



# THE Lantern

January 2020 – Happy New Year!

Volume 25 Number 1

## Eric's Song – Celebrating the Life of Eric Ecklund

Eric Ecklund, master Garden Railroader and long-time BBMRA member and friend to all, died November 30 at his home in Crawfordville. He was 84. Ina Ecklund says he wrote Eric's Song with help from a friend with Big Bend Hospice.

Well, hello there, friends and how do you do? You just come on in. Take a seat here in my living room. Let me tell you a story or two.

My father came from Sweden to the great US of A. I grew up in Lakewood, New York, by the water of the Chautauqua Lake. As a boy, I played with model trains and the kids around the neighborhood. I loved to kick tin cans around and play hide and seek in the woods. I loved to lie down in my bed and gaze out my window, listen for the train and count the cars. I didn't mind playing alone.



In high school, I loved sailing. I loved to be outdoors. It was just my good friend, Bob, and me. We'd sail for hours and hours. In gymnastics I did flying rings. I also enjoyed volleyball, basketball, scuba diving and tackle football; and I dated quite a number of girls. At 16, I met a man named Frank who showed me how to use dynamite. Underwater demolition; oh boy, did it change my life!

The Navy wanted me so badly to be a Frogman like a Navy Seal. But I wanted to fly airplanes, so the Air Force was my deal. The pilot thing did not work out because I got so sick. I had to choose a new specialty and it was computers. I always worked with excellence, people said. I was a big hot-shot. But let's just call

it for what it is. Everybody knows I am smart.

I married my first wife and had three kids – Jennifer, Rick and Scott. But now I'm with my sweet Ina. I'd say she is the love of my life. Well, Ina came as a package deal with Cyndee, David, Jared, Candice and Derrick. All mushed up like the Brady Bunch.

Now, some would say I am peculiar, but I just want things done right. Grandchildren call me Bubba. I blow my horn and go fast when I drive. I like to drive my Stuff-Mobile. Here are my favorite things: pickled herring, peanut butter, Coca-Cola, chocolate and cheese.

Oh, by the way, before you go, step outside and take a look at the trains.

## HO, Thomas Featured at 2020 Children's Day, R.A. Gray Building, January 25

The 37<sup>th</sup> Annual Children's Day, Museum of Florida History, Capitol Complex, is Saturday, January 25. BBMRA has participated in this fine event for at least 20 years, with John Sullenberger directing us in the earliest years. Plans right now for 2020 are to run the always expanding HO T-Traks and Randy Lombardo's Thomas the Tank Engine layout. We will be operating out of the same room as the last several years – what is referred to as [the Gallery for Innovation and the Arts](#). Children's Day operating hours are 10 a.m.

to 4 p.m. Set-up will be at 9 a.m. and breakdown ASAP beginning at 4. We need participation from as many club members as possible.

**Also, in this Lantern:**

- **Annual Layout Tour Moved to March 21**
- **2-10-0 Russian Decapods Introduced on HO T-Traks**
- **ACL-SAL Historical Society Annual Meeting February 6-8**
- **Doug Gyuricsko on Suitcase Connectors**
- **Why Do Men (Like Rod Stewart) and Women Love Model Railways?"**
- **Bill Bell on Prototype Rails 2020 in Cocoa Beach**

**\*\*\* BBMRA Meetings \*\*\***

**January 21, 2020, 7:30 p.m.**

"Third Tuesday" BBMRA Meeting. Capital City Christian Church, 6115 Mahan Drive. Program Director Andy Millott is presenting a video on Classic Florida Trains. There will also be discussion of BBMRA programs for the new year, including the June 27 show and sale.

## **Annual Layout Tour Moved to Saturday, March 21**

The 2020 BBMRA Annual Layout Tour is now scheduled for Saturday, March 21. March 28 was discussed during the November meeting, but tour director Andy Millott developed a conflict for that day and the plan now is for March 21. Andy is looking for members ready to show off their modeling work. Contact Andy at [millott32073@hotmail.com](mailto:millott32073@hotmail.com)

## **2-10-0 Russian Decapod Steamers Introduced on HO T-Traks**

### **From HO Coordinator Phil Weston:**

The BBMRA HO Division operated one of its HO T-Trak model railroad layouts at the Sopchoppy Depot Christmas & Winter Holidays event held at the Sopchoppy Depot on Saturday, December 14. Paul Schneider, Art Wilson, Scott Garner and Phil Weston participated in the event as did the infamous BBMRA N Scalers. This was the first year that the layouts were on display at the event. This was an outstanding event from our perspective with many friendly and interested visitors that were pleased to see the layouts in the building adjoining the depot.

