

Volume 24/25 – 4

December 2024



smdnmra.org

From the Desk of the Superintendent:

By Bob Johnson

First, I want to remind everyone that there will **not** be a business meeting in December. The Division will be conducting an NMRA membership recruiting event at HobbyTown – Frederick on Saturday, 14 December. It was agreed that this event would take the place of the regular meeting. The next business meeting will be held on 12 January 2025, at the home of Steve King in Pond Bank, PA.

On to other thoughts...

At the risk of being accused of beating a dead horse, I am again asking you to consider taking a more active role in the management and operation of the Division. It is hard to believe that we need to have candidates for the positions of Superintendent, Clerk, and Paymaster identified by the end of February so that we can follow the prescribed process for nomination and election of officers in time to notify the NMRA as to who our officers will be during the 2025/2026 program year. As of this writing Ray Price has agreed to continue as Paymaster and we have one potential candidate for Superintendent. We are still looking for volunteers to serve as Clerk. If we don't get one we may have a "work around" but I would prefer that we had a volunteer who is qualified under MER guidelines.

In addition, we need a number of volunteers to serve in appointed positions. A listing of the primary positions, along with a description of the associated duties, is included below. My thanks to Alex Polimeni for developing this information.

SMD Membership Promotion:

On 14 December your Division will be conducting an all-day event to encourage model railroaders to join the NMRA at HobbyTown - Frederick, located at 454 Prospect Blvd, Frederick, MD 21701-6400; (301) 694-7395; htufrederickmd@gmail.com. This event is scheduled to run from 10:00 AM till 4:00 PM. In addition to an information table promoting the benefits of NMRA membership we will have several table clinics (similar to the Mini-Con) with demonstrations of technology in model railroading (DCC, 3-D printing, computers, etc.) We will also be highlighting model railroading as a form of gaming. This approach is targeted to appeal to the younger modelers in the community. In conjunction with this event, we have updated our Division brochure and purchased a pull-up promotional banner. These items will also be of value to us at the April Mini-Con.
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Membership Promotion continued...

Thanks to all of you who have volunteered to participate in this activity. The available space is just about filled up but if any of you would like to stop by we would welcome you and maybe even put you to work for an hour or so to give the volunteers a break. HobbyTown – Frederck is operated by Division member Richard Benjamin. We thank Richard for making the space available.

2025 Mini Con:

Grant Berry has agreed to take the lead on the Division Mini-Con again this coming spring (April) and Mainline Hobby Supply has again offered to support the event. It will be held on a Saturday in April but as of this writing we do not have a scheduled date from the fire company for room availability. As always, Grant will need help with registration, event set-up, and of course clinicians. Start thinking now as to what sort of table clinic you could present at the event.

The Susquehanna Division has expressed interest in participating in the event with us this coming spring but details have not been finalized. More to come on this development.

2027 MER Convention:

We are still looking for two or three volunteers to form an exploratory committee to get things started for the 2027 MER convention which we are scheduled to host. Since the MER handles most of the convention arrangements the committee's responsibilities at this time will primarily be centered around locating a suitable host hotel, developing a list of potential layout tour hosts, and to identify some sort of rail related prototype tour. Again, if you are interested please let me know. Email southmountaindiv@gmail.com.

Division Job Board:

By Alex Polimeni

As anybody who's ever worked on something at a hobby bench before knows, sometimes you don't see what's right in front of you. At least, that's how I felt after our October meeting at Andrew Dodge's when the question was asked, "are there job descriptions for the Division officers?" I think many of us have been with SMD for so long we don't always realize there's folks who haven't been. So, let's take a look at the officer positions of South Mountain Division!

To begin, there are elected officers and appointed positions. Each January, the Division assembles an impartial nominating committee to solicit potential officer candidates. The membership then votes on these candidates during the May meeting, who then begin their term in July. Supporting the elected officers are a number of appointed positions, which require only a volunteer and the Superintendent's formal recognition.

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Division Job Board continued...

Superintendent (president, elected)

The most important obligations of the “Super” include appointing volunteers, soliciting potential membership meeting hosts, and presiding over the meetings themselves. The Super is also our Division’s point of contact with MER and NMRA national, whom we liaison with for insurance coverage and other support. Having served four years as Super, I would say that outside the meetings themselves, I’ve spent only 2-3 hours per month on my duties and most of that was writing emails. As Super, you can expect to:

- Chair a mid-summer meeting of officers to identify meeting hosts to contact and address other concerns before the coming Sept-May season
- Reach out to potential meeting hosts, clinicians, and guest speakers
- Send reminders by email before each month’s meeting
- Chair membership meetings according to Robert’s Rules of Order
- Coordinate with the other officers and appointed positions to make sure they have the support they need (and are providing the support the Super needs)
- Maintain Division property such as the Marv Kershner gratuity boxcar and our projector screen
- Liaison with MER regarding NMRA paperwork and conduct a bi-annual review of Division bylaws

Now, all this isn’t to say the Super has to go it alone, as perhaps’ the Super’s greatest power is the power of delegation!

Paymaster (treasurer, elected)

The Paymaster is responsible for maintaining the Division bank account, and is the only member authorized to make deposits or withdrawals. The Paymaster is expected to provide a report of the current balance at each meeting and promptly reimburse members who have made out-of-pocket expenditures on SMD’s behalf.

Clerk (secretary, elected)

The Clerk is responsible for taking minutes at each membership meeting and forwarding them to the Super to be distributed before the next meeting, creating a record of all Division business and helping to keep the membership informed. Currently, I take notes at the meeting and then format them into a pre-made document template afterward.

