

THE BRASS POUNDER

Newsletter of the Carolina Southern Division 12, Mid-Eastern Region,
National Model Railroad Association

Volume 14 Number 5

January 2015

Carolina Southern Division Events

Carolina Southern Division Annual Business Meeting

Saturday, Jan 31, 2015 - 10 am
Hunter Acres Baptist Church
4620 Heman Drive, Charlotte, NC.
See agenda below
Lunch follows at
Texas Ranch Steak House
1310 West Sugar Creek Road

Railroad Modeling University

Saturday January 17, 2015 – 9:00-4:00
Northside Baptist Church
www.carolinasouthern.org/RMUmmain.htm
I85 Exit 41, N on W Sugar Creek Rd,
Right on Roman Rd

Wade's Train Town

Open House

Saturday 1/10 & 2/14 10:00 – 2:00

Calendar of Events

2015 NMRA National Convention

Portland OR
August 23 - August 30, 2015
<http://www.nmra2015portland.org/>

Asheville Model Train Show

WNC Ag Center
Fri Mar 6 12-7 Sat Mar 7 9-5
NC Hwy 280, Airport Rd
Exit 40 off I-26 Fletcher, NC
www.asheville-trainshow.com

2015 Greensboro Train Show

Saturday, Mar 21, 2015 - 10 am - 3 pm,
Greensboro AMTRAK Station, Greensboro, NC.

Layouts in Progress

by Bob Halsey

Morgan Feldon and Troy Cross are building a large HO layout in Rock Hill, SC, on the second floor of their house. The layout represents a freight and coal operation in Pennsylvania during the '70s/'80s, with a single track main line and passing sidings.



Troy, Bob Wesmiller, and Jim Rager work on the benchwork

Although it has no name (as yet) it is a subsidiary of the Chessie System, using former B&O and C&O rolling stock hauling coal, steel, general freight, and intermodal traffic. It will have a staging yard and 3 or 4 freight yards (one will be for intermodal operations), all controlled by a Digitrax system.



Neil Anderson helps Troy with backdrop supports

Eventually, there will be an upper level accessed via helix, and possibly a future lower level, but for now, work is being concentrated on track laying, wiring, and installing tortoise switch machines (one at each end of the yards -- the others are hand-thrown). They currently have only 5 locomotives (all diesel -- no steam), but that is sure to increase!



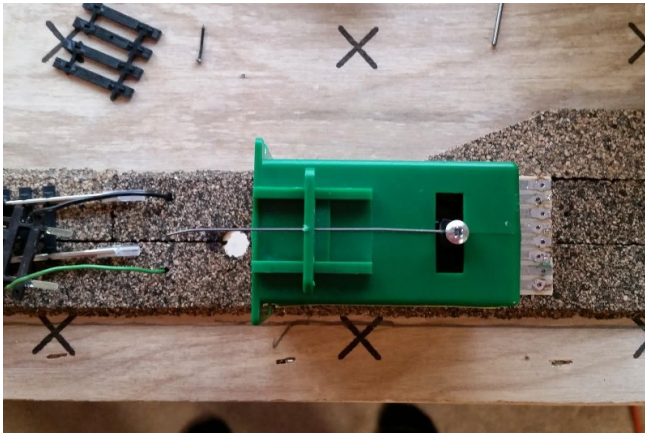
Jim and Bob get some track laid

Of course, a layout of this size requires some additional help to build, which has included Roy Becker (electrical & electronics tech), Bob Wesmiller (benchwork expert), and tracklayers/coolie laborers/advisers Jim Rager, Larry Paffrath, and Bob Halsey.



Roy Becker shows Troy how to control the layout

Morgan, when not messing with model railroading, is a self-employed website designer, and most importantly, a gourmet cook! He has prepared barbecue pork and chicken for our last two Division picnics, brought various goodies to Monday night sessions at Rick Knight's, fed the layout workers some outstanding dinners, and most recently prepared a complete Thanksgiving dinner (turkey, gravy, etc, and his home-made raspberry truffle and apple pie) for a few lucky work crew members!