The HO Division ran a 2-10-0 Russian Decapod steam locomotive with freight cars carrying the Georgia, Florida & Alabama (GF&A) banner. The GF&A was known for their Russian Decapod locomotives. We also ran a 2-10-2 Pacific steam locomotive with GF&A log cars. Thanks to Drew Hackmeyer for sharing some freight cars and GF&A decal sets that we were able to get prepared in time for the event. We hope that this event will become a regular part of our annual "running of the trains"!!

Since the event, a couple of our members have acquired additional Bachmann Spectrum 2-10-0 Russian Decapods and installed SOUNDTRAXX DCC Tsunami2 sound decoders and speakers that sound great and will be available for display at next year's event.

The HO Division will be operating a HO T-Trak layout at the State Museum's Children's Day event on Saturday, January 25. We'll have more information at the BBMRA meeting on the 21st.

I have three 33" HO T-Trak Corner Modules to distribute to specific HO Division individuals that have requested them and who will be preparing them for the June Show. I have one more of those 33" modules that

I need to find a home for. If you are interested, please contact me and it can be yours with the caveat that it'll be decorated & landscaped for inclusion in our June Show layout.

## ACL-SAL Historical Society Annual Meeting February 6-8

From **Big Bend Ties**, the monthly publication of the Gulf Wind Chapter of the National Railway Historical Society.

Railroad history fans will descend upon Jacksonville on February 6-8 for the 2020 annual meeting and conference of the Atlantic Coastline and Seaboard Air Line Railroads Historical Society, Inc.

The organization has announced a full schedule of activities, including a presentation on the preservation of Tampa's Union Station, vintage movies of the ACL and SAL from past decades, as well as the history of famous passenger trains operated by the two railroads. The Saturday night banquet speaker is Seth Bramson of the Florida East Coast Railway Society. His topic will be reflections on the FEC's 125th anniversary.

The big event Saturday is the 41st Annual Jacksonville Rail Fair at the Prime F. Osborn III Convention Center. The expo features railroad artifacts, memorabilia, collectibles and model railroad displays and layouts. The Rail Fair opens at 9 a.m. and wraps up at 5 p.m.

The conference hotel is the Crowne Plaza Jacksonville Airport/I-95N, which is located at 14670 Duval Road. For more details and to download the conference schedule, use this link: <http://www.aclsal.org/annual-meeting-2020.html>

## BBMRA Right-of- Way & Equipment Maintenance: Doug Gyuricsko on Suitcase Connectors

(Don't forget this fairly new column in the Lantern and send Sam notes and photos on your ongoing model railroading projects.)

**From Doug Gyuricsko:**

Hi Sam, this site at the bottom may be of help to someone of all gauges. This is part of my research to wire DCC, but it can be used for DC also. Many people, including me, have not found "suitcase connectors" to be 100 percent reliable. This site explains many reasons for that and how and what to use to be successful.



3M Company has specific connectors (IDC) for different wire sizes. I'm doing #12 AWG bus line to #18 AWG feeders. The #18 may need to be connected to even smaller wire when connecting to Atlas code 55 rail.

This is all about avoiding shorts in the layout for safety, but a step for even more safety is circuit breakers. Any layout with a short can cause over heating of the wires.

I am also determining where I want to place uncoupling magnets and which style of permanent and electrical coils to use for Kadee couplers. Electrical style requires cutting into the plywood base under the rail. Permanent ones can be cut in or placed on top of ties and could be changed around. There are numerous magnets now to experiment with.

