



# MAIL HOOK

SAN DIEGO DIVISION, PSR-NMRA

4th Quarter, 2021 Edition

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**NOTE regarding the Pacific Southwest Region 2022 Convention, Back on Track in 2022! For anyone who signs up and pays by the end of this month (Sept. 30th, 2021) you will receive a convention discount! More information at:**

<https://web.cvent.com/event/1474b6bc-b18a-49ec-9b4e-9f58fb4665cd>

## Superintendent's Report



We have lots to look forward to here in the San Diego Division. October is our annual partnering with the North County Model Railroad Society, in Oceanside. The Model Train Swap Meet is by NCMRS, and their layout is our official October Layout Tour. There will be the Cali Food Truck, fun, fellowship, and trains! In November we will return to our traditional fall meet at the San Diego Model Railroad Museum. Finally, in December there is the annual Division Holiday Party... details to follow in the future.

Last month, in August, we had our first in person meet in over a year. The event was well attended and very enjoyable. There was a Swap meet, a BBQ and Clinics. The highlight for me was the awards. Rudy Spano earned the Golden Spike, and Wayne Pierce earned the Golden Spike and several certificates toward his MMR. We were treated to pictures of each of their work.

San Diego members made a good showing at the PSR convention in September. The Cajon Division put on a great convention. I enjoyed 3 hands on clinics myself, and I am told the tour of the Gemco

Yard was fun and interesting. The awards banquet was well attended, and all enjoyed the guest speaker, Charlie Getz, Past President of the NMRA.

San Diego is up next in September of 2022. The convention theme is "Back on Track in 2022." The registration site is online and ready for you. The special 2021 convention registration rate is available until September 30. Sign up early! Also, let us know if you would like to volunteer to help.

Hope to see you soon at upcoming events!

Happy Modeling!

Ryan

## **Articles:**

### **Attendee impressions of the NMRA Pacific Southwest Region 2021 Convention, The Orange Blossom Special:**

#### **Article by Joel Shank:**



Random thoughts on the just completed Orange Blossom Special NMRA convention.

The convention hotel was excellent. I stayed in the hotel and would encourage anyone who does not live close by to do so. It gives you an excellent base to access all of the activities the convention offers yet a quick escape for a short nap to recharge. My room was exactly what I needed. Clean, easily accessible, quiet for a great night sleep, and it provided for a free place to park my vehicle.

I particularly appreciated the format this convention had where there were clinics held in the morning and evenings leaving the afternoons free to travel to see the layouts open to tour. No more having to make the difficult choice of either visiting layouts or attending that clinic you really wanted to. Narrow Gauge Conventions have been doing this for years and it is great to see a great idea finally migrate into at least part of the NMRA. Still there were tough choices to make as several clinics I wanted to attend were scheduled for the same time. There is just no way but to make a decision.

Layout tours were a tough choice as well. There were so many good layouts to choose from. Geography and horrible traffic could easily limit you to potentially only a couple in an afternoon. I chose those close to each other and in the scale I was most interested in viewing. It was interesting to see how people adapted their railroad fit into the space they had available. It is so challenging in such an expensive area to live and basements are incredibly rare.

And of course the best part of a convention is reconnecting with all the friends made over the years and meeting new ones. The first night ice cream social was a big hit as was the railroad bingo. Visiting between clinics, and in the bar afterwards also adds to the camaraderie as ideas, techniques, layout plans, and of course sharing photos of all these stored on our cell phones simply added to the fun.

I also participated in an extra fare prototype tour of the GMCO yard. Dreadful traffic made for a 2 hour bus ride both ways but the tour of the yard office and getting an up close view of the motive power being readied for its run North was certainly worth it. Seeing the train crew preparing for their trip, the paperwork involved, then actually watching them put together the cuts of cars is the stuff we all attempt to replicate on our own railroads. The details we saw in person filled in the blanks at least for me and I'll incorporate them into the next time I operate my layout.

Next year the convention will be held in San Diego. Already there was incredible interest shown as the pre registrations easily surpassed the number hoped for. And indeed it looks to be a great one. Check out the website and see all the super activities already in the works. An incredible number of truly wonderful home layouts, the San Diego Model Railroad Museum, excellent prototype tours planned as well as the usual informative clinics will make for an exciting convention. I'll be there, will YOU?

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## **You Better, You better, You Bet**

### **By Rudy Spano**

At the PSR convention, The Orange Blossom Special in September, I sat in on a clinic by Morrie Fleishman entitled "Lessons Learned in Creating My First Merit Award Structure".