Getting a Tortoise lined up for installation

Troy spends his non-model railroading hours as a "data architect" for Maersk Lines (he coordinates data bases to eliminate duplication and increase efficiency) which requires him to travel occasionally to Copenhagen and to Houston, TX. He is a computer whiz, and has helped a number of us resolve our personal computer problems!



Everything is in place for a test run

Obviously, it is a real pleasure to have these fellows as members of the Carolina Southern Division!

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Meet the officers of the CSD

by Rusty Doss, Asst. Sup.

Welcome back readers of the Brass Pounder to my series Meet the Officers of the Carolina Southern Division. The *Carolina Southern Division* is a division of the **Mid-Eastern Region** of the **National Model Railroad Association (nmra.org)** in and around the Charlotte North Carolina area. In the previous article (Brass Pounder Vol. 14 Number 4 October 2014) I introduced Larry Paffrath, CSD Superintendent to the Brass Pounder readers. After going to the top with our Superintendent, I will start with the

Board of Directors. First to put up with me will be Gil Brauch.



Gil Brauch, CSD Director standing by the town of D'Ree on his N scale layout

As we arrive at Gil's home and enter the basement area, that is home to his railroad, my eyes are drawn immediately to the name, "The DD&DM Railroad" I ask? Gil replies "we have twin daughters, named Debra Dene & Donna Michelle, and it sounds "railroady", we both laugh, but it does. Gil continues, It was originally envisioned as a connecting railroad between the N&W and the Southern. Looking around Gil's railroad, you quickly get, that Gil is into N scale and has been for sometime. Gil admits that he was originally focused on modular railroading, I make a note to ask how that came about later. As I continue to tour his railroad, it's also evident he still is, and by all appearances, very good at it! As I walk around his railroad asking questions, I'm reminded of my interview with Larry Paffrath and what he said about Gil and his visit to the Greenburg Train Show and I ask Gil which module he took there? Gil shows me the two he took with him for that show then adds "Each of these modules have lift out scenes." Gil then demonstrates how the "scenes" of his modules can be lifted out; this fascinated me! Gil then shows me all the different scenes he has available to be taken to shows. Gil said "I used to take two module frames with me to a show, one with a crossover and one without, I could then pick and choose which scene I added to the frame for each show. After touring this impressive railroad, seeing all that Gil has created both with track and scenery, I had to ask Gil why he does not have his Master Model Railroad certificate? Gil replies that he has not fulfilled the requirement for motive power/cars and hasn't done one in

structures/prototype scenes. Gil says that one of the reasons he likes lift out scenery, is so that he can work on it, without leaning over the layout. That to me, makes great sense! Going forward, Gil plans to build one more module that will become his "travelling module" the ones that have been his travelling modules in the past, will become part of his home railroad.

With that, the tour of the DD&DM Railroad is complete. Both of us having spent the majority of the day on our feet, I think we're both are ready to sit down for a while. Once were settled into a couple of easy chairs, I start off with "So what is your association with the Pentagon.... Colonel?"



A gift from the 8th Battalion, 158th Aviation Regiment

Colonel Brauch replied that he had spent 30 years on active duty and among his assignments, he served on the Army Staff, the staff of the Joint chiefs of Staff, and the Office of the Army Secretariat, in various positions. "For example, on the Army Staff, I was speech writer for the Deputy Chief of Staff for Operations, now called the G3" Gil recalls and continues, I left that and went to the Joint Staff Directorate of Logistics and was the desk officer for Canada and Europe. Then went back to Germany and then came back to the Pentagon and worked for the Deputy Under Secretary of the Army, (Operations Research). I sit there for a moment and then reply "I think that will answer one of the questions I normally ask: Tell us something we may not know about you." We both laugh aloud!