<https://sites.google.com/site/markgurries/home/part-sources/connectors-1/idc-connectors>

## Why Do Men (and Women) Love Model Railways?

From the London Daily Telegraph, December 2019, (via Doug Gyuricsko)

As Rod Stewart reveals that he always books a hotel room for his model railway, we ask the enthusiasts why these tiny tracks hold such a big place in many men's hearts

While promoting his new album, Rod Stewart has revealed a hobby that doesn't quite align with his leopard-print trousers or the excitement of his hard-partying youth. The 70-year old rocker enjoys building and playing with model railways.

Admitting that he always books two hotel rooms (one for himself and one for his trains) Stewart also revealed that the track at his Beverly Hills mansion rivals the area of a regulation size tennis court – which, at over 20 meters long, is a lot of track.

It's easy to mock model railway enthusiasts as the dull cousin of train spotters, but the truth is that attics and spare rooms across the nation are filled with small buildings and model engines. So, what is it about the guilty pleasure of building tiny tracks and watching tiny trains zip around them that is so appealing?

Mike Hughes is the Marketing Director for the British branch of the [National Model Railroad Association](#) (NMRA). He believes that constructing model railway tracks is a "hobby that transcends generations" and encourages people to nurture a wide range of skills as problem solvers.

"It's a complete range of skills," says Hughes, 68. "You can begin by researching the different railways and trains, and then of course a great deal of skill goes into the planning. Woodworking skills are required to lay the track and then electrical skills to successfully install all the wiring. You improve your artistic and modelling skills as you build as well."

"People think that they're toys, but it does take a great deal of skill. They're anything but toys these days, with digital command controls (DCC) and such things."

Hughes is keen to dispel the stereotype of the middle-aged male model train enthusiast. "There are a great deal of women who build. And it does become a community after a while, people joining with a common hobby."

"But then there's a great range within the NMRA, people model different things. Some steam, some diesel, some electric. All of these different aspects are what generates the interest."

Indeed, model train titan Hornby cites an increase in young modelers as a key factor in its "healthy and steady" year-on-year sales. "Model train building is a nostalgia thing," a spokesman for the company said. "Dads and grandads alike are introducing their kids to it because it's what they themselves grew up with – they either collected Hornby as a kid or they were around for genuine old steam trains."

Hornby's key demographic continues to be the over-50s, who indulge their passion with an increased financial ferocity post-retirement. But the average age of the model railroader is dropping, and the ethnicity and gender of modelers is becoming correspondingly diverse.

Howard Smith, the features editor of [British Railway Modelling](#) magazine, believes that "it's the making of things and satisfaction of creating something for yourself that appeals so much". "From creating the scenery and landscape," continues Smith, "to painting the backdrops – known as backscenes – it's not a hobby that is exclusive to men."

