

## ROANOKE VALLEY

## MODEL RAILROADING

## NOTICE: Membership Meeting - November 15

## • UPCOMING EVENTS

- 27th Annual Neuse River Valley Model Railroad Club Show; Nov 5th and 6th, 2011 <http://www.nrvshow.org/>
- Railfest Model Train Show, Bluefield, WV, Nov. 12-13
- Nov 27, Greater York All Train Show
- Dec 3-4, Greenberg's Train & Toy Show, MD State Fairgrounds, Timonium, MD [http://www.railserve.com/jump/train\\_shows.cgi?http://www.greenbergshows.com/](http://www.railserve.com/jump/train_shows.cgi?http://www.greenbergshows.com/)
- Dec 10, 10-2 P.M: Open House for the RVMRC.
- Dec 17-18, Greenberg's Train & Toy Show, Richmond Raceway Complex, Richmond, VA, [http://www.railserve.com/jump/train\\_shows.cgi?http://www.greenbergshows.com/](http://www.railserve.com/jump/train_shows.cgi?http://www.greenbergshows.com/)

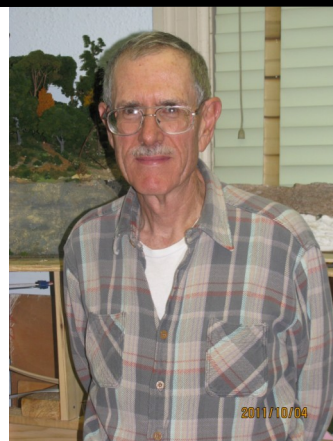
## EDITORS NOTEBOOK

My interview with John Beirne was very enlightening and very, very interesting. He started working for the railroad in the 70's and has many good stories to tell—too many for the newsletter. I hope you enjoy his interview.

*On Tuesday, Nov. 15 we will be having a membership meeting. Mark this club meeting on your calendar as DON'T MISS CLUB MEETING.*

Yo, yous guys. Give me something to print. I'm starting a couple new columns. I'm sure y'all have lots I can use in your newsletter.

## WHO IS THIS MEMBER



Meet John Beirne from Roanoke. You'll find John in the On30 room and here's his interview.

Q: John, where are you originally from?

A: Missouri in the St. Louis area. I guess you would like to know how I got interested in trains? "Yip!" I said. My father liked trains so he would put my mother and me on a train and he would drive 50-60 miles and pick us up. My father had me hooked on trains before I can remember. My first layout was HO on a 4x8 sheet of plywood back in 1960. It was a good time to be a rail fan in St. Louis because the St. Louis terminal was very busy with passenger trains and all the eastern rails met the western rails in St. Louis so there were plenty of trains to ride and plenty to watch.

Q: Did you see any steam

engines on the tracks?

A: At 10 years of age I have a vague recollection of seeing steam engines.

Our house was situated on a bluff overlooking the Mississippi River. Below the bluff it was flat land and I do remember standing on the toilet late at night where I could see the tracks and watch the Burlington Zephyr trains running North probably to Minneapolis.

When I went to college, majoring in Civil Engineering, I got involved in the wrong crowd—train fans! That time was a lot of fun. Passenger service was decreasing. We had quite a few trains before the lines became freight only. There was an increase in steam powered excursion trains, so, my college friends and I would cut class and ride the excursions (we *laugh*). In fact, I met my wife on a blind date during one of our steam trips. Ann and I have two sons both living in Roanoke with their wives and our 5 grandchildren.

My railroad friends and I would find an empty room on campus and put our 2x3 modules together and run trains. We still managed to graduate!

I joined the Army in 1970 and went into the Army Transportation Corps. As a Transportation Corp Officer my training took me to Fort Eustis, VA. There the Army introduced me to all modes of transportation, including steam and diesel

trains but the training emphasized on trucks and loading ships. The train yard going around the military base was like a layout. We would ride in the cabs and they showed us how to couple and uncouple

cars, what you could haul, throwing turnouts; etc. so, if you were put in a railroad unit you would know the basics to get you by.

Part of our training which was really, really cool was hooking equipment to helicopters. One training session involved a cannon transport via Chinook helicopter. The rotors on a helicopter turn so fast they create friction as they cut through the air and this friction causes a static charge and will discharge to ground if possible.

You can imagine this guy straddling a cannon holding this donut like sling with the Chinook, the size of a bus, hovering 8-9 feet over your head and this guy has to attach the sling to the under belly of the helicopter as he gets a jolt of high voltage and he needs to jump off as quick as possible or he goes with the cannon! I've got to admit that this part of the training was cooler than the trains

Then I went off to Ft. Lee, VA to test new equipment the Army would purchase. We would load equipment onto flat cars and run them through makeshift tunnels fashioned after tunnels in other countries. We did this to make sure

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the flatbeds would go through the tunnels e.g. France to Norway.