I say to Gil, one of the best questions that I've learned to ask, that has received the best replies, is the one I'm about to ask you, so I say "Looking back on your railroad hobby life, for most people like us, there was one defining moment in their life, that set the stage for you and the hobby's

relationship together, thinking back on your life, what was that moment? Your earliest memory of trains, talking to an engineer, riding on a train, playing with a toy train, what was that one moment, for you, that led you to where you are today with the hobby?" Having learned a lot about Gil from the days he spent in service to this great country, I realize now, that a lifetime of military service does not leave someone once they retire. It explains a lot about someone. Gil is a reserved person, at least I have always considered him reserved. Not someone to quickly jump into anything. A thinker, a thinking man. His answer is not immediate, I didn't expect it to be, especially now, having an idea of how his mind worked. After some time he gives me his answer, but I'm not prepared for it, it surprises me. "I don't have one", he says. I'm like REALLY??!! Gil replies that he had the obligatory around the Christmas Tree Lionel set when he was a young kid, that disappeared in junior high school, in a neighbor's attic. Gil recalls "He and I tried, unsupervised, to put together a layout, on the floor of the attic, and eventually lost interest and I never recovered the train. I don't have a clue what happened to it. I would love to have it back, a 1940s original Lionel train, but ain't got one. In the Army I was a transportation officer, trains hold that universal fascination, I believe there is a universal fascination because of the sheer size and the mechanical wonder, particular in the steam days. And so, being associated with transportation in my professional career, the defining moment for the modeling career was in the early 1970s, when I was going to graduate school at Georgia Tech. The girls (their daughters) were very young, preschoolers, and we went into a place called Lionel Leisure City. It was the equivalent of a ToysRUs back then, and I saw for the first time ever, N scale trains. Now, being on active duty and moving around a lot, HO was out of the question. There was too much stuff and it was too big, and I said I might be able to do something with that. So I bought the set and I still have it. That was back in the days when N scale locomotives had two speeds, zip and off!" We both laugh at that. Gil continues and says the locomotive has a single truck with a vertically mounted motor. "Eventually, I built a slightly larger than 4 by 8 layout in the basement, on

plywood. Then I got orders to go to Germany. The movers came and took a look and said we'll just put it on top of the load inside the container. I said well okay, its only insured for about \$3500.00, if you want to do that, that's fine. They then said we will go get some wood and build a crate". Again we laugh. So the layout went to Germany. But before I came back to the U.S. I sold it to someone over there and I came back to the D.C. area, that was in the early 1980s and the NMRA was having a convention in Washington D.C. So that was when I joined the NMRA so I could go to the convention. There they had an NTRAK setup, first time I had seen anything like that. And Mr. Jim Fitzgerald who is the guy who really kept NTRAK going all these years, who just died recently, was there running a humongously long coal train with a locomotive he had built called the "Cotton Brute". It was painted in Cotton Belt colors. He had bashed together two SD type locomotives into a very long one and had weighted it with depleted uranium. That one locomotive pulled hundreds of N scale coal hoppers. I then discovered the guys that eventually became Northern Virginia NTRAK when I went to the local NMRA division's convention. I started hanging out with them and adopted an orphaned module. I later built two of mine own and they became my standard show modules for many years.



NV (Northern Virginia) NTRAK Club Train that Gil helped design

Quite a history of N scale railroading right there. With the history covered, I moved forward with "some people say our hobby is waning, what do you think? Do you think its waning? Do you think it is becoming more for a certain group of individuals, than another group?" Since Gil had been into this hobby for a good while, I wanted to

get his opinion on what I had been hearing, since I started asking this question. Gil was quick with his answer: I think it's always been for a certain group more than another group. "Which group" was my reply back. Gil replied the group that has enough time and money to put into it. Gil's honesty was refreshing. Gil continued with this, Young folks are building their careers and raising their families. Us old retired guys ain't got much to do, so we can sit and put the time into it. Some of us are fortunate to have some disposable income that we can put in it. And if we have sort of been in it, in the medium time, we've accumulated stuff, because I'm a accumulator not a collector (we both giggle) now we get a chance to put it to use, however, the resurgence in modular railroading, which I attribute too NTRAK, whether its N scale or HO modular, the guys that showed that modular railroading works, was NTRAK, what scale track you lay down on the modules is your choice, but the resurgence has made it possible for a younger generation, with a little bit of time and interest, to participate without getting involved in these basement size layouts that you see in the model railroading press. That right there, is one man's honest opinion of where this hobby may be headed. Think about how quickly a module can be created, how easy they are to transport and set up and how many modular clubs there are. I had to ask one more question before moving on, so I asked Gil, your passion for modular layouts, do you think that had something to do with how mobile you had to be during your Army career? Gil's reply, again was quick: Having to be mobile in my Army career showed me the value of sectionalized and modularized railroads. Proof of this was when worked had to be completed in Gil's basement. He simply took the layout apart and stored the modules in a PODS in the backyard until the work was completed, then brought them back in and set them up again, without destroying anything.

