



Send your news, articles and other material to the Editors. All contributions used with gratitude!!

North Eastern Roundhouse Ramblings, August 2004

From the Editors...

It's been several months since you've heard from us, and a lot has happened in that time. We've celebrated another birthday, gone from hiring freeze to the WCN to hiring freeze again, and introduced several new features that makes MSTS and VNERR that much more enjoyable. But we'd like to hear what you think about all the changes – feel free to make use of the Suggestions forum. We're always striving to improve!

Roundhouse Ramblings is back. Thanks to a number of committed engineers, we've been able to update Ramblings to a [live news page on the website](#). Feel free to check in every now and then – how else would you be the first to read Claude's next rant, download the latest routes and equipment, and read up on what the latest is in the MSTS world? During the first week of each month, we'll send you a summary of the latest and greatest news by email, just in case you forget to check. But you wouldn't do that, would you?

We are both looking forward to your article submissions – Roundhouse Ramblings wouldn't be the same without them. E-mail them to either hrd@vnerr.com or nagy@uoguelph.ca. If you'd like to contribute, but are in the midst of a brain fart, get in touch with us for article ideas.

JohnH and cedric, Editors,
Roundhouse Ramblings

Tuesday, 31 August

- We are nearly at the **end of our first month**!! Quite an achievement, really. Thanks to everyone who has contributed, and thanks to you for reading it. We intend to archive each month's Ramblings so that the information is not lost. Some of it will be useful to someone for some time into the future - if only to keep track of how many updates there have been to some of the utility programs!
- The subsidiary pages to this one will not be archived at the same time as this one is. They will be archived as the need arises - for example, when they grow too large to be loaded quickly.
- New material won't be added in the last couple of days of each month. That will give people time to read the last few items before that month's Ramblings is archived.
- The purpose of the summary is to remind people what has been published during the month and also to try to persuade more people to read Roundhouse Ramblings every few days to keep up with developments in the VR world.
- This is your chance to see your writing published on the internet!! We welcome any and all contributions and will use them. You don't have to be a highly-skilled writer - we are happy to help you write and edit. Your ideas and information are what we want. Each one of you has something to offer us, whether you realise that or not!

Sunday, 29 August

- **ConBuilder** is now up to version 2.0.6 - available on our Other Downloads page - log in through NETS.
- Train-Sim has a utility available called FSAutoStart v1.1 (build 9). It was developed to allow the user to shut down services and programs to allow the maximum resources to be made available to the computer to run a particular program, e.g. Flight Simulator or, in our vworld, Train Simulator. There was a thread in the AVSim forums praising it. And there is a [thread in the NERR forums](#) about it - some are happy, some are only lukewarm about its benefits. It appears to be very customisable (is that a word?) and could be a very useful way to maximise your ability to run MSTs at a high level of detail. If it is worthwhile, we can ask for permission to host it here. Give us your opinion in the forum thread - in the Locker Room forum.

Thursday, 26 & 27 August

- To all engineers and activity developers: We have just received permission from Doug Jones' to host his **Route Profile Generator** utility on our web site - you can find it on the Other Downloads page (don't forget to log in through NETS). The program creates a profile drawing of a route from the .tdb file. The drawing is created as a scalable vector graphics (.svg) file.

In the NERR forums, taz has just made the following comments about this utility: This is a fun little tool that I've been using for some time. When you combine the information on the various maps (or real world timetables) with the generated profile information, you can really get a clear picture of what the route is like.

A couple of usage tips...

1. Make the generated drawing bigger than the size of your browser (i.e., your browser is 800 by 600...Make your drawing 1240 by 1000 and use the "pan" function to see the segment that you're interested in...Don't forget the "zoom" function).
2. Try using both the "Mile Posts" and the "Station Names" (independently since they can not be used together) to get an indication of where the terrain changes are.
3. Try to match the "generated profile" up with the route maps. You'll find that some of the "Mile Posts" from the generated drawing match items like signals or other features.
4. Play around with the various setting. From my experience, there is no one setting that is better than any other for viewing a specific route...Each route is different.

