

Volume 23/24 – 7

March 2024



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From the Desk of the Superintendent:

By Bob Johnson

First, I would like to thank Pete and Jane Clarke for offering to host the February meeting. Unfortunately they had to cancel, literally at the last minute, due to that nasty COVID-19 virus. Fortunately they realized what was going on in time so they did not pass the virus on to the rest of the Division. I am hereby offering them the opportunity to be one of the 2024/2025 program years hosts.

Speaking of the 2024/2025 program year, I am seriously concerned about the future of the South Mountain Division. In last month's *Wheel Report* I again issued a call for volunteers to step-up to support the Division by serving as officers, support staff, meeting hosts, and clinic presenters. To date, I have received one offer to host a meeting next year and no expressions to serve as officers or to fill non-elected positions. If we cannot find members who will, at the bare minimum, fill the elected positions we will have no choice but to declare the Division inactive and turn our rather substantial Division funds over to the Mid-Eastern Region. I do not want to see this happen, but we cannot depend on two or three people to run the Division year after year.

In addition to meeting hosts (2024/2025 program year), I am still seeking volunteers for the elected positions of:

- Superintendent (president)
- Clerk (secretary)
- Paymaster (treasurer)

As per our bylaws, all Division officers must live within the Division's territory.

There are other unofficial positions that serve at the pleasure of the Superintendent.

Again, as per the bylaws the Superintendent will appoint the following committees and officials:

- An assistant superintendent.
- An advisory committee of three or more former officials.
- A nominating committee of two or more members.
- A (financial) audit committee of two or more members.
- An editor for the official publication of the Division.
- An achievement program coordinator.
- Other committees and officials, as needed, to carry on the activities of the Division.

Email southmountaindiv@gmail.com to indicate your support. - Ed.



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March Meeting:

The March meeting of the SMD will be hosted by Bob Johnson on Sunday, 10 March starting at 2:00 PM. Please remember that the 10th is the first day of daylight savings time for 2024, so be sure to set your clock ahead by an hour Saturday night.

Following the business meeting SMD member Larry Daily will present a clinic on developing plans for models when working from photographs.

By the way, Gary Brown, Mid-Eastern Region VP, will be attending the March meeting. Let's have a good turnout to welcome him.

About Bob's West Virginia Midland

The West Virginia Midland is a freelance HO standard gauge short line set in central West Virginia in the spring/summer of 1954. The Midland connects with the B & O at Holly Junction and the Western Maryland at Cherry Falls. Both interchanges are supported by small staging yards with represent Grafton (B&O) and Laurel Bank (WM). The Midland's base of operations is the twin towns of Webster Springs and Cherry Falls, WV. The main yard (all 5 tracks) and shop facilities are located there. There is also a small interchange yard at Holly Junction. The primary motive power for the Midland is a fleet of geared steam engines supplemented by several rod engines.

The major sources of income for the Midland are coal, limestone, and lumber. There is also a small industrial area in and around Webster Springs.

The main body of the Midland is "E" shaped (12' x 16') with an additional 65 feet of around-the-wall running. The scenery is about 95% completed and features trees (lots of those), and discrete scenes that are visually separated by viewing angles and scenic view blocks such as hills and, of course trees.

For those of you who have never visited Bob's layout, you can see a September 2023 video made by Al Pugliese [@alpugiesetrains9753](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCpugliesetrains9753) found on YouTube; <https://youtu.be/w33vZSMjLKM?feature=shared>.

Special Directions & Parking

You can park on the street in front of Bob's house (look for the crossbuck sign) or park in the driveway (room for about 5 cars) if you don't need to get out early. If the weather is dry entry will be by the basement door. If it is wet or muddy, please use the front door. A sign will be posted to point you in the right direction.

Email southmountaindiv@gmail.com and we will provide the street address. -Ed.