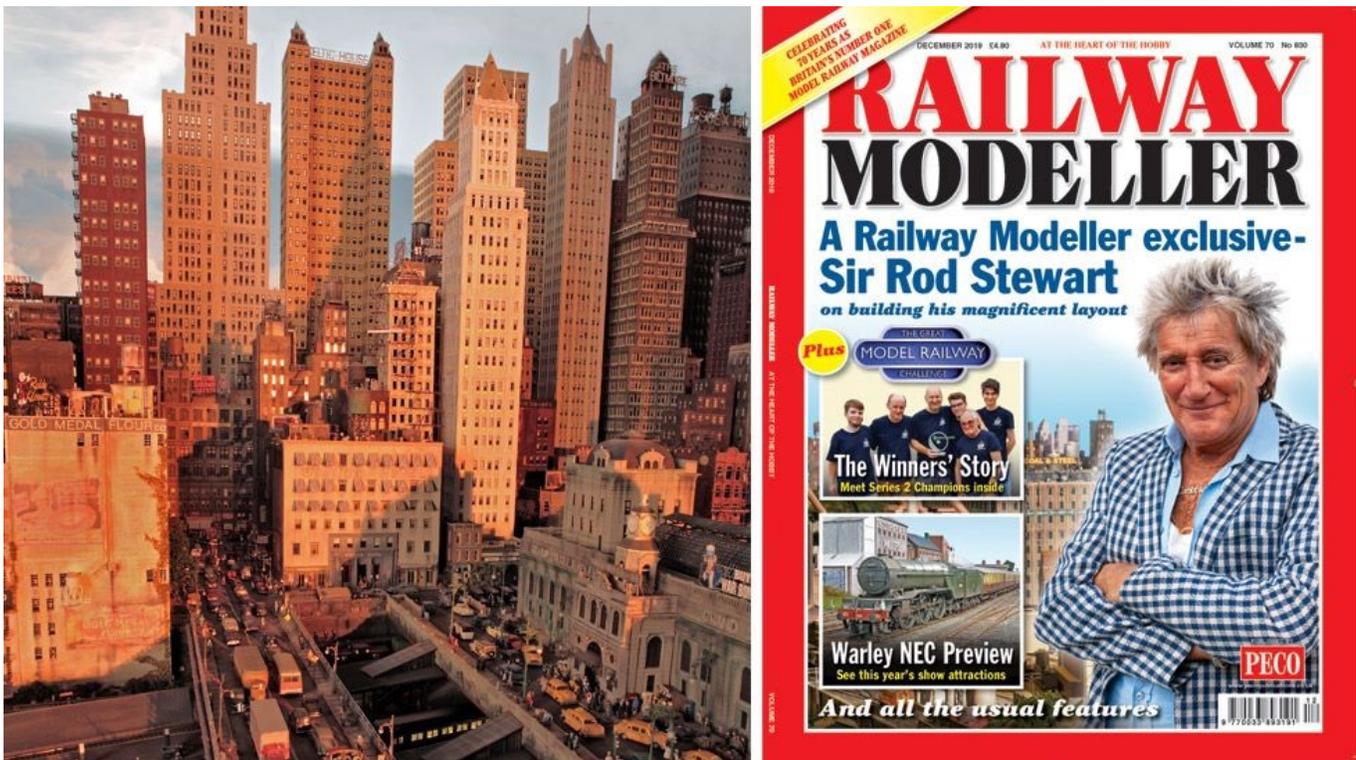
"For many, myself included, a model railway isn't just a trainset, but an attempt to recreate a real life location in miniature. It's like a 3-D art form. And the more realistic you make it, the more people like them – it's quite addictive!"

Smith believes the future of model railway building to be bright, with sales of the magazine going from strength to strength. "Demand for British Railway Modelling magazine has increased in recent times," he explains, "and we're quite pleased with that. It's reassuring to know that such a great hobby has a future and can evolve and appeal to other generations."

Mike Hughes agrees, saying he has witnessed the birth of a new modelling generation firsthand. "My generation enjoyed modelling, but then the next didn't. But the children who are growing up now, who enjoy Thomas the Tank Engine for example, are becoming interested once again.

"I think they like having something physical as well as being able to play video games."

Perhaps Rod Stewart's dedication to his model rail track shouldn't come as a surprise - and even less a target of mockery. Many model train enthusiasts appear to break the stereotypical mold, and with sales rising and a new generation becoming increasingly interested in the littlest of locomotives, model railroading looks like an industry on the rise. Full steam ahead!



Rod Stewart recently revealed his obsession with model trains.

## Prototype Rails 2020 Revisited

From William Bell

Prototype Rails 2020 was held at its usual venue of the Cocoa Beach Hilton Hotel on Thursday, Friday and Saturday, the second weekend of January. If anyone else attended, please come talk to me so we can compare notes.

As the name implies, most of the clinics were directed at rivet counters. They held over 90 clinics on Thursday evening, Friday and Saturday. Many of the clinics were the usual assortment of how the old railroads were run, details on specific car types, as well as scratch building specific railroad cars, and building the now ubiquitous resin kits using cyano acrylates. There were a number of clinics and discussions that looked at new subjects and new approaches to scale modeling.

There was a pair of clinics on modeling using state of the art 3D printers. One was highly upbeat on the endless possibilities that were to come. Tom Madden, a name that some of you will recognize from Model Railroader magazine, gave a more realistic view of state of the art 3D printing for HO scale modeling. Some of you may have purchased some of his passenger car sides and kits that he creates. He only uses 3D printing to produce his master copies, which he cleans up and uses for molding his sides and kits. His experience has shown that for anything smaller than O and S scale, the current state of the art 3D printing is right at the cusp of being able to reproduce useful thin parts. He brought in actual printed HO parts that when you tilted them in bright light, you could detect the lines in the plastic. This was extremely noticeable in flat areas, like boxcar, passenger car and reefer sides. Originally, these lines had been much more prevalent until he convinced Shapeways to print his sides flat on the bottom of their chambers. Of course, this gives one pause when dealing with thin models, even though he uses their best detail material.