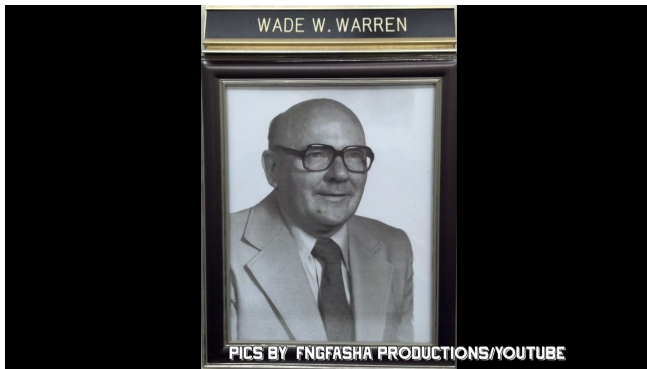
As my time with Gil was getting close to ending, I wanted to find out, how the retired Army officer, who had been all over Washington D.C., Germany and the world, ended up as a member of the Carolina Southern Division and living in Hickory (pronounced "Hick'ree") N.C., So I say to Gil, "this is a two fold question, first how did you, this Army retiree who had been all over the world,

come to settle in Charlotte N.C. and.., "in Hickory" Gil corrects, I laugh and say yes sir, I miss spoke, let me clarify that and say in Hick'ree and Gil says I am from Hickory. And I'm like what? Your originally from Hickory? Gil goes on and says that he is was born in Tennessee, but spent his growing up years in Charlotte. Went to college at Davidson and then off into the Army and did his thing, "we had two daughters and then time came for them to go to college and they came to Lenior-Rhyne and never left town." So when I retired, we were deciding where to live, and it was no question, you come to where they are. So already being a member of the NMRA, I started going to things associated with the Division. How I ask Gil, did he become a board member with the CSD? Gil replied that it just sort of happened. It started with website work and the board member position just fell into place. I asked Gil what are some of the challenges he recognizes for the CSD and what he thinks the solutions are? Population Density was Gil's short answer. The long answer was that as model railroaders, the CSD members are spread all over many counties and the density is not what you would find in major metropolitan areas. Second, there are not that many railroads that run through our areas, they are not as visible as they are in the northeast, here we really only have two. Third, is the "lone wolf" challenge: "I'm in my basement, building my layout for me to use and I may be a member of one of the operating societies, and that is where I get my railroad socialization and I don't need the NMRA." Interesting, thought provoking answers Gil has provided, so now lets see what the fix is, So I say, the population density, with the hobby not being as popular as in, say D.C., how do we overcome that? Gil's reply is honest, "I don't think there is an overcome, I think it is a matter of looking at what we got, and figuring out what they are interested in and trying to help them with that interest. As far a the general public is concerned, I think RMU is the keystone." So I ask about the lone wolf modeler: If one of these guys walked up to you today and asked you why should I become a member of the NMRA, what would be your answer? Gil replies that the 'canned answer" is to support the hobby. But there is really no good answer for that guy, because in essence what he is asking is "what's in it for me".