Wednesday, 25 August

- If you are into European routes and equipment, then [ActivitySimulatorWorld](#) is a site that you must visit. And if you're not into European railroads, then visit it anyway, and check out how that part of the world "plays trains". Yes, I know that it's all in French, but there are lots of pictures! It has nearly 30 routes for download, including the following that are part of the NERR Network - LGVMed v3.0, Unterland - plus Whitefish v5. Other routes are from France, Italy and the Netherlands. And there is a vast number of freight wagons, locos, passenger cars, and lots of objects for those of you who are route builders (the magicians of the MSTs world!!)

Tuesday, 24 August

- A new version of **ConBuilder** has been released - version 2.0.5. You can find it on our Other Downloads page (log in through NETS). You will also need the fix file for a minor problem with the new version. Again, download it from our Other Downloads page.

Sunday, 22 August

- Mike Simpson, the developer of **Route-Riter**, has released a Beta of Version 6 of his utility. We will update our Other Downloads page when Mike takes it out of Beta.

Meanwhile, you can download it from his web page at http://www.railpage.org.au/steam4me/trainsim/Route_Riter/ - remember that it is a Beta version - nearly 10Mb download. The notes below are from a posting that Mike published in the UKTrainSim forums:

"New to this version: -

1. 'Check Route' now looks through all installed routes (including those saved with Trainstore) for missing files, and if it finds a file with the same name as a missing file, will substitute it if requested.
2. MakeAce has been replaced with AceIt by Scott Miller (an AceIt help file is included). This file has the same options as MakeAce, along with several improvements including the ability to handle 1024X1024 files, and to add mip-maps to texture files.
3. TGATools2a is included with this package - This is a replacement for TGATools2 which works with the above AceIt rather than MakeAce, kindly supplied by Martin Wright.
4. TsUtils by Carl-Heinz is also included in this package. This is a suite of Java utilities for MSTs and I have added options in Route-Riter to enable use of some of the utilities. Your system MUST have a Java Runtime Environment installed before installing this version of Route-Riter - You can download one from <http://www.java.com/en> site - Click on the Get It Now button and it will be automatically installed on your system (if Java is already installed, you will be sent to a screen which says 'Java Software Installed'). TsUtils are placed in the Route_Riter\TsUtil folder, and there are help files in English and German in that folder. See TSUtils_English.txt for descriptions of the utilities included, most of these have been reduced to a single button entry in Route_Riter. Most useful of these are: -
 - a. Route Integrity Check - This option checks items such as the local tsection.dat, route.tdb and .rdb files etc for errors, and some cases offers suggestions for corrections. (This option should always be run before any of the other options are run, as if errors are found then the other options may fail) .
 - b. Move a route - This option will move a route by a given number of squares east/west and north/south - e.g. to avoid the great white void error.
 - c. Change a route's altitude.Other options are fairly technical but can be used to update local tsection.dat files against a new global tsection.dat etc. MAKE SURE YOU HAVE BACKUPS BEFORE TRYING ANY OF THEM.
Please direct any queries about any of the above programs to me, as they have all been included as a courtesy by their authors, and I do not wish to add to their workload by involving them in a lot of emails. If there is something I can not answer, then I will pass the query to the appropriate person."

- Yet another set of enhanced tracks for MSTs has been released on Train-Sim - **Mtracks v1.07**. "Mtracks is an add-on set of turnouts that are compatible with all regular MSTs track (like default and XTracks). They are built to standard railroad sizes of #15, 20 and 24. Mtracks is also a new set of straights and curves that have a different (more prototypical) track-center spacing scheme." No comments in their forums yet, but I'm sure that people will have something to say sooner or later.