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Bridge Out Ahead: The Past, Present, and Future of SMD

By Alex Polimeni

This past decade has been a tumultuous time for the South Mountain Division. My Dad (Ron) and I first began attending membership meetings after NMRA annexed our county (Hampshire County, WV) into SMD and his email address was placed on the Wheel Report's mailing list. The rest, as they say, is history... but let's revisit it all the same. My first years in SMD were under the leadership of Paul Rausch. With his unfortunate passing, assistant Superintendent Bill Wilson administered the election with three names in the hat: Don Florwick, Paul Mahoney, and my own, Alex Polimeni. The youngest Division member by at least two decades, it was incredibly humbling to receive your vote of confidence.

I served as Super for three years until declining to run again for the 2020-2021 season. Instead, the chair was turned over to Jerry Skeim with the agreement that I would serve as assistant Super to help in the transition. Sadly, Jerry became the first and only SMD member we lost to the pandemic, passing in the hospital after a severe COVID-19 infection. For the second time, I took the chair after losing our previous Super all too soon.

I've since yielded the chair once again, this time into Bob Johnson's capable hands... but this job is too big for any one person, even if it's "just" organizing a social club for model railroading. Under Paul, to me, to Jerry and Bob, the train has kept moving, but from where I'm sitting, the bridge is very much out ahead... and you, the Division, must decide if that means it's the end of the line.

As things stand, Bob Johnson has said he will serve no more than one more year as Superintendent. Ray Price continues to serve as Treasurer, as he's done since at least my first year as Super. Bob is currently acting as Wheel Report editor while I serve as acting Clerk. SMD has welcomed a number of new old faces and seen old ones return, yet the fact remains that we are not what we once were.

Although I kept the seat warm, I regard my time as your Super as a failure. There was so much potential I had hoped to harness, but I wasn't the person to make good on it. The potential itself, however, remains unchanged. SMD has a storied history more than 40 years in the making, a membership that spans four states, and a crown jewel of the Mid-Eastern Region in our annual Mini-Con. With roughly 90 members at any given time, we have the potential to become a powerhouse and help the hobby to flourish in our Division. *continued on next page...*

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Bridge Out, cont.

This is your Division, but more than that, it's our Division, each and every one of us. We decide its value, not just for ourselves, but the friendships we have because of it. If you're reading this, think about what SMD means to you. The bridge may be out ahead, but it doesn't have to stay that way.

Bits and Bobs:

Richard Benjamin of Hobbytown USA in Frederick, MD has a customer looking for help installing an LED lighting kit in his HO Caboose.

If you wouldn't mind lending a hand, please reach out to southmountaindiv@gmail.com and we will help you connect.

Reminder:

SMD membership meetings are always the 2nd Sunday of the month at 2PM. The only exceptions are for April, when the Mini-Con replaces our business meeting, and in May, which will take place one week later, on the 3rd Sunday.

We have had some issues with finding hosts for meetings this year. Please consider hosting a meeting sometime during the 2024 - 2025 program year. If you would like to host, please let me know. We try to avoid back-to-back repeat visits so if you have never hosted, or it has been a year or so since you did, give it a thought.

SMD Meeting Schedule:

April 6 – Mini-Con, Blue Ridge Summit, PA

May 19 (3rd Sunday) – Jay Beckham, Berkley Springs, WV

WHEEL REPORT **SMD**

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Renew On Line:

You can renew your NMRA membership on line at the following link;
<https://www.nmra.org/store/membership>

Remember that your national membership automatically includes membership in both the Mid-East Region and the South Mountain Division and you will receive the NMRA Bulletin electronically on a regular basis. Membership is a requirement for insurance purposes but guests can attend one or two meetings without joining. There is also a trial membership category available at a reduced cost (see link above).

SMD Officers and Officials:

Superintendent: Bob Johnson

Clerk: Harvey Heyser

Paymaster: Ray Price

Webmaster/Digital Assets Manager: Tom Fedor

Wheel Report Editor: Alex Polimeni

Division Achievement Program Coordinator: Jane Clarke

Mini-Con Coordinator: Grant Berry