If he is happy in his basement, the true answer to the question is nothing is in it for you. I follow-up with "lets say he is on the fence, he comes up and says I have been reading some about operations, how will joining the NMRA help me help my layout? Gil's reply is quick! "It puts you in contact with people of similar interest and helps you find those people and then you do with it what you want. In the NMRA no one is a master of everything, even master model railroaders, they don't master everything, there are some things they are better at than others. Jack Parker, (MMR) is a master at weathering. He is good at a the other stuff, but he is a master at weathering and likes to teach weathering. Fred Miller (MMR) if you want something done electronically, that's the guy to go to. He is good at the other stuff, his trolleys are marvels of art, but his electronics are mind blowing. I like doing scenery, I have tried several different ways to do and I like teaching it. If you join the NMRA you will be put in touch with these guys. I have to hand it to Gil, his answers are spot on.

I asked Gil how long he had been a member of the NMRA? I don't think he wanted to say the "number" of years, so he replied that he "joined in the early1980s. I asked what was that one event that stood out to him, a major high point, something that you did or were a part of, that when you think about it, a grin comes over your face. Gil was really fast with his reply here and said it was the 1996 N Scale Convention that we held in Alexandria, Virginia, I was the treasurer. We had decided we were going to have an east coast convention. We invited clubs from all over the east coast to come and they came! We reserved a hotel in that area, we planned to use the ballroom and atrium to set up the modules and the other rooms for clinics and vendors. With less than 3 months before the convention, the hotel called to say we have double booked you with a National Chess Tournament. There was no other hotels in the area available that close to the date. We went back to the hotel and said okay, what are we going to do about this. They took the bottom level of the parking deck and added carpet, covered the sides and added A/C units. So we said we could live with that. We got busy redesigning the layout to accommodate the sloped ramps of the parking garage, which turned out to

be the world's largest N scale layout! At that time, there was a weatherman, of Channel 4 in that area, who liked trains and came down on Friday and did his weather report from in front of part of the layout. Channel 4 was the most watched channel in that area at the time. The very next day, two of the other major three channel's weathermen came and did the same thing. So the day of the train show, we are charging admission to the show, \$5 for family, and we had over 20,000 people come through that train show!!!! It was absolutely incredible and a great time. We established something that continued and kept going for twenty, twenty five years!!!



Wade W. Warren, creator of Wade's Train Town

With that I looked at Gil and said "I have three words for you: Wade's Train Town."

Before Gil and I left Wade's earlier that day, in the Board of Director's meeting we attended, Gil announced that all major repair work could be considered completed. This was a milestone for Carl Wessell, Michael Lethcoe and Gil, who put in many hours on the repairs. As we were locking up, I asked Gil what he was feeling right then, I will share that in just a moment. But first I asked Gil who, what, where, when and why? Gil smiled and said Rick Knight called me one day and said "you know about the layout in Brookford?" and I said "no" and we both laugh!! Gil continues, "Rick said why don't you come over here to Bo'peeps" and I said Bo who?" More laughs. That is one of the commonalities I have found with this group of guys, they are full of fun and good times!



Bo Peep Restaurant that sits across the road from Brookford where Wade's Train Town is housed

Gil continues and tells me how Rick and he got together and Rick had found out about it, Rick has that knack about him, well at that time, he was in this area doing his business. He found out about it and asked me over to help him evaluate it and whether or not we wanted to help preserve it, because it had sat there for so long and the town was telling the family, either get it out of here or do something with it, that was the summer of 2006. And so we talked about it, and he and I kind of decided together to try and put something together to do something with it. Since I lived in Hickory, I volunteered to be the Project Manager, thinking that people would come up and help out. Carl Wessell because of his unique situation, put in a lot of time and became a regular. Michael Lethcoe, he regularly came over. We had a half dozen or so of people that would come up once a month on Thursday nights. I can see Gil is attached to Wade's, it has been 8 years of his Thursday nights and 2nd Saturdays of each month. I can only imagine how hard it is for Gil, not to think of Wade's "as his layout", that's a lot of time to put in. So as we were leaving Wade's earlier that day, when I asked Gil what he was thinking, right then at that moment, just having announced that all the major repairs had been completed, his reply was "the vision of the man who put it together, initially, continues to fascinate me. His creative mind. He, like most model railroaders wasn't schooled in Urban Planning, and yet when you go through the town, everything that you would need in a town to make it livable, is here. Car dealerships, hospitals, fire department, a yard sale, its all here!"