Wednesday, 18 August

- No, we haven't forgotten to update *Roundhouse Ramblings*! It's just been very quiet in the VR community. You will notice that we have reduced the size of the banner. Some of our members were having trouble reading some pages - they were too wide for their screens. The smaller banner should fix most of those problems. We hope!!
- So let's try a *Don't Forget!*

Don't Forget: So you want to submit an NERR time slip. You type in the name of the work order, then the time taken for the run, and then a pithy comment to show your appreciation to the developer. You press the Verify button - and it tells you that the work order is not in the database. So you do it a second time - and the same thing happens. The third time, you forget about the comment, type it in again, and start thinking evil thoughts about the people who maintain NETS and its databases! And it still can't find it!! Now you are ready to get really mad!! But wait ... stay cool ... there is a solution.

Solution: Use the **Work Order Search** facility - check the words in purple in the picture below. If you click on them, you can then select the route that your just-completed work order is for, then you will see a listing of all the work orders for that route currently in the database. Most likely, your work order will be there - and there will be a slight difference in the name (e.g. maybe a hyphen in a different place). We suggest that you highlight-and-copy the correct name and paste it into the Work Order Name box on the Form T screen - see the picture below.

Form - T		vNERR Work Orders	Help
Work Order Name	<input type="text"/>	Work Order Search	
Time of Trip	<input type="text" value="0.0"/> In 10ths of an Hour please. Round Up.	Minutes -- Decimal 01 - 06 -- 0.1	

Result? Your time slip will be accepted. You will maintain your sanity, and you will be a much nicer person to live with!! And that's important if you want to keep running trains! As you do, right?

Monday, 16 August

Interview with **grpabear**, Employee of the Month for July 2004:

1) How did you come to find NERR?

A fellow rail and neighbor introduced me to Train Dispatcher simulation. He has written a few scenarios for their free library. I enjoyed the experience and was intrigued by the included Trainmaster game. I was surfing the web one night and hit upon the Train-Sim site. I had tried MSTs before but wasn't very impressed. As I explored the Train-Sim site, I became more interested and decided to give MSTs another try within the confines of the vRailroading community. For one with limited space for model railroading this was just the ticket. I have not been disappointed - outstanding fellowship, great routes & equipments, realistic cabviews and the best of all, good fun.

2) What is your favourite piece of NERR equipment?

I have a soft spot in my heart for F7s. They herald a definite turning point in railroading history. They were sleek & streamlined and very pleasing to the eye. I remember riding many a passenger train powered by these units. As a young brakeman in the 70s, I found out these were not the best freight power to work on. They were hard to get on or off at speed, let alone with your grips. They had a poor platform to ride on to make a coupling (about 1 foot square plate near the pin lifter). They were very noisy & dirty if you had to walk through them to the other end for any reason. In all, they were worn out. I enjoy the NERR units from the 70s & early 80s, a true variety of power - not like today's modern fleet. This reflects my early railroading days where my seniority in the district allowed me to work on F7s, GP7s, SW1s, SD9s, GP30, SD40s, ALCO RS3, C424, C636 & GE U23Bs, C30-7s.

3) What is your favourite NERR route?

I have not tried all of NERR's routes, but some of the ones I have and like are

ADFRRv3, Ohio Rail, NEC4, Whitefish3, Hoodoo Pass, Chippewa Valley, M&M, and FBLv2. I like a route with mostly double track (or at least, very long controlled sidings) with just enough single track in between to make AI traffic meets varied and interesting. I like routes that are patterned after (but not necessary exact copies of) Real World railroads past or present. I like routes with interesting scenery, both natural and man made (bridges, trestles, and industry complexes). I also like routes with manual switches to lots of industries to open up Work Order possibilities without crafting every reverse move for the player's train. In all, the NERR routes are excellent, varied and truly addictive.

4) What is the best activity you have ever run, and what did you like about it?