I was sent to Viet Nam during the time our armed forces were getting out of the country. I was involved in the inventory and selection of equipment and material to be placed onboard ships and transport planes, as much and as fast as we could. Most of this stuff was transported to the receiving points via truck but there were trains too, so again I was involved with trains. They were narrow gauge on steel ties but they didn't cover many miles due to war damage. The engines were French diesel electric.

When I got out of the Army I ended up with the Southern Railway in Atlanta. I worked on track design, survey and construction for 3 years.

I then went to work for the Illinois Terminal Railroad. The IT was a 500 mile long short line that started business in the 1900's as a interurban streetcar company. The route was in Central Illinois between St Louis and Peoria, IL. In the late 1930's they changed direction and developed a strong freight business pulled by 600 volt DC electric locomotives. By the 1970's the IT had developed a good business of hauling grain products, chemicals and general freight. I worked for the IT from 1976 to 1981 when the ITC was purchased by the Norfolk & Western. I stayed in St. Louis in maintenance supervision for track and bridging. From 84-88 my wife and I spent time in Moberly, MO that was, at that time, a N&W division. Maintenance is a rough and demanding 24/7 job but it was a lot of fun and the work was fulfilling.

Here's a great maintenance story: I thought I had about 10 days to move to Moberly but N&W called me December 20 and told me to get to Moberly right away and finish this bridge project before the



Makado 2-8-2 4960  
1964 St Louis, MO

weather turned bad. I told my wife I needed to go and she needed to pack up and find another home in Moberly to live in.

I went to the bridge site out in the middle of nowhere and it was just a matter of sliding the old bridge out using two cranes and lifting the new one in—an 8 hour job, what could possibly go wrong. It was a beautiful day but it was going to turn cold that night. We got the old bridge out with no problems but sliding the new girder bridge didn't go so good. One of the cranes was going too fast, broke the cables for it's counter weight and down went the crane boom. Okay, we have one crane on one end and we'll use hydraulic jacks to slowly move the other end over into place.

It's starting to get colder and colder and it got down to minus 20F. The hydraulic fluid in the jacks would freeze which made them useless; so, N&W was sending us jacks from all over. We had a trailer with a heater to thaw the jacks but the heater could only maintain 30F. There wasn't any room in the trailer for men

because it was full of jacks. We could get 3 or 4 pumps out of a jack before it would freeze up again. We were out there 3-4 days until the bridge was in. Now we had to ballast the track. The wet hopper cars were like a chunk of ice so when the shoots would open—*clink*—a rock would fall out, the rest of the load was frozen in. We tried diesel fuel, wood and torches to heat the car but nothing worked. We ended up just creeping the track up. Christmas morning the first train crossed the new bridge and it had a Christmas tree on the front of it.

In 88 or 89 my wife and I moved to Alexandria, VA and did a short time there. We then were moved to Roanoke and I got into the geometry line to test the durability of track. I was familiar with geometry cars while working for the Southern Railway. This used to be done by hand until after WWII and in the 60's the Southern Railway built this geometry car that would do the measuring for them. Working for N&W we purchased a UP vintage coach and modified it to hold all our gear plus a yard slug so we

could use the generator. The slug was heavy so any weak ties could be measured by the instrumentation we had installed on the slug. When N&W merged with Conrail we took our coach up North to check the tracks. That was a good experience! Our coach is still in operation and I was able to get it parked in the museum yard. When the museum has their open house in May you'll find me in the geometry coach.

I retired in 2006 from N&W and joined the RVME club. When I got here Hank, Rick and the others had the On30 already running. I started out building structures for the layout.

Q: What's your favorite thing about model railroading?

A: Here at the club it's the companionship with other people having the same interest

Q: You grew up having an HO layout. Why did you gravitate to the On30 side?

A: When I came here everyone was working on the On30 (continued mid page 3)

# MODELING TIPS & TECHNIQUES

In this series of 3 videos the BigE talks and demonstrates the use of airbrushing on a structure. If your thinking about or have never used an airbrush this maybe a good primer for you. He also has a tip on using a Sharpie pen on window frames and the hazards of building your own spray booth. <http://www.youtube.com/user/thebig61#p/c/9A794FDD02ED93A0/2/ocgLvVZWVM>

I came across an interesting article in MR using pine bark as rock. The strata is already in the bark so using a single piece as one boulder or several pieces stacked to give a

cliff illusion would do the trick. Setting them with any glue medium and then painting them with plaster will give you a pretty good illusion. You can read more about this in the Model Railroad Magazine, October 1976 issue

I was talking to some guys at the club about the high cost of the Model Railroader magazine. I can understand why the cost is high when I compare it with my other subscriptions but I just can't dig deep enough to pull out 40 some bucks. John Beirne suggested I check out my local library; so, this morning while running around doing

some errands I stopped by my local library and there on the shelf was Model Railroader, plus, the Roanoke Railroad Heritage magazine, The Arrow. I also noticed a lot of old geezers reading the paper, magazines or taking a snooze. I thought, don't these guys have something else to do like model railroading! Perhaps when I go back to read the new issue of Model Railroader I'll take a sign to put on the table that will say FRED NEEDS HELP! WOULD YOU BE INTERESTED IN MODEL RAILROADING? TALK TO ME. I just might get some help for Fred!.

