Street and Fourth Avenue**

**St. Albans, WV**