I must confess that I have not run many NERR Work Orders compared to many NERR Engineers. I like Work Orders based on Real World trains. Not so much in their exact dimensions (length & tonnage) but in the fact that the actual trains ran from point A to B during a particular railroad period. I enjoy through freights rather than locals or yards, because I do that 6 days a week. Most of my runs are non-scheduled Work Orders of 1-4 hours in length based on either Real World traffic research or my own personal railroading trips. To many, these activities would be too long & boring, but to me they are very relaxing (everything works & no hassles from management are ever encountered, and that save button is great). I generally have two activities (or scenarios with loose consists) crafted per route (1 east or northbound and 1 west or southbound). I have numerous paths and AI traffic patterns laid down to reflect railroad traffic. As I get the urge, I construct a NERR train in Conbuilder, use the activity editor to select a path, the work I wish to do, and AI traffic to run against me, then set the time & season, and then I'm off (takes me 5 minutes). I do limit my local and working manifest trains to daylight and run lots of through trains at night or low light conditions. A tad bit dull for some, but it works for me.

5) Which line in any country of the world would you most like to travel on?

There are so many!! Let's see. I would like to travel along both American coasts & through the Rockies in daylight. Some high speed European lines and the Chunnel would definitely be on my must-see list. In general, anywhere in Europe or North America with a view would be great if it took me and my fair lady on a long overdue vacation.

(from Tigermon #205)

Saturday, 14 August

- Another new column! You can read about one member's experiences during a past hurricane in Florida, and a major male confession, in **Rick's Rantz**. [Editor's note: Rick's Rantz has been archived near the bottom of this document.]
- A generally quiet time on the other MSTs web sites as far as new equipment is concerned, so no updates this week of the [Non-NERR News Page](#).

Thursday, 12 August

- A new column! **Claude's Corner** (or should that be "Klaude's Korner"?). [Editor's note: Claude's Corner has been archived near the bottom of this document.]
- Another upgrade to **Route-Riter** - EXE file only - to version 5.2.52 - Log in through NETS and go to the Other Downloads page. This will help those people who have Route-Riter installed on a different drive from MSTs, and when you use the "Check rolling stock" option, you will get more information.

- "When I moved to Windows XP, one the most helpful tools I had for route building would no longer work - that was Rat Win. Basically it disabled either the horizontal or vertical mouse movement (your choice) and made it much easier to place and rotate objects in the Route Editor. BitSplash has now made a more than worthy successor called [Exact Mouse](#), which does everything Rat Win did and a lot more. It's available at www.bitsplash.com/exactmouse in a trial version (\$20.00) purchase. This may seem a lot, but I guarantee at least a 50% reduction in profanity when doing almost anything in Route Editor." (from [rlbarr](#), #126)

• *Real World news:*

FRA Proposes to Improve Crash Survivability of Locomotive "Black Box"

Event recorders, the train equivalent of an airplane's "black box," will be improved to make sure critical information survives train accidents according to a proposed rule issued today by the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA).

"The survival of data is key to understanding why a train accident happened," said FRA Acting Administrator Betty Monro. "Having a better 'black box' will improve our ability to prevent future accidents."

The Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (NPRM) published in today's Federal Register addresses several safety recommendations made by the National Transportation Safety Board to improve the quality of data available for post-accident analysis. The regulations proposed today are intended to prevent the loss of data resulting from train accidents involving fire, water, and significant mechanical damage.

The proposed rule would establish standards to make sure event recorders survive accidents in new and existing locomotives. It would also phase out the use of magnetic tape as a data storage medium within current "black boxes." FRA also is proposing that improved event recorders collect and store additional data, including emergency braking systems, locomotive horns and text messages sent to the engineer's display regarding directives and authorized speed. The proposed rule would also simplify existing standards for inspecting, testing, and maintaining event recorders by railroads. (from [JohnL](#), #233)

Wednesday, 11 August

- No, this is not a [ConBuilder](#) News Page, but it seems like that this week. [Version 2.0.2](#) is now available on the Other Downloads page on this web site. The word from a few of our members is that the earlier versions had a minor glitch or two, so the author quickly put out a new version. Good response!!
- Do you have any gossip? [Send it to the editors.](#)

