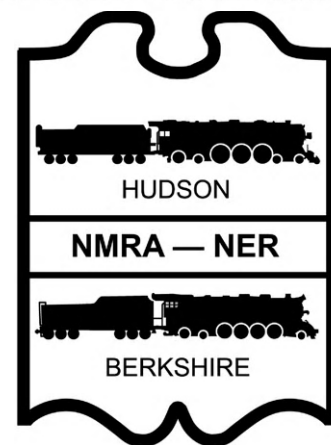


# FORM 19

**The Official Newsletter of the  
Hudson-Berkshire Division  
of the NER NMRA**



**Order Number 383**

**February 2023**

## **Next Division Meeting**

### **February Division Meeting**

**Friday, February 17, 2023 7pm to 9pm**

**Malta Community Center, One Bayberry Drive, Malta, NY 12020**

**"Membership Open Forum"**

## **From the Editor . . . . By MARK SKLAR**

I enjoyed the January HBD meeting with Dave Marecek's presentation of the Trainz Simulator. The Trainz Simulator was much more comprehensive than I thought. I now understand how someone can build quite an empire with it and operate it as the prototype. This coming month's meeting is important for all to participate. We will be having an open forum to get your ideas on the future of the division. See Doug Dederick's "Open Forum" on page 4.

Our new president Ben Maggi has kicked off a new feature this month called "Derailed". Ben wants to see stories of model builds that didn't go quite as planned. See page 4 for the story.

Geoff Dunn has submitted a story on how he wired his Digitrax Zephyr for mobile use with his modules. See page 5 for the article. Thank you Geoff!

Please, if you have completed a project you are proud of, then send me a few pictures and a brief description so all of us can enjoy seeing it. Send it to [mark4527841@gmail.com](mailto:mark4527841@gmail.com).

See you here next month.

-Mark



## Form19

The *Form19* is published ten times per year for members of the Hudson Berkshire Division.

The opinions expressed do not necessarily reflect those of the Division. Products and publications mentioned in *Form19* in no way constitute an endorsement by the Division.

### Contributing to the Form19

The *Form19* staff welcomes all contributions. Letters, articles, photos, and other items may be mailed or e-mailed to the editor. Please include a note if you would like materials returned. Suggestions also welcome.

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# The President's Corner

By Ben Maggi

I have recently enjoyed the articles written by Rich Smith showing how he took an older model from the 1950s and detailed it to better match a specific prototype. This type of modeling was very common in the “early years” of the hobby because, frankly, there was really no other way of obtaining a model of a specific locomotive unless you were the few who needed B&O “Docksider” switcher or PRR K4s Pacific or some other commercially available engine. There is a lot of great information contained in Rich’s articles regarding techniques.

I won’t say that kitbashing and/or scratchbuilding are “lost arts” but they sure aren’t common like they used to be. Just look through recent issues of the big model railroading magazines and compare them to older issues from the 1970s and 1980s. At the same time, paint and decal manufacturers have slowly closed up shop. And, the proliferation of ready-to-run (and gorgeous!) models in all scales has seemingly made scratchbuilding and kitbashing a thing of the past. ... *OR HAS IT?*

Sure, there are plenty of great models that you can pull out of the box and plop on the layout which will give you instant satisfaction. I have some and love them, so I am not knocking them here. But if you spend a lot of time online or talking with people you will see that decal manufacturers are making a comeback by using EBay and

printing them on demand, which is a good business model. Also, the internet has exploded with a wealth of 3D printed detail parts for almost anything you can think of. Some sell you the parts, and other sell you the digital files to them so you can print them yourself. What this means is that kitbashing and scratchbuilding might not be as prevalent as they once were due to necessity, but there is still an interest out there for people to build. And I think that is great.

In other news, the Division recently held our first “hybrid” in-person and remote online meeting a few weeks ago in Clifton Park. We watched an online presentation by Dave Marecek on the *Trainz* game software, a program I probably spent 2,000 hours on between 2005 and 2015 before work, family, and Windows 10 got in the way. While he demonstrated how to construct virtual model railroads, I mostly used it to run trains on pre-designed layouts set in the USA, UK, Australia, Switzerland, and Germany. It was, and still is, a lot of fun.