Morrie took us through the planning, design and construction process of building a structure that he would use in his pursuit of an AP Structures Merit Award.

Working through the process towards achieving enough Merit Certificates to reach the goal of Master Model Railroader (MMR) can seem a daunting task. Morrie put that task into perspective when he said that he wasn't looking to be the best model railroader, but a better model railroader. Afterall, isn't that what we are all shooting for, to be better model railroaders?

The most points that you can earn on a structure is 125, but the minimum points to get the award is 87.5. Given that range, there is a lot of opportunity to take our modeling to a newer, better level, without feeling that we have come up short if we don't reach the maximum. Morrie's structure got more than the minimum points and even though he didn't get a perfect score, he was perfectly happy with the knowledge that he had increased his model building skills and achieved a Merit Award.

How are we increasing our modeling skills? One way is to attend the annual Pacific Southwest Convention. This next year that Convention will be in your own backyard, here in San Diego. A wonderful chance to sit in on clinics, visit other modeler's layouts, and perhaps most importantly to make new friends and connections who may become great resources for answers to modeling questions. Our convention, Back On Track In 2022 will be a great opportunity for you to become a better modeler or perhaps for you to help someone else achieve that goal. Please go to our website and register today for a great experience.

## **Gary Robinson's impressions about the convention**

I was happy to be able to attend this convention, as last year's was cancelled. It was good to see old friends, and to learn new skills, the two things I expect to get from such an event.

I arrived on Wednesday, September 8, after a trip from Oceanside on the Surf Liner. The Surf Liner is always a nice ride, along the coast. An Uber got me across town from the Amtrak station to the hotel. The hotel staff was courteous and efficient. I was in time to attend the Board meeting, but elected instead to attend a clinic on the Cricut machine. This is a scrapbooking tool that can act as a poor man's laser cutter. The clinic was very informative, but I'll still be doing some additional research before I take the plunge. The top-rated machine, the Cricut Maker – Ultimate Smart Electric Machine, sells for \$500 on Amazon, but other machines are available on-line for as little as \$249.

Following that clinic, I took the rest of the afternoon off, as the clinician for the next clinic in which I was interested had apparently cancelled. This gave me a chance to explore the hotel a little. While doing so, I ran into some friends from the PCR, whom I had not expected to see, so we spent some time catching up.

Wednesday evening was the Welcome Reception and Ice Cream Social, including Bingo for Trains. They ran out of daubers for the bingo cards, so we shared, or used ballpoints to mark the cards. I wasn't lucky enough to win anything, but a couple of folks at my table did. One of my tablemates was Shotgun Tom Kelly, radio personality and model railroader. He is a very funny guy, and the Keynote speaker for our convention in San Diego next year! All in all, the evening was very enjoyable.

Thursday began with the Annual Membership Meeting, where the officers discussed the recent filing as a 501c(3) corporation. This includes all divisions in the PSR, and will allow us to offer possible tax credits for donations. Each division director reported on events in their respective divisions, and the meeting concluded.

Thursday clinics included Scratch Building, with Frank Baker. I had attended one of Frank Baker's clinics on scratch building previously, but this time I picked up new tips on mocking up a structure or part of one, interior bracing, and selective compression. Frank has been at this gig a long time, and his work is exemplary.

The several clinics related to modular railroading provided information on how other clubs create their modules and connect them into layouts, as well as a few scenery ideas. Most DID NOT adhere to the NMRA modular standards. Instead, they created standards for each of their own groups. This gave them greater flexibility in layout and scenery. My group, Poway Station, has also deviated from the



strict NMRA Standards. It was interesting to note, the first deviation of any of the groups seemed to be in the area of basic module construction, in an attempt to reduce the weight of the modules.

Morrie Fleishman's clinic was interesting, because I'm in the process of designing and creating structures to support my application for the Master Builder – Structures portion of the Achievement Program (AP). Having an idea of the pitfalls to avoid will save me time in constructing the necessary structures.

The clinic on Flawless Trackwork, by Carl Heimberger, introduced a new tool that will be helpful in (HO scale) track laying. You can buy an adjustable shelf stanchion at a lumber yard of your choice, that will fit exactly between the rails, and assist you in achieving perfectly straight track. The discussion of easements, both horizontal and vertical, will be useful as well. That wrapped my Thursday, and I retired to my room to prepare for the Friday clinic.