Sunday, 8 August

- Yet another update of ConBuilder 2.0.1 has just been released. It is now officially version 2.0.1c - some further big fixes and things. You can find it on the Other Downloads Page on this web site - log in through NETS.
- [UKTrainSim](#) has the first African route that I have seen completed - "Recreation of the railway line Kuru-Jos with a length of 55 km, this railroad is in the centre of the country in the well-known region called Jos Plateau, rich on tin, iron and other minerals, being Jos the most important city of the region, with a gauge of 1067 mm like almost all the network of the NRC (Nigerian Railways Corporation). Single track not electrified." It's a download of 6 files, totalling about 65Mb. The route was available from Train-Sim.com in a single download file a couple of weeks ago.
- Have you visited the [GL&ARR web site](#) yet? It's the first of the two new payware-based VRs that are being set up as subsidiaries of the NERR. If you have Kicking Horse Pass II, Michigan Iron Ore (LS&I), the Bridge Line, or Sandpatch, then this is your newest VR. Jim will welcome new members - it costs nothing to join and register in the forums. The

VR will use the default railroad stock and activities, as well as the NERX stock and other approved activities for those routes. They will also use a group of freeware routes that will be used as connecting lines to complete their network - Newark & New Jersey, Central Wisconsin, Buffalo Southern, East River, and Whitefish3-Hawk - these are the same versions as the NERR uses. Go and have a look - you know you want to!! What better excuse to buy those routes that you have always wanted but couldn't find a good excuse to buy!

Saturday, 7 August

- An updated version of ConBuilder was released today (v2.0.1) - not a major upgrade but some minor bug fixes. Now available on the Other Downloads page - log in through NETS.

Thursday, 5 August 2004

The newest addition to the NERR was unveiled today - the **News Page**. This page, and the pages linked to it, will be updated with:

- NERR developments - what's new at the NERR?
- News from other VRs, including OVS and vFBL.
- Links to new MSTS equipment on other sites.
- News about our members - new ones, "old" ones, interviews.
- Handy hints for MSTS. [Click here to read more ...](#)
- Articles from members - you can have your ideas published here. [Send your ideas and articles to the News Page Editors.](#)
- NERR statistics - updated dynamically (through Bob's coding wizardry!!).
- the new items for downloading from the Other Downloads Page.
- Your suggestions are welcome.

"Ever notice how the rails get not-so-curved as the radius of the curve gets larger? I started getting really annoyed with this, so I created replacement shapes for the Kuju original shapes. I created new 2000, 1500, 1000, and 500 meter curves, in 20, 10, and 5 degree turns, for 1, 2, 3, and 4 tracks. I'm considering doing the 250-meter radius curves too, but the jagged curves aren't so noticeable at the tighter radii.

I've tested them, and although the poly count is higher with my new curves, I used LODs extensively to reduce impact on frame rates, and actually I haven't seen any drop in frame rates at all.

All you got to do is drag the shapes to the GLOBAL/SHAPES folder and overwrite the originals. No modification to the tsection.dat file or any route editor time is necessary. It affects any and all routes on your MSTS installation."

With these words in a thread on the forums at Train-Sim.com ([click here to read the thread](#)), Mark introduced his new Smoother track package. The Train-Sim thread has some photos that show that he has eliminated the straight sections of tracks that spoil the appearance of curves in the tracks. You can download his tracks from

the Download Library at Train-Sim.com ([click here to go to the web site](#)) - search for *smoother.zip*. Feedback in the forums over there indicates that they work well and will probably be included in the next version of XTracks.

The photo on the left below shows the original MSTs track, and the photo on the right shows the track after installation of the smoother.zip package - quite a noticeable difference.



