



The Lantern

October 2005

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We're Riding the 7½" Rails

Concentrated Card Order Session—Part II

By John Anthamatten

In the September issue John took us for a ride along the 7 ½ inch (gauge) rails. This month he is back to conclude the structured operation session. [The scale of the equipment is 1 ½ inches.]

The conductor and I rode the 3 seat flat car positioned behind the 10 car consist and in front of the caboose. Most conductors use standard railroad hand signals in daylight and lanterns or a light source for signals in dark. Most train crews do have hand held radios but most don't use them except for contact with the switch yard. All locomotives have headlights and running lights for night operations.

RIGHT OF WAY AND SIGNALS

The two railroads are divided into numerous operating "blocks" controlled by

signals of several types. As a train approaches a block the signal will indicate clear or stop. A stop signal means that another train has possession of the block so the approaching train must wait or risk a tail end or head on collision. When the signal clears to green or black then the waiting train may proceed into the block.

At the beginning of each block is an easy to reach lever on a post, electronically connected to the signals and activated by the engineer. At the end of the block is another lever, again activated by the engineer, to release block possession. Block control works like a light switch that you turn on when you enter a block and turn off when leaving

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Texas City Train Festival Features Great Layouts

By Larry Benson

Last November, Shirley and I flew to Houston to visit relatives and catch the Texas City Train Festival held on the 13th and 14th. The Festival included a dealer and ten great layouts in all scales from Z to O. More about these displays follows. But first, a short history lesson:

On April 16, 1947 the cargo ship SS Grand Camp was docked in Texas City, TX. The ship's holds were filled with tons of ammonium nitrate. Just after 9 am a fire was discovered on board and when the firemen arrived they began to pour thousands of gallons of water into the ship hoping to douse the blaze. When the water reached the

Circling above the layout was a hot air balloon with people peeking over the edge of the dangling basket."

tightly compacted cargo, the Grand Camp exploded with a thunderous roar destroying all nearby buildings and igniting a fire aboard the SS High Flyer anchored nearby also containing a full cargo of nitrate which exploded soon afterward.

The two explosions that killed over 600 residents including firemen and other rescue workers leveled half of Texas City. I graduated from high school in June of 1947 and well remember what's known as the "Texas City Disaster."

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It's almost North Florida Fair Time!

By John Sullenberger

CALL SHEETS

The North Florida Fair Association is handling the entry of exhibitors differently this year. Instead of handing out tickets, there will be daily "call" sheets.

Members scheduled to work will appear on that day's call sheet. Entry to the grounds will be at Gate 14 only. Park your vehicle outside the gate, check in with the security guard and walk to building #6.

The BBMRA will get three or four parking passes which allow the holder to drive through the gate and park behind building #6.

RESERVE YOUR TIMES

Operation slots are on a first come, first serve basis. Each shift should have a minimum of two members working the layout. Please contact John Sullenberger at 410-8425 (8 am to 4 pm), 562-5137 (5 pm to 10 pm), 544-1870 (cell) or sullyjws@aol.com.

CANCELLATIONS

If you sign up for a shift and have to cancel, you need to try and find a replacement. If you cannot find a replacement, call John as soon as possible.

SUNDAYS

12 noon	until	4 pm
4 pm	until	8 pm

MONDAYS through THURSDAYS

5 pm	until	10:30 pm
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FRIDAYS

(11/4)		
5 pm	until	11 pm
(11/11)		
12 noon	until	4 pm
4 pm	until	8 pm
8 pm	until	11 pm

SATURDAYS

12 noon	until	4 pm
4 pm	until	8 pm
8 pm	until	11 pm

Riding the Rails

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SATURDAY'S RUN

Saturday we were not quite as ambitious so we requested a five car consist. People in attendance that do not bring trains, and other visitors, usually sign up to be conductors, brakemen, yard assistants, passengers or just volunteer to sit and watch. Our Saturday conductor was a young lady, the owner of a switch engine but she did not have it at the meet.

Again, I was the brakeman and Tom was the engineer. Well, it is his train – so



he gets to drive it. At least a dozen local freights were operating in Saturday's session so we did have numerous waits for blocks and waits on sidings or run-arounds allowing right of way to the passenger trains. Even with a five car consist we finished late in the evening. Railroads operate 24/7 and these two railroads do run at night and in the rain (not in lightning) during the sessions.

SUNDAY'S RUN

It rained all of Saturday night and was raining lightly when we arrived on location about noon. Tom suggested that we make a free run and asked if I wanted to be the engineer. I certainly did not refuse

that offer even though it was raining. I did not realize the responsibility one has playing with toy trains until my time as the engineer.

The engineer must maintain speed and braking, control entering and leaving blocks (only missed one possession lever that I remember) and read track switches since the switches do not have position markers. Occasionally, an errant brakeman will forget to reset a switch to mainline position so the next train could run into a siding or go in the wrong direction. Switch positions are visible to the engineer from the locomotive and assuring the correct position is one of the engineer's responsibilities.

The weather forecast predicted severe thunderstorms for Sunday afternoon and the sky was looking darker as we finished our free run. It began to rain harder, so Tom decided to load the train in the trailer, store it and head for Tallahassee. The only significant event we encountered on our return trip was a three and one-half hour stop in the middle lane of I-75 because of an truck accident some miles ahead of us.