I LOVE Design Preservation Models (DPM) buildings, but have never assembled one myself. I have worked to rehabilitate a few, and found working with the resin used to be quite different than working with styrene. I had been anxiously looking forward to this clinic, and it was worth the wait. This was an Extra Fare clinic, led by Carl Heimberger, Dave Arendes, and Gary Butts, Master Model Railroader (MMR). Each attendee was provided with a DPM kit for a small house, and instructions for preparing the kit for assembly. The clinicians had removed the mold release agent and primed the structure for us, so we began by squaring up the parts.

Also provided by the clinicians, was a sanding tool for squaring the edges of the walls. This is important with the DPM structures, since the walls have a bevel at the edge, to facilitate removal from the molds. If the edges are not squared, the joints will not be as strong as they could. The sanding tool consisted of a piece of sandpaper laminated to an 8 inch square piece of hardboard to provide a flat surface, and a 2x3 block trimmed with a table saw to be exactly square. Rubbing the wall parts on the sandpaper while holding them against the block resulted in perfectly square edges. Attendees were allowed to keep this tool, along with some other tools. These were 1) a three inch square of 1x3 drilled with four holes in the corners (to keep your paint brushes handy without smearing paint on your work space), and 2) another three inch square of 1x3 drilled with a center hole part way through, sized to accept a glue bottle, with a hole in one corner to hold your glue applicator. This makes it harder to knock your glue bottle over (also works for paint bottles). Finally, a 1 ounce glass bottle, to hold glue decanted from a larger container was provided.

As it turned out, one wall of the kit was longer than the other, and had to be shortened to match, to ensure a square structure. This was also done on the sanding tool. Paint was provided, with instructions to paint the molded-on trim first, avoiding surfaces that would be joined. DPM kits are molded with corner trim and window trim integral to the casting, so this has always been a concern of mine. Lessons learned on how to do this will be invaluable, going forward.

Friday night was the Hobo Auction, which is always a treat, even if you don't win anything. I did win a few things, and that is always a good feeling. My only problem was in figuring out how to get the booty home on the Surf Liner! Luckily, one of my friends came to my rescue, and transported the box containing my winnings, and the tools from the clinic, back to San Diego.

When not attending clinics or other scheduled events, I spent time helping out with the San Diego convention registration desk. There were a couple of new registration methods that greatly simplified the work of the registrar, accelerated to acceptance of funds, and helped to result in about twice the number of early registrations that we've had in the past. I also got to visit the Contest Room to see the entries, and observe the T-Track N scale modules set up in the lobby. I enjoyed the Hobo Breakfast on Saturday morning.

All in all, I thought this was a very good convention, and "worth the price of admission," as it were. I'm looking forward to the convention in San Diego next year, and hope many of you will join us.

## **My Time at the Orange Blossom Special Convention**

**By Paul Wilfong**

My time at the Orange Blossom Special convention was pretty limited. I was able to attend Thursday and Friday morning, and attended clinics and visited the contest room. Here are some highlights for me...

A clinic on using the Raspberry Pi computer described setting up a Pi to act as an interface link for DCC layouts, to allow smartphones to act as throttles. Commercial products for this purpose are available, but there are some cost and technical advantages for using a Pi, as well as more functional flexibility. I was quite interested in an anti-static mat the clinician was using for his workspace, to help prevent static conditions that can potentially damage solid state components.

Along the same lines, a clinic on using the Arduino for special affects was inspiring, and included discussion of new "Individually Addressable LEDs" which can be used to manage multiple LEDs with much simplified control. Kits are available to explore using the Arduino for various projects, which include a number of the gadgets that can be used and/or controlled with an Arduino, such as sensors, servos, and relays. Those are all useful for creating special effects on a layout. In particular, the clinician described a project using strips of individually controlled LEDs, to create lighting effects, such as smooth night/day transition, but also use of colors for fancy simulation of sunsets (red/yellow), moonlight (blue), and smog (brown - no, just kidding on that one!)

I attended a clinic about using the Cricut, a crafter's cutting device which is relatively inexpensive, for modeling. The clinician called it a "poor man's laser cutter". Instead of a laser, it uses blades which follow patterns the user sets up in an "easy to use" web-based drawing program. You don't have to get the Cricut to use the drawing program, so I've been playing with it at home and it is indeed pretty straightforward. The results of using the machine are pretty impressive, and the clinician had one of his structures in the contest room as an example of what could be done.

I really enjoyed all the clinics I attended, and it's wonderful to see the swell models and photos in the contest room. I wish I'd had more time for more clinics and layout tours!