Both ESU Locksound and Soundtraxx Tsunami 2 sales and support people gave clinics and were continually answering questions in the ballroom of the Hilton on how they supported prototypical model railroad operations. The Locksound people touted their programs as being faithful to prototype engine sounds and accessories. They also touted that their system had now increased to 12 channels.

As you are probably aware, Soundtraxx has changed their entire operation from the older Tsunami to the Tsunami 2, which presents a smorgasbord of separately taped original railroad equipment sounds. The modeler has complete control of choosing specific sounds for prototyping a specific engine. I have not done any work with Locksound or Lockpilot equipment, because I didn't want to buy a Lock programmer to install software. I have been experimenting with Soundtraxx's new Tsunami 2 for steam, which includes 90 different whistles and more exhaust chuffs than I will ever use, all in 16 bit sound.

The difference seems to be, if you want to load a series of specific sounds for an engine or if you want to build up the sounds yourself. When pinned down, both companies agreed that the quality, size and number of speakers had the most effect on realistic sound. You make your choice and take your chances.

There were other clinics that have left lasting impressions. The new Shake and Take project for 2020 will be making a boxcar by altering an existing kit with supplied parts and decals. Lance Mindheim's color strategies were notable - understanding prototype colors and using darker colors to hide less detail and/or make oversize detail blend into the background. John Wilkes' new hands on clinic on aging models using alcohol was instructive and it actually works; but I see no way to demonstrate it during one of our meetings. We might try getting together sometime this year in a venue where we can use airbrushes, dull coat and alcohol.

I believe that this is one of the best and cheapest annual clinics to which we in Tallahassee can drive. The cost has gone up to \$40 for registration for Thursday night, Friday, Saturday and touring layouts in the Merritt Island, Cocoa area of Brevard County Florida. There was just one O gauge layout on the tour belonging to retired dentist Marty Megregian. It takes up the bonus room over a three-car garage, is staffed with eight or ten UP Big Boys and about the same number of Challengers and is a sight to behold.

If you want more information on what transpired, google Prototype Rails 2020.



**April 25, 2020: NMRA Sunshine Region Northern Division Workshop, 9:00 a.m. through 3 p.m. Program and location to be announced later, but it will be in the Jacksonville area.**

**May 19, 2020, 7:30 p.m.: "Third Tuesday" BBMRA Meeting. Capital City Christian Church, 6115 Mahan Drive.**

**June 2020: Tampa Model Show, Saturday & Sunday, Florida State Fairgrounds, Tampa, FL. We don't have the exact date yet.**

**June 13, 2020: NMRA Sunshine Region Northern Division Workshop, 9:00 a.m. through 3 p.m. Program and location to be announced later, but it will be in the Jacksonville area.**

**June 20-28, 2020: TCA and Department 56 Collectors national convention in Jacksonville. More information on this major event later.**

**June 16 or June 23, 2020: "Third Tuesday" BBMRA Meeting. The third Tuesday is June 16, but the meeting may be shifted to the 23, which would be the final Tuesday before the 2020 show at the fairgrounds for final planning for the show.**

**June 27, 2020: a Saturday, the 29<sup>th</sup> Annual Tallahassee Model Railroad Show & Sale. Leon County Fairgrounds. Set-up is Friday, June 26.**

**August 2020: The Villages Summer Train Show, 9a to 4p on Saturday, 10a to 3p on Sunday. The Villages near Leesburg. Not sure of exact dates yet.**

**July 21, 2020, 7:30 p.m.: "Third Tuesday" BBMRA Meeting. Capital City Christian Church, 6115 Mahan Drive.**

**August 18, 2020, 7:30 p.m.: "Third Tuesday" BBMRA Meeting. Capital City Christian Church, 6115 Mahan Drive.**

**September 2020: Wiregrass Annual Model Railroad Show & Sale, National Peanut Festival and Fairgrounds, Dothan, AL. Not sure of exact dates yet.**