Tom and his wife will vacation northward in September and will end up in Flint for another large Card Order Session. After that session, they will bring the train back to their home in Bristol, FL. During winter months there are numerous 7 1/2 inch events around the State of Florida. Tom and his wife will take the train to several of these events. Maybe if I behave he will invite me along again.

I cannot put into words how unique this experience was to me. It is something that I will never do on a full size railroad. Yes, it is a model railroad, but operating nearly prototypically gave me the feeling that I had accomplished one of my "to do in life" wishes. Words probably did not express my thanks to Tom either, but I did clearly express my desire for another invitation.

Veterans Memorial Halloween Train

The "Spooktacular" train will run Thursday through Saturday evenings on the 27-29th, weather permitting. Times are from dark (about 7:30 pm) until about 10 pm. Estimated cost is \$1! An even smaller kids fare is being considered. Folks from Tally, save a little gas and car pool. We'll be back with a Christmas special too!



Executive Reports & News Briefs

Larry Benson, **Secretary**

Vice President Sal Martocci called the September 20 meeting to order at 7:10 pm in Program Room A of the Leroy Collins County Library with 24 members in attendance. Division coordinators gave their reports.

Sal reminded members that it's the HO Division's turn to run the BBMRA layout at the North Florida Fair which runs from November 3 through November 13. Copies of the Guidelines for Running Club Layouts were distributed to members with Sal emphasizing several of the rules. He also suggested copies be

inserted in the October issue of *The Lantern* to assure every member has a copy.

The meeting adjourned after Sal's talk about "Inside Turnouts."

The Lantern Updates

During the September issue of *The Lantern* spot color was introduced. This month, the newsletter is being presented in full color to our email subscribers. If you want to view all of the photography at its best, contact Larry to change your subscription to email. Each month an email is sent out with a link to download the newsletter in PDF. Our secret – on-

line recipients get the news sooner!

Also, the door remains open for you to share your stories and modeling tips with the group. If you have a story to share, we'll get you published in a future issue of *The Lantern*.

In Next Month's Issue

We'll feature the conclusion of David & Dan's coupler workshop article. The article will focus on the proper height of couplers and trip pins. Use next month's article to ensure you're ready to run the rails.



Texas City

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Now, back to the train festival. The 2-day event was sponsored by the City of Texas City. Unfortunately, cloudy, windy weather diminished the crowd and kept outside vendors away, except for one hot dog stand. The building was once a Penney's store that's now a railroad museum owned by the city. Inside, ten fabulous layouts were running – four located on the ground floor and six upstairs. Terrific!

The Greater Galveston Area Train Club (GGATC) who keeps their HO and N-Scale layouts there permanently

leases the second floor. Along with paying nominal rent, the club agrees to run their layouts on weekends. While all of the layouts were eye-popping, an N-Scale modular display had sound effects and fabulous details including a hot air balloon gliding back and forth above the buildings. Mysterious!

Sound is activated by push-buttons mounted on supports along the perimeter, which visitors can press to hear chickens cluck, a church bell ring, cows moo and ducks quack. An automated bulldozer pushes dirt back into a trench being dug by a working ditch digger. Down the street a man is paint-

ing the outside of a barn. He is grasping a paint roller in his hands with his arms going up and down. In another scene, a homemaker walks from her house to the clothesline with a basket of wash then retreats back inside. Small motors hidden beneath the bench work operate all of these animations. Awesome!

Circling above the layout was a hot air balloon with people peeking over the edge of the dangling basket. From afar, I couldn't imagine how the balloons were able to glide along the layout, gently swinging from side to side on each pass. When I got closer, I saw lightweight monofilament line attached below overhanging lighting from which the balloon was suspended. The monofilament circled around tiny pulleys mounted above each end of the layout. Fantastic!

I asked the "head honcho" how many members belong to GGATC. He said only 22. When I mentioned that BBMRA has around 80 members and his club seems to be doing a lot with just a few members, he replied: "Well, we have ten more applicants waiting to join but we haven't voted them in yet." Then he went on to explain that only those "guys" who will continue to be active and commit to working many, many long hours for the club are approved for membership.

Like the two ships 58 years ago, my brain exploded!



The Lantern

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www.bbmra.org

Upcoming events

October

10/15-16

Rail Fest 2005

Palatka, FL

10/18 • 7:30 pm

BBMRA Meeting

Myers Park

11/27-29 • 7:30-10 pm

Veterans Memorial Halloween Train

Bristol, FL

November

11/5-6

Train Show

Orlando, FL

11/5-6

Greenberg's Train Show

Norcross (Atlanta), GA

CALENDAR

Grow Your Reference Library

Help for Painting & Weathering

By Shawn Vann

Recently, I decided I was ready to take my plastic models to the next level of realism. First, I had to overcome that periodic nagging inside that wanted to know why I was willing to risk a perfectly good, not so cheap model in the name of improved visual appeal. My \$5 swap meet cars were the perfect answer.

My early attempts involved me sitting down and having a go with chalks and paint. At the end, the cars were dirtier but I didn't like the results. I visited my new local hobby shop here in South Florida and now I am back on track. There are shelves of reference material for model railroaders. I encourage you to explore the many titles available.

My great find was *Basic Painting and Weathering* by Jeff Wilson, from Model Railroader Books. Jeff has presented the book in a straightforward, easy to follow



format. The book begins with basic information about tools and technique. By the end, he's challenging you with weathering projects for locomotives and freight cars. There's even figure painting demonstrations.

If all goes well, I'll have some great models I'll want to share. Rest assured, I plan to share the processes and finished products here.