Elsewhere in this Form 19 you will see a new column titled “Derailed”. In it, I describe one of my modeling projects that went awry and *literally* derailed, so to speak. I am hoping that this column will be a place for members to share stories, pictures, or short anecdotes about some of their modeling projects that didn’t perhaps go as they planned. I am positive everyone reading this newsletter (except

( Continued on next page)



*(Presidents Corner Continued)*

perhaps Bob Hamm, who doesn't ever make mistakes!) has had at least one problem come up. By sharing these stories perhaps we can have a good laugh and share our learned wisdom with others. So, please feel free to reach out to Form

19 editor Mark Sklar and tell us about your misadventures. You don't have to write a lot... heck, you can just send a picture and not write anything else at all. But, we would all love to hear about it... at least I want to know I am not the only one

who isn't perfect!

Our next meeting is in February and will be an open forum, so look elsewhere in this issue for details.

See you at the next meeting!

## Upcoming Division Meetings/Events

### February Division Meeting

**Friday, February 17, 2023 7pm to 9pm**

Malta Community Center, One Bayberry Drive, Malta, NY 12020

### March Division Meeting

**Friday, March 24, 2023 7pm to 9pm Mike Hachey's Layout**

Look for details in the March Form 19

### NERx Virtual Event

The NMRA Northeastern Region will hold its annual NERx virtual event on March 20-23 from 6:30-10:30 PM Eastern Time.

The event will include clinics, layout tours, a model showcase, and panel discussions. For more information, visit [nerx.org](https://nerx.org).

Where to watch NERx

The preferred place to watch the NERx virtual convention is YouTube. Tune in to NERx from 6:30-10:30pm eastern by using this link and finding the "Live" presentation:

<https://www.youtube.com/c/NMRAORGMModelRailroading>

The NERx virtual convention will also be streamed on Facebook simultaneously with YouTube. If you plan to watch NERx on Facebook, we recommend you "like" and "follow" this NMRA Facebook page to receive notifications when the event goes live at: <https://www.facebook.com/NMRA.org>

You have probably received an email from the Northeastern Region office announcing that the latest issue of the Coupler is now online. The NER website is - [NER Coupler](https://ner.org).



## February Meeting "Open Forum"

This month we will be holding an "Open Forum" meeting for **all our members** to come and talk about anything they would like to talk about. I cannot stress enough that this is **YOUR** Hudson Berkshire Division and we want (no, need) input from our members. Here are a few things we can talk about to give you an idea;

- 1) Form 19 and what you would like to see in it as far as articles or anything else you would like; for example, a section to list items for sale by members
- 2) Clinics or presentations (suggestions) - What would you

like as far as upcoming meetings?  
Are we doing a good job?

- 3) Would you like to see a bus trip or car pool trip? Would you go?
- 4) GTE - There are some questions we need to address as far as where we need to head with our train show (Our President Ben and James our GTE show coordinator will talk more on this at the meeting)

These are just a few of the things we can talk about. The floor is open for any suggestions or concerns regarding our Division.

I also would like to bring up an idea I had. It involves us (members) building a free-standing switching puzzle for adults during our GTE train show to be used as an interactive tool. It would also

be used to display some of our members' (your) buildings. We would place the buildings on the sidings to be used for the industries. These could be exchanged with other buildings from time to time, or even during the show so everyone has a chance to display their handiwork. It could also be used by our members over the course of the year. I would like to see a show of hands if you are willing to participate in such a project. **THERE MUST BE** interest in this otherwise we will not pursue it. OK, so **PLEASE** come and join in on a low key get together with your fellow HBD members.

Thanks, Doug

## Derailed By Ben Maggi

I am hoping this column will be something you all enjoy reading and contributing to. Each of us has had problems come up with our projects, resulting in lessons learned that can benefit others. If nothing else, we can all smile and nod in agreement or write down on our bulletin board as things to avoid.

My first real misadventure occurred when I was a teenager in the mid-1990s. Bachmann had released its excellent plastic HO scale 44-tonner engine a few years before, and I wanted to paint one for a local shortline. I didn't receive a large allowance and had to save for a bit to purchase my model. I tested it on my layout and it ran well, so I was pretty happy. But, one day I left a switch set to a siding which led to the edge of my layout (for further expansion, I had reasoned when I built it) and the

locomotive took a trip to the floor. I was crushed, but thankfully it wasn't. All that was required were some new gears in the trucks.