## **Switching on the BN, An interview with Carl Lindberg**

### **By Rodger Gredvig**

I recently sat down with Carl Lindberg, my sister's father-in-law, who was employed for 45 years with the Burlington Northern (1934-79). Actually he started with the Great Northern which was later merged with the BN. He worked for 18 years as a gandy dancer, brakeman and switchman on the "Northern Division" which is in between Minot "Dakota Division" and Duluth "Missabe Division". It covers the area from just east of Crookston, MN (my birthplace) through Grand Forks to Devil's Lake, ND. Much of what he shared about switching is familiar to most rail fans, namely, getting a switch list from the Yard Master and breaking up or classifying cars on tracks allocated for south, east, 'downtown', lcl, etc. I learned a little bit about the hand signals used to brake, "kick", or pull out a string. Interestingly, the assignment of jobs or tasks were carefully segregated. In our conversations I would ask when they uncoupled and how they marked a car for destination, and repeatedly I would hear: "that's the carman's job ... that's the roadman's job .. that's the yard master's job." Apparently, the demarcation of jobs was very particular. The Brotherhood of Railroad Switchmen was broken down into sub Unions that described specific tasks.

Another curiosity is that advancement occurred only within the Division in which a man was originally hired. You lost seniority when transferring to another Division, even with the same railroad. Carl moved to Seattle in the 50's and had to start all over at the bottom. He related a story about going out on a repair train and being asked by the boss if he could fix a bad order car on location. He impressed the boss by jacking up the car and replacing the brass on a burnt out journal in record time. The lingo Carl used was different than I had heard before. The soft metal bushing he called "brass" on which the axles sat, and the oily journal wadding I had known as packing, he called "waste".

We all know from history that real railroading was a dangerous occupation, but its horror is relived in the eyes of one who beheld it. Carl shared a few experiences where co-workers lost a hand or worse. You could still see the sick look on Carl's face when he described one young man in his 20s laying decapitated across the rails. I asked him if he had ever been hurt, he smiled slyly, and wiggled all ten fingers and said: "Nope!". The closest he came, he said, was a close call where he left his glove in the jaws of the coupler as he jerked his hand away just in time.

Carl worked for many years as a switchman at the King's Street yard making up and setting out passenger cars for the fleet of trains out of the main depot of Seattle's famous station. Where some stations had commissary tracks to reload dinning cars, Carl said that on King Street branch small motorized carts would come out to the cars to restock food or linens.

I was surprised to learn that even into the 70s there was no Interlocking tower or automated switches in the yard. They were all unlocked and turned by hand. "It's all different now", Carl sighs, "they don't do it the same anymore". No, they don't, Carl. But thanks for your contribution to the economy and railroading history.

## Pictures of the Orange Blossom Special Convention:



### 1 SATURDAY SWAP MEET



### 2 CARVED CONTEST ENTRY



### 3 CRICUT BUILDING CONTEST ENTRY





4 DISNEY THEMED GARDEN R.R. ON LAYOUT TOUR



5 MORE DISNEY THEMED GARDEN R.R. ON LAYOUT TOUR

**Orange Blossom Special Awards Ceremony**

**Awards to members from our Division**



**Pete Steinmetz, Region Member of the Year**  
Pete was recognized for the significant work he has done in organizing nationwide Zoom meetings on model railroad topics during the Covid shutdown. He was surprised that he received the award, though his work clearly merited it.



### **Ryan Di Fede, NMRA Presidential Award for Service to a Division**

Another deserved award for Ryan's organization of our division Zoom meets.

### **Mike Hampson, Division Member of the Year**

Mike was not present at the award ceremony, but he received this well-deserved award for his work as the division's webmaster. The improvement he has made on the division web page has moved it from a fourth page landing on Google searches to a first page landing. That is a significant accomplishment in search optimization.



### **Kim Fowler, Arts & Crafts contest winner, 1st & 2nd place for handmade quilts.**



Don Fowler speaking at the awards ceremony





The San Diego Division table at the awards ceremony. Hollywood Walk of fame recipient and twice Emmy award winner, “Shotgun” Tom Kelly, joined us at the convention.

## Past Meets



**Summer Meet: Saturday, August 14, 2021**, (Don’s house and layout) This was our first in-person meet since the pandemic started and was for members only.

Clinic 1: Improving the Realism of Plastic Building Kits by Gary Robinson. This Gary presented ways to improve the appearance of plastic (or resin) building kits to be installed on a layout.