Claude's Corner

by Claude Thibault, NERR Engineer # 23

Article # 1 - 12 August 2004

THE WAY I SEE IT

So here it is... My first contribution to the Rambling Roundhouse. A lighter column, "light" as in humorous... Sometimes! (*Editor: he might even get the name right next time!*)

Before we start having fun, let's get things straight. As you all know, VNERR is international... writing for people with different backgrounds and beliefs is VERY touchy. How to be funny and still not offend is quite a contract. So here's what I suggest... you are offended by something that I write, you give me a buzz at claude@vnerr.com and I will adjust. OK? I live in Quebec, I am a French-Canadian, we are VERY open-minded, we freely talk about sex, politics, religion etc. For example, I learned through the forums at VNERR that the word "bloody" is a no-no in England! Sheesh! That was one of my favourite English words! Of course you can write to the same address to say you like me or want to buy me a beer! (*Editor: he also likes red wine!!!*)

And another thing... To the boss's dismay, my writings will SOMETIMES talk about trains, MSTs and computers (notice I said SOMETIMES!!).

By the way (BTW)

PLEASE NOTE: in a pedagogical effort so that our readers can understand the



meanings of certain commonly used writing shortcuts, parenthesis shall be used to introduce such shortcuts. In a few weeks all text will be written using only the shortcuts. For example: pls snd msg asap to VNERR mgr! OK! LOLROF! This way, we can condense 54 pages of RR into 6 lines.

As I was saying (AIWS), having been appointed official baby-sitter to my grandson for a couple of weeks, I have to write this column on my daughter's computer. This wouldn't be so bad if her screen was wider than 6 inches. I have to wear glasses over my glasses to see what is written. And using MSTS is out of the question. This computer is so old that the tower and screen are made of wood. A little hamster in a wheel powers the whole thing, and he sleeps 17 hours a day. There is a pencil marked "printer" beside the keyboard! The CD accepts LP records. Sound is visual. Sheesh!

Which reminds me (WRM) of my first computer, a TIMEX SINCLAIR! Total memory: 2k!!! The size of a pack of cigarettes. Came with a golf game. The driver was an "L", the ball was an "o" and the hole was an "O". Trees were "V"s. Written in DOS 1.0. I played this game for hours, loads of fun! Then came along Commodore's Vic 20 followed by Commodore 64; The ultimate computer, with 64k. To start a program you'd type "run 'name of the program'" and go take a shower, walk the dog, watch the news, mow the lawn, have lunch, and if you were lucky, the program would then start. Formatting a floppy would take 60 minutes... One hour! Then one day, yikes! Somebody came up with a program called Fast Copy; now you could format in only 30 minutes. I had a bookkeeping program for my business, making a backup of my files took 3 hours; enough time to watch a whole hockey game. Would have loved to see MSTS on a Commodore!

TIME FOR A BEER!

Claude is a member of the North West division and a member of the Feasibility Team. He joined NERR on opening date, September 1, 2002. Each year, Claude takes leave during the spring to tend to the bulbs on his farm in Yamaska, Quebec. He can be contacted by email at claudio@vnerr.com.

Rick's Rantz

by Rick Foss (silvermeteor), NERR Engineer #42

Article #1 - 14 August 2004

Hurricane Humour

I am just about ready to leave the house and go to a motel to wait out hurricane Charlie. I just wrote down some of my experiences during hurricane Hugo. I don't know if you think that this is interesting enough or not. I will not be offended if you decide it is not appropriate or not interesting enough but I thought that I would send it. The decision is yours. It is unsolicited and there will be no hard feelings either way.

As Bonnie passes us by after leaving us 2-3 inches of rain and we get ready to spend our Saturday hosting Hurricane Charlie, I thought that it might be nice to share some hurricane humor.

In 1989 Hurricane Hugo came to visit us here in South Carolina. Hugo was a category three hurricane with gusts as high as 130 mph. Those of us living in a mobile home, such as we do, or living in low lying areas were advised to move inland to a safer location.

That is how my wife, our 18 year son and I found ourselves in a motel for the evening. It seems like 90% of the storms arrive at night so you cannot see what is going on. We had brought my pick up and my wife's car, and they were parked outside the room.