I sent a parts order form to Bachmann along with the required funds and expected some new gears. But, they didn't have the parts available and instead mailed me a brand new engine to replace the broken one. Nice! I then took my new engine and started to custom paint it. Unfortunately, the thick Testors spray paint I used went on too thick so I tried to quickly remove it. Picture a frantic teenager scrubbing the engine with a Brillo pad under running water over a utility sink! I didn't realize that oil and enamel paints reacted different from acrylics. It didn't work, with the result being I now had two damaged engines. Worse, Bachmann had revised the mechanism between batches and the

good body on my first engine didn't fit the working chassis of the second engine.

So, I waited a few years and saved more money and bought two more brand new engines. This time, I paid to have them professionally painted and decaled. When they arrived back, they looked great but I wanted to seal them with Dullcote. I shook the can but when I sprayed the first engine it took on a gray haze, likely due to either old Dullcote or high humidity.. I didn't know that overspraying it with a good can of Dullcote would correct it. I was crushed, but I then attempted to repaint it over the haze. That turned out okay, but it wasn't great. My fourth engine I left alone.

So, I now have four Bachmann 44-tonners in various conditions.

The End



## Zephyr-In-A-Box

By Geoff Dunn

This article describes a project, making a portable DCC setup, which is similar to ones that have been done by other modelers. Mine is a little simpler and may be of interest.

My layouts are mostly modular - T-Trak, NTrak, Free-mo, plus a small shelf layout - so my control systems do not stay in one place. A DC power pack is easy to move. My NCE PowerCab is fairly transportable. And I have a Digitrax DCS-52 Zephyr system, which is somewhat self contained but still requires a number of wires and connections and is a moderate pain to carry around. That unit is the subject of this article.

Putting the Zephyr in a box makes it easy to safely transport the unit, easy to carry the power supply and necessary cables, easy to store it, and leaves room for an extra throttle, Digitrax cheat sheets, and other stuff. Putting jacks and such on the box makes setup simpler and safer.

Parts needed are:

Digitrax Zephyr

Digitrax UP-5 or similar

Power Pole chassis mount

Box (see below)

cable ties, screws, wood

I purchased a tool box from Home Depot, Husky 1002620877, still available as of 6/19/22. If you don't use a Digitrax DCS-52, verify that your unit fits this box. There is a similar tool box for the same price that is NOT deep enough for the Zephyr. The box has a tool shelf that can be removed and flipped over. This is key to fitting the Zephyr and UP-5 into the box for transport, and then popping them out for use. Other tool boxes will certainly work if they are deep enough for the Zephyr without being overly huge in other dimensions.

The Zephyr is held onto the tool shelf with long plastic cable ties. I think I used two 11" ties on each side, and trimmed them (and sanded the sharp ends!). The UP-5 is screwed into a block of wood, which in turn is held in place on the tool shelf by screws from underneath. My Zephyr was purchased as a backup and test system for Free-mo modules and layouts. Free-mo uses Anderson Powerpoles to connect wires between modules, so a Powerpole chassis-mount was installed. This is also in a block of wood, on the other side of the Zephyr. Mounting on a block of wood seems more secure than

mounting directly to the plastic tool shelf. The "block of wood" for the UP-5 is a little fancy, but I didn't want to leave the metal corners exposed. The Powerpole panel-mount adapter was from ebay, from a seller named "thecrazyham" (Anderson Powerpole connectors are also used by ham radio enthusiasts). It was 1/4 the cost of a similar product from Anderson, but it needed a slight modification to work. The power wire is run through the tool shelf to feed the chassis mount. It would have been easy, but I did not put in a jack for a programming track. The Zephyr seems underpowered for programming some newer engines anyhow.

So this is my little project. It takes inspiration from several articles and projects I've seen in person, and I thank the authors and creators of all those. It is very portable and is a useful way to carry a low-end DCC system to shows or to test projects around the house.