Gil Brauch (left) announces to the Warren Family (left to right) Grandson, Wade's wife Maxine, Daughter Kim and Granddaughter, that all repairs/construction have been completed and that the CSD has plans to keep the layout open to the public.

Going forward, Gil hopes to get volunteers to come on weekends to help with the open houses at the layout. I asked Gil what you would say to someone who reads this and thinks hey I might be interested in coming up but... they're on the fence about it. Gil's reply was quick, "don't be intimidated if you don't know anything about it." Gil went on to say that the first time someone volunteers, they will have written instructions to help them know what to say and there will be an experienced member there with them. Eventually a brochure will be available to hand out. So if you would like to help out by being a Host for an Open House, look for information in upcoming

newsletters, or on the website and sign up. I can tell you that it is a treat to see and hear the history of Wade's Train Town. I will have to check to make sure, but I think volunteering for this would count toward one of your NMRA Achievements, check with Dave Chance to be sure.

As a final question, I wanted to ask Gil "what is most satisfying about this hobby to you?" NOW this took Gil a long moment to answer. I gave him time. During our time together, asking about something Gil is so passionate about, I had seen the excitement in his face and energy in his replies, but here, he is back to the "thinking man." We all have our own answer to this question, when Gil replied, his answer was solid, he said "Finishing a job, finishing a section of scenery so it looks reasonable. The last tree in a section. About being able to step back, look it over and say "that works... that's believable."

And with that, we finish the interview. It was a pleasure to spend the day with Gil. I found him easy to interview (not at all shy like he said he was) and full of knowledge and more than that, I found him to truly be someone who cares about this hobby and the direction it is headed and willing to do what he can to move it forward in a good direction.

Look for an expanded article in the near future on Wade's Train Town.

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CSD Annual Business Meeting

January 31 2015

The Annual Business Meeting of the Division will be held at 10:00, January 31, 2015 at Hunter Acres Baptist Church, 4620 Heman Drive, Charlotte, NC.

Directions:

From I77, take exit 16, Sunset Rd east, NC115 north. Go 1.2 mi on NC 115, turn right on Gibbon. Go 0.9 mi, turn left on Christenbury Rd, Go 0.3 mi, turn left on Brandie Glen turn right on Nicholas, turn left on Heman Dr.
 OR from I85, take exit 41, W Sugar Creek Rd, north. Go 2.7 mi on W Sugar Creek Rd, turn left on Christenbury, turn right on Nicholas, turn right on Heman.

Agenda follows:

CSD Annual Meeting Agenda
January 31 2015

Welcome & introduction of any new members or guests present

- October 2014 MER Convention review
- Next MER Convention October 22-25, 2015 Mt. Laurel, NJ
- Next NMRA Convention Portland OR August 23 - August 30, 2015
- Reports:
 - --Paymaster (John S.)
 - --Membership (Morgan F.)
 - --Brookford Project and website (Gil B.)
 - --Newsletter (Jack H.)
 - --Achievement Program (Dave C.)
 - -- Railroad Modeling University (Rusty Doss)
- Elections (Nominees from Nominating Committee)
 - Director 2017: Roy Becker
 - Superintendent: Jack Haynes
 - Clerk: Fred Miller
 - Director 2016 (Replacing Jack Haynes): Blayne Olsen
- Appointed positions
 - Program Coordinator
 - Newsletter editor
- Plans for 2015:
 - Brookford Open House staffing
 - Quarterly:
 - Meeting with clinic and brief business meeting
 - Site visit or tour
 - Special event
 - --Swap meet Brookford Open House (November)
 - --RailOps weekend
 - --Boy Scout Merit Badge Day at the Explorium
 - --Modeling contests

Open Discussion

Adjourn (Optional gathering for lunch)

The Division Brass

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Submissions For Brass Pounder

Next Issue Submission Date
 March 2015 February 22, 2015

Articles are welcome on any railroad topic,
 model or prototype. Your editor is available to
 assist in preparing the materials.

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