You should also know that I am from Florida and was quite blasé about hurricanes. My father, who worked as a cable splicer for Southern Bell Telephone, always slept through the storms because he would be called out as soon as the storm had passed to begin the repairs. As a result I was somewhat used to hurricanes. But this was a large one, and my family's safety dictated the motel.

It is about midnight, and my wife and son are huddled in the motel bathroom as the wind howls outside. Being the man of the house, I was relaxing on the bed next to the bathroom. The eye of the storm is approaching and is going to pass directly over our location. Suddenly there is a tremendous crash, and our poured concrete motel trembles. ...And then there is another even louder crash.

I have got to tell you that it is almost impossible to maintain your cool as you frantically scramble towards the bathroom to join your sensible wife and son.

Some time later I gathered enough courage to look out the motel room window. All electricity was off, and I was confronted by a confounding scene. Outside our room there was a dim light, and it was impossible to see what may have happened.

When the eye of the storm arrived, several of us ventured outside, and the situation became clear. A very large pine tree on the other side of the parking lot had simply snapped off and fallen towards the motel. The first crash and shudder was when the tree hit the second floor roof, and the entire top of the tree snapped off. The second crash occurred as the rest of the trunk landed just outside our room. The trunk ran from the tailgate up the bed and down the middle of the cab of my truck. The mysterious light turned out to be the dome light which came on as the doors were sprung outward.

After the storm the tree trunk was cut off at both ends of the truck, and it sat there for several days as a mute testament to nature's force.

We live in a very small community, and electricity was off for the next three weeks. Our water is pumped up into one of those large water tanks and is gravity fed, so we had water for the next few days. When the water finally ran out, my wife asked how we were going to be able to answer nature's call. Being the man of the house, despite my tarnished macho image, I came up with a workable solution. We all would do #1 in the woods and use one toilet for #2. When required, we would drive the six miles to the Santee river and retrieve a five gallon bucket of water which I would pour into the toilet to flush it into our septic tank.

Near the end of the first day, my son and I took the drive up to the river. We soon returned with the bucket of water and poured it into the toilet which obediently

flushed. Feeling rather smug and secure in the fact that I had recovered some of my macho image, I walked over to the back door and looked out over our pond.

As I stood there it slowly began to dawn on me that my macho image had slipped yet again. Why had we just driven six miles one way to get a bucket of water from the river when I had a pond that was overflowing ten feet outside our back door?

I can assure you that I will not be driving to the river for water to flush the toilet if Charlie leaves us without water and electricity tomorrow. Who knows, maybe we will be lucky.

Footnote after the hurricane has passed:

The wife and I are safe, and our "mobile" home, darn thing hasn't been mobile for 20 years, is still standing. The storm made its way out of here about 11:00 am this morning, Saturday.

We did not have electricity when I first got to the house around 11:15, but when I returned with the wife around 12:00, it had already been restored.

No serious damage at our home. We got lucky and dodged a bullet this time. The wife and I have just spent the last several hours cleaning up our large lawn. I have noticed that the yard seem to grow larger in proportion to my advancing age.

Anyway, I told the wife that I was not going to spend hours bending down and picking up all of the twigs, etc. that were strewn around the yard. She asked what I planned to do? I told her to watch.

I went outside and started piling the larger stuff into piles and leaving the smaller debris behind. Then I got a large plastic woven tarp and piled a large quantity of debris onto it. Finally I got the riding lawn mower and tied a rope to the end of the tarp and pulled it to the pile we plan to burn later this winter.

After I had picked up all of the piles I started mowing the rest of the debris. When I stopped one time, my wife asked if that procedure would not ruin the three blades on the mower. I told her it most probably would, but that \$25 for a new set of blades, it was a lot cheaper than a doctor's visit and calmly went back to mowing.

My yard is the only clean one in town at the moment. Everyone else is still trying to figure out what they are going to do.

The views expressed on this page do not necessarily reflect those of the NERR Administration. They are the views of the author of the particular news item.