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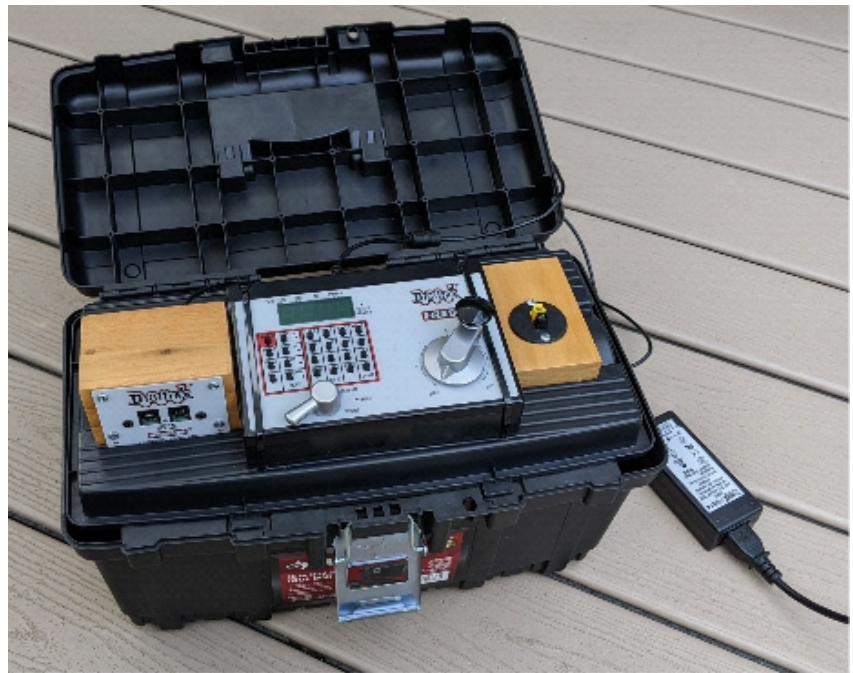


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Here is the unit in its storage or transport mode (except with the top open). The yellow cable goes from the Zephyr to the chassis-mount jack. Yes, it could be shorter, but it works, so it stays. The screws that hold the wood blocks for the Powerpoles and the UP-5 are visible, as are the cable ties that hold the Zephyr. If I'd known I would be taking pictures, I might have used white cable ties!



Here is the unit in "usage mode". The UP-5 is on the left, then the Zephyr, then the Powerpole jack. The power cable is visible (this was not made part of the box), and the connection from the Zephyr to the UP-5 is barely visible as well. The straps that hold the Zephyr in place are visible on either side of the unit.



The End



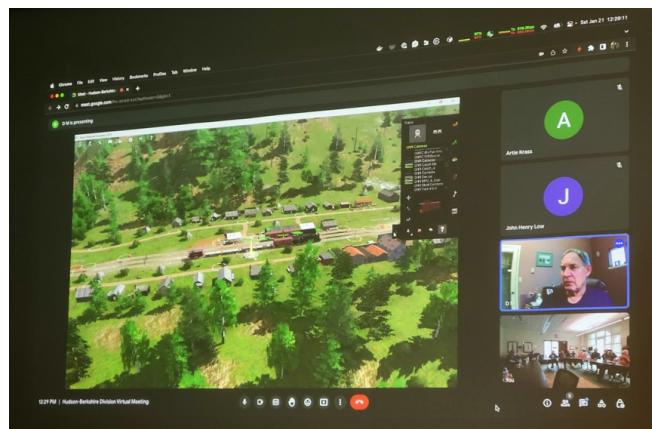
## January HBD Meeting Report


The January meeting started with division business. James Lauser discussed the GTE statistics. The major items are that the show was profitable and thank you to all the volunteers.

Vice President Doug Dederick presented outgoing President Irwin Nathanson a "Certificate Of Appreciation" for the past four years as president. Irwin kept the division active through the terrible time of Covid. THANK YOU Irwin!

After the business meeting Doug introduced Dave Marecek. Dave gave an excellent and detailed discussion/demonstration of the Trainz Simulator. Dave lives in British Columbia and gave the demo virtually through Google Meet. Members not able to be at the meeting could connect virtually at home. This is the first time an HBD meeting has been conducted like this.


-Mark





**March 20-23**  
**6:30 - 10:30 PM Eastern**

[Nerx.org](http://Nerx.org)



MARCH 20-23  
6:30-10:30 PM  
EASTERN TIME

# Layout Tours Model Showcase

## Tips 'n Tricks

## Clinics

## Nerx.org

## Website

**Please visit:**

**Hudson Berkshire Division Website:**

<http://www.hudson-berkshire.org/>

**Facebook Pages:**

<https://www.facebook.com/HudsonBerkshireNMRA/>

**Hudson-Berkshire NMRA Group**

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/809686920433872/>

**“Hudson-Berkshire Division of the NMRA” YouTube Channel**

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCE4Em3wMYwj5Z3ynfNsla8g/featured>

**FORM 19**

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