**MEMBERSHIP MEETING  
NOVEMBER 15**

# LEARNING PROTOTYPE

I was at a Boy Scout leaders luncheon meeting this past Monday and the question of varying the speed of AC motors in diesel engines came to mind. Why would this question just pop up during this meeting? The Cub Master just so happens to work for TMEIC and knows everything about automation. So, I asked him "How can you vary the speed of an AC motor?" Well, he didn't let me down. In fact, he was at the GE engine plant in Erie a few years back and he said GE has been installing AC motors for approximately 15 years. He explains that controlling the frequency will vary the AC motor. This is done by rectifying the AC coming from the generator and chopping the needed frequency at the DC stage and then converting back to AC with the needed frequency to increase/decrease the motor speed. For further details here's a couple of web sites.

[http://www.me.ua.edu/me360/spring05/Notes/Topic17-AC Motor Speed and Other Motors\\_sv.pdf](http://www.me.ua.edu/me360/spring05/Notes/Topic17-AC%20Motor%20Speed%20and%20Other%20Motors_sv.pdf)

and [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Diesel locomotive](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Diesel_locomotive)

November 18, 1883

It didn't take an act of congress to divide the continent into four time zones but it was the large railway companies that did it. They really didn't have a choice because without the time zones scheduling was a nightmare. Today, these four time zones are pretty much the same. It was not until 1918 that Congress officially adopted the railroad time zones.

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# BEWARE

This column came to mind when I purchased something from Micro Mark: Despruing tweezers 82393, \$17.80. The problem with this tool was that the cutting blades didn't mesh, so, I sent it back. I received the replacement today and the replacement is much better; however, I can still see light towards one end of the cutting blades when the two are meshed together. Next time I will buy from Jensen Tools.

Are Athearn engines really as lousy as some say? What brand wouldn't you buy and why? Let your readers know.

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layout and the HO room stayed dark, so, I just stayed in this room. It wasn't just a few years back that the lights went back on in the HO room and things started happening in there.

Q: Where do you think your talent exists in model railroad layouts?

A: On30 is really good for scratch building. It's a good scale to work with because

you can get a far amount of detail in your modeling. I tried G-Gauge one time and that required too much detail.

Q: What was your favorite train excursion?

A: I would have to say a Burlington trip in St Louis using a 1920's vintage 2-8-2. This steam engine is still in use for the Grand Canyon Railroad.

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# COMMENTS ABOUT THE FIRST NEWSLETTER

Thank you, Lee! This was a lot of fun to read. Wilson

Excellent Job Lee! I will try to write up some articles and get some pics from time to time to put in this....(as time permits). Thanks for your hard work and efforts!

Don

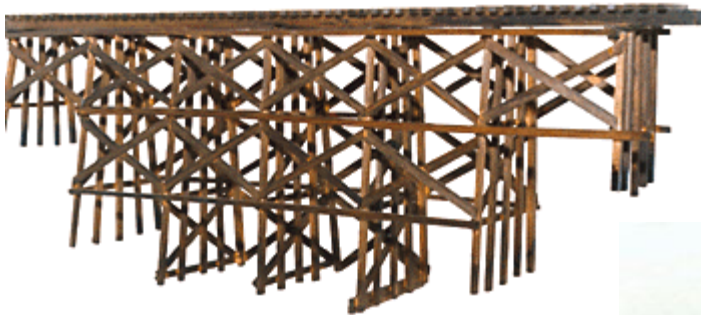
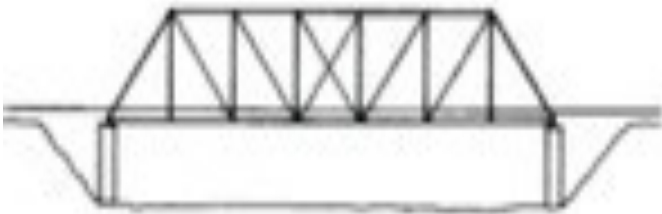
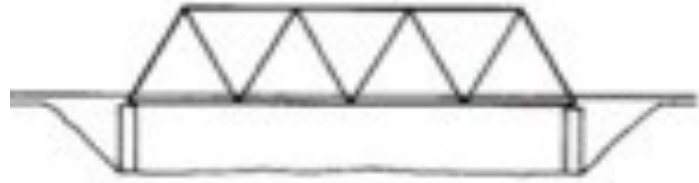
nice job lee! Hank Very good - Interesting. Is there a way we can save this on the Club's website? but first, do the club members want this posted? John Beirne

Great job - thank you for doing this. I should have made sure you knew when the next open house was going to be (Dec 10) so you could have added that as well. I'm looking forward to the next issue. David McCall

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Can you identify each bridge by it's design name?

- A. Howe
- B. Trestle
- C. Pratt
- D. Lattice
- E. Warren
- F. Girder



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