**September 15, 2020, 7:30 p.m.: "Third Tuesday" BBMRA Meeting. Capital City Christian Church, 6115 Mahan Drive.**

**October 1-3, 2020: NMRA Sunshine Region 2020 Convention - SUNSHINE EXPRESS. The John Trinkle Center, Plant City Campus of HCC 1206 North Park Road, Plant City, FL 33566. Hotel: Holiday Inn Express & Suites 2102 Park Road, Plant City, FL 33566**

**October 2020, 7:30 p.m.: "Third Tuesday" BBMRA Meeting. Capital City Christian Church, 6115 Mahan Drive.**

**October 24, 2020: NMRA Sunshine Region Northern Division Workshop, 9:00 a.m. through 3 p.m. Program and location to be announced later, but it will be in the Jacksonville area.**

## Big Bend Model Railroad Association Minutes for Meeting of November 19, 2019

President Andy Zimmerman called the meeting around 7:30 p.m., at the Capital City Christian Church, 6115 Mahan Drive; approximately 25 folks were present.

**Minutes** – Minutes from the October meeting were accepted without objection.

**Treasurer's Report** – Treasurer Drew Hackmeyer reported that the club is solvent. In keeping with club policy, detailed financial figures discussed during the meeting are not published in the Lantern. BBMRA members can obtain detailed information from Drew or Andy. Drew reported that renewals continue to come in and that the club membership was at 58. (Two new members signed up during the November meeting.) Drew reported that \$300 has been paid for the December donation to Toys for Tots from the BBMRA Memorial Fund.

**Division Reports/Large Scale** - Sam Miller, large scale coordinator, noted that the upcoming weekend was going to be a busy one – Sam, Doug Gyuricsko and former member Mark Beshera are participating in the Toy & Comic Book Show at the Tallahassee Shriners Club November 23; the Large Scale Division is helping Sam during the annual open house for his Woodgate neighborhood November 24; and the winter train show of the TCA Southern Division is being held in Jacksonville November 23. Sam reminded members of the annual holiday reception December 13, Friday the 13<sup>th</sup>, at his home in Woodgate.

**HO-** HO Coordinator Phil Weston reported that his group would be running T-Trak modules December 14 during the Christmas carnival in Sopchoppy, along with the N Scalpers. Andy Zimmerman asked if the HO folks could participate in a set-up at the Pensacola train show in early December. Phil replied they will consider this for next year, but not now. The HO Division continues building large radius T-Trak corners.

**Small Scale-** Garth Easton, small scale coordinator, also discussed the upcoming set-ups at the Sopchoppy depot and in Pensacola during that train show.

**Switching Layout**–Andy announced that Joe Haley is retiring as superintendent of the switching layout after who knows how many years. The club is seeking volunteers to take over this important task, using the new switching layout built by Doug Gyuricsko last year. Joe is being honored in the Lantern early next year.

**Good of the Group** – The club welcomed two new members. John Cummings is helping his grandson build an HO layout and will be seeking help from our HO folks. Chris Martin will be constructing a Garden Railroad layout modeling a logging railroad in Alabama. He was welcomed by Ron Fletcher, G Gauge coordinator for the Large Scale Division.

Andy asked Sam Miller to provide details on our space requirements for Children's Day at the R.A. Gray Building January 25. The club hopes to operate an HO T-Trak layout and Randy Lombardo's Thomas layout.

Andy Millott discussed plans for the annual layout tour next March. March 28 was discussed during the November meeting, but Andy developed a conflict for that day and the plan now is for March 21. Andy is looking for members ready to show off their modeling work. Contact Andy at [millott32073@hotmail.com](mailto:millott32073@hotmail.com)

Submitted by Sam Miller for Secretary Sheldon Harrison, who was unable to attend the meeting.

The LANTERN" is the official publication of the BIG BEND MODEL RAILROAD ASSOCIATION, INC. and is published monthly just prior to each regularly scheduled meeting. Subscriptions are included in all members' dues. Submit materials to Lantern Editor Sam Miller at [sammiller61113@outlook.com](mailto:sammiller61113@outlook.com)