Clinic 2: Hands On Weathering Clinic by Pete Steinmetz. Participants came away with a weathered car

and knowledge of how to use Pan Pastels.

## Zoom Meetings

Note that videos for our Zoom Meetings can be viewed on YouTube at

[https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCmVkw\\_U9jF5NwhFi\\_jR7vow](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCmVkw_U9jF5NwhFi_jR7vow)

Or do a search on YouTube for San Diego Division PSR-NMRA



## July 10, 2021, Saturday, Virtual Meet

The San Diego Model Railroad Association presented their HO scale San Diego and Arizona Eastern layout.



## June 12, 2021, Virtual Meet

Layout Tour: Desert Highlands Railroad by Tim Foote.

Clinic: Track laying techniques for Operations by Tim Foote.

## EVENTS CALENDAR:



NMRA Pacific Southwest Region Convention  
September 7-11, 2022  
Presented by the PSR, San Diego Division

Sign up at:

<https://web.cvent.com/event/1474b6bc-b18a-49ec-9b4e-9f58fb4665cd>



**October 9th 2021, Saturday, 8:00 a.m. to noon (PDT) In-Person Swap Meet and Layout Tour at the The North County Model Railroad Society**

The North County Model Railroad Society will have their fall Model Train Show and Swap Meet from 8 a.m. to noon, and will include raffle prizes.

The North County Model Railroad Society is located in Heritage Park at 230 Peyri Drive,

Oceanside, California.

The Swap Meet is free for all visitors. (Sellers pay \$10.00 per table. There will be food trucks at the park that day where you can purchase drinks, snacks and lunch.

The San Diego Division will have a table at the Swap Meet and will sell train cars, hobby books, model train and real train memorabilia, and more. The San Diego Division will also use our Swap Meet table as a recruiting table.

Layout Tour: The layout tour will be at the HO scale North County Model Railroad Society in the Train Depot building in Heritage Park.

If you want your event listed please contact [mailhook@sandiegodivision.org](mailto:mailhook@sandiegodivision.org)

## **From the Editor**

### **Do your part for the club and submit an article:**

The Mail Hook needs interesting articles and features. Please consider writing and submitting an article on a model railroading or railroading topic to share your knowledge with other modelers. It can be a how-to article or highlighting a project you are working on or any special knowledge you may have about a railroad. Maybe you could write an article about your layout progress, including pictures. It can be a half page or larger. Earn AP points or just make it a fun challenge. Note that we will accept most articles from other divisions as well.

Tim Foote

Acting Mail Hook Editor

[mailhook@sandiegodivision.org](mailto:mailhook@sandiegodivision.org)

### **Submission Guidelines:**

There is no compensation for articles submitted or published. Please Submit articles by email to the Mail Hook Editor at [mailhook@sandiegodivision.org](mailto:mailhook@sandiegodivision.org), with the submission attached as a text or MS word document or in the body of email message. Pictures can be attached separately to the same email. Submissions may be edited for length or formatting, or not used, at the discretion of the editor.

### **The following are the quarterly deadlines for submitting to the Mail Hook Editor:**

First Qtr.-January 2; Second Qtr.-April 1, Third Qtr.- July 1, Fourth Qtr.-October 1



### San Diego Division Officers

<b>Director:</b> <b>Pete Steinmetz</b>	<b>Superintendent:</b> <b>Ryan Di Fede</b>	<b>Chief Clerk/Paymaster:</b> <b>Trudy Seeley</b>
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### San Diego Division Chairs

<b>Membership Services:</b> <b>Rudy Spano</b>	<b>Layout Tours:</b> <b>Tim Foote</b>
<b>Contests:</b> <b>vacant</b>	<b>Meet Coordinator:</b> <b>Don Fowler, MMR</b>
<b>Clinics:</b> <b>vacant</b>	<b>Member Aid:</b> <b>Vacant</b>
<b>Publicity/Club Liaison:</b> <b>Vacant</b>	<b>Webmaster:</b> <b>Mike Hampson</b>
<b>Achievement Program:</b> <b>Rodger Gredvig, MMR</b>	
<b>"Mail Hook" Editor:</b> <b>Tim Foote (acting)</b>	

## Websites

San Diego Division website:

<https://www.sandiegodivision.org/>

San Diego Division Facebook Page:

<https://www.facebook.com/San-Diego-Division-PSR-NMRA-460628147317440/>

San Diego Division Facebook Group:

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/683893925747889/>

PSR

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