Assistant Superintendent (appointed)

The Assistant Super ostensibly has all the same responsibilities as the Super when required, and serves to ensure the Super can fulfill his/her duties. It is also customary for the assistant Super to reach out to new and expiring members to welcome them into SMD or ask if there’s anything we can do to bring them back. If the Super is unavailable to chair a meeting, it is typically the Assistant who will do so in their stead.

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Division Job Board continued...

Achievement Program Coordinator (appointed)

The AP Coordinator is responsible for helping Division members work toward their Master Model Railroader milestones.

Mini-Con Coordinator (appointed)

The Mini-Con Coordinator works with Blue Ridge Hobby Supply, the Blue Ridge Summit fire hall, the Division at large, and guest speakers, food vendors and visitor marketing (such as modular layouts) to organize our annual, April Mini-Convention, which regularly draws 200+ members of the public.

Newsletter editor (appointed)

The editor pulls together information for our monthly newsletter the *Wheel Report*, which you're reading right now! Editors have a lot of room to make the WR their own, and it fulfills a vital function in keeping the Division on the same page.

Webmaster (appointed)

The webmaster maintains our online presence, making sure important information is kept up to date and accessible to the public.

Advisory Committee (appointed)

The Super typically asks involved Division members- often former officers or volunteers- to join an advisory committee, which simply weighs in on matters as varied as potential meeting hosts to Christmas cards!

MODELING WHAT YOU LOVE

By John Pursell, South Mountain Division, NMRA

Originally Published in [The Local](#), Sept/Oct 2005 -ed.

The general declining membership of the NMRA and the "graying" of our hobby has been a topic of conversation among model railroaders for some time now. To most hobbyists, it is apparent that this trend must be reversed if our hobby is to survive. I'm 52 [now 71! -ed] and at many meets I seem to be the youngest guy there! Yet, I can't help thinking that many of the initiatives and ideas for bringing in younger hobbyists are, to put it bluntly, barking up the wrong tree.

I love trains. And because I love trains, I build train models. Now, one of my good friends loves airplanes, so he builds model airplanes. In other words, I build models of something that I know and love in the real world, as does he. If you love cars or military vehicles or ships, you build models of cars or ... well, you get the point. But the downside here is this: most young people today simply know nothing about railroads! So why should they build models of something they don't know? Why should they try to recreate in miniature something that has no relevance to their lives?

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Modeling continued...

When I was growing up in the '60s, within an hour of my home I could see trains of the Pennsy, Lehigh Valley, Jersey Central, Reading electric and a myriad of different types of equipment. I grew quickly to enjoy the variety of cars and engines that I could see close up. Today in the same area I can see Norfolk Southern and a whole lot of containers. Yards that used to be open for prowling are now, understandably, closed to the public for security and safety reasons. And most young people's idea of passenger trains is limited to 2-mile tourist railroads with obligatory Santa Claus, Easter Bunny or train robbers. Tourist railroads are fine, but they are in effect a type of museum. And who wants to model a museum?

Few people under 50 years of age have seen steam in revenue operations (at least in the U.S.), yet hobby manufacturers continue to turn out train sets with steam engines included. Most people under 40 have never seen the vast majority of road names and paint schemes offered in model equipment.

So why should young hobbyists model what they don't know?

My point is this: instead of trying to attract new model railroaders, perhaps we should be trying to develop rail fans. Grow a rail fan and he or she will, in all likelihood, develop into a model railroader as well.

Well, that's easy to say, but how do we do it? I don't discount the value of some of the activities that we now engage in. Setting up a modular railroad at the local shopping mall to attract young people is fine. But watching trains go round and round quickly gets boring and youngsters don't understand operations. Buying easy-to-build kits for boys and girls clubs is also fine, but do they realize the significance of the miniature they are holding and how it relates to the world at large?

Probably the best thing we can do for younger people is to try to engage them in more prototype activities. In other words, take your kids or grandchildren on a train trip. Sure, it's slower than flying and probably more expensive, but we all know there's no comparison. If commuting to work by train is an option, why not try it once in a while? Let the youngsters in your family see how prototype trains are a part of your life.

Naturally, we should support the work of the National Railroad Historical Society and all the prototype groups. For my part, I'm in the planning stages of a course I hope to put into the curriculum of our local community college. While it doesn't have a title yet, it will be something similar to John Armstrong's "The Railroad: What It Is, What It Does."

And yes, visit those tourist railroads. But take the time to learn beforehand how and why that line came into being and then explain to the youngsters—why it's there, what it did, and why it was important to that town or city. Don't rely on the personnel working the train; they're probably too busy and may not know as much as you!

And most important, be receptive to younger people. Of course they don't know a Mikado from a feedwater heater. And they won't if you don't tell them.

I love trains. I'm not sure why. But I do, and if all of us who love trains try to help younger people understand and love real trains, then our train hobby will continue to be just fine for many years to come.

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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.

Please consider hosting a meeting sometime during the 2024 - 2025 program year.

Email southmountaindiv@gmail.com. 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.

As of this writing, with the exception of May, all of the 2024/2025 meeting dates have been spoken for. The schedule is as follows.

- December 14th (Saturday) – Membership promotion meeting @ HobbyTown USA in Frederick, MD
- January 12th - Steve King; Pond Bank, PA
- February 9th - Richard Benjamin; Frederick, MD
- March 9th - Pete and Jane Clarke; Damascus, MD
- April (date TBD) - Annual Mini-Con; Blue Ridge Summit, PA
- May 18th (3rd Sunday to avoid Mother's Day conflict) - OPEN



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: Alex Polimeni

Paymaster: Ray Price

Webmaster/Digital Assets Manager: Tom Fedor

Wheel Report Editor: Bob Johnson

Contributing Wheel Report Editor: Alex Polimeni

Division Achievement Program Coordinator: Jane Clarke

Mini-Con Coordinator: Grant Berry