



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

Wednesday, 22 September

- This is probably the final update of this month's Roundhouse Ramblings, as one of your Editors is on a trip to Darwin, in the far north of Australia, to attend a conference. We'll publish a photo or two next month. Darwin is the northern terminus of **The Ghan**, the new 5-star passenger train that runs between there and Adelaide, on the southern coast of Australia.
- Our second interview for this month is with **kip** - the creator of the **Priest River Railroad** and the Hoodoo Pass 2.5 route called "Cascadia" **and** NERR's Hoodoo Pass v1.0 route **and** NERR's Wisconsin Central v1.0 route **and** NERR's Chippewa Valley v1.0 route. Thanks for sharing with us, kip.

Latest Updates:

[Non-NERR News](#) - **20 Sept.**

[Reviews](#) - 8 Sept.

[Rick's Rantz](#) - 17 Sept.

[Claude's Corner](#) - 14 Sept.

1. How did you get interested in trains? Was there any connection with your real world occupation? How did your family feel about your interest in trains?

My interest in trains started at a very young age. I was extremely fortunate to have grandparents who lived within 200 yards of a "crossroads" of several Railroads ... all fallen flags now except one. I was "entertained" by the Great Northern, Northern Pacific, Spokane Portland and Seattle (SP&S), and Union Pacific. The Union Pacific tracks were 100 yards from my grandparents' front door. Trains went by on all tracks all day. Let's say I was never bored. So, being a young boy and being around that many trains, my "love" of trains was a done deal so to speak. As for my family ... they think I am absolutely "nuts" concerning trains. I am the only train lover in the family; however, I am slowly converting a nephew. His mother will be pleased, I'm sure.

2. What involvement did you have with trains before you discovered MSTs?

At the age of 18 I worked part-time for the Burlington Northern RR in Elliston Montana. My job was to clear ice from the tunnel doors at Bossburg tunnel during the winter. On certain lucky days I was able to "dead-head" down the mountain to my house in Elliston. The first locomotive I got a cab ride in was a SD40, then a lot of GP9's. I also modeled trains for a while at a younger age and have just started back up.

3. How did you discover MSTs?

I was looking for a game to play at a Staples store and discovered MSTs. Bought it ... and now I'm here.

4. How long after that did you become interested in MSTs route building? How did that happen? What was your first route like?

I've always been a "creator". The Route Editor (RE) was actually something I delved into more than the sim itself. I was able to figure a lot of the tricks, but after I bought Michael Vone's Route Building Guide, things became clearer, and off I went. My first route was a small version of Hoodoo which took me 2 months to make. During this time I made mental notes and a few written ones for the "real" route.

5. What was your inspiration for your Priest River Railroad and the Hoodoo Pass route?

I treated Hoodoo Pass and the PRRR like a story in a book. I took real places and names and built upon that. Everything else came along "naturally". Though the PRRR and Hoodoo are fictional, it could be real, hence the PRRR slogan "It's so fictional, it's almost real". Hoodoo Pass does indeed exist; Priest River also exists. Even the Diamond PRRR logo is real, but it's real history is lost. The story of the PRRR and Mt. Cascade gives Hoodoo a soul. All routes should have a soul in my opinion. We who create all fall back on the old saying by Willy Wonka: "...we are the music makers and the dreamers of dreams...".

The text in the table below is reproduced with permission from kip's PRR web site. To read the "story" behind the Hoodoo pass route and the surrounding area, click [here](#).

The art of "inventing" your own Railroad in V-Scale

The PRRR was created in late 2001 on a whim. For some reason I got it into my mind to create a wholly identifiable Railroad Livery, let alone a company with a history. I used a "town" that actually exists in Northern Idaho named Priest River. I also made a route named Hoodoo Pass. Hoodoo Pass does exist, but not in any railroad capacity. It is indeed in Idaho, as is Priest River. The PRRR's Logo and Livery Symbol of a diamond with a P in the middle is 50% true. The diamond was taken from what I found many years ago of a scrapped logging car in Spokane Washington. The diamond is real, but what it meant as in a name is still a mystery. I have researched everything I could of the area in it's logging heyday, but nothing was found. In real life the Northern Pacific Railroad ran through Priest River, as did certain Great Northern trains. In 1970 Burlington Northern went through Priest River. Now, that particular sub has been "abandoned", and is today used by Stinson Lumber Company and Rail Link.

So...I took all the elements of information I could get and played with it for awhile until I came up with a "plan". It was a evolutionary beginnings. The color scheme and logo were pretty much done ,except I changed the colors in certain ways to help simplify matters and cause less confusion for myself and others. After about a year I was able to set a standard for

livery and color styles.

After all the scrambling of getting it "right", the Priest River Railroad (PRRR) was born. I uploaded a few files to Train-Sim with the new livery. Many thought it was real, and I had to say they were fictional right away. Now my new "baby" needed a home to call its own. So...after a while I was dabbling in the Route Editor and got Michael Vone's Route Building Guide. I learned quickly enough to try to make a "starter" route. Which I did. This non-published route was the first step in creating Hoodoo Pass. I began to sketch out a route plan and everything I wanted to have in the route. Many aspects were needed to formulate a route and its workings. Length, Industries, passenger service, elevation data, the works. At the very beginning the route was originally 80 miles long. Then 120, 160, 190 and finally 200 miles! Then I made a sub line that was 32 miles long. Now...I needed a premise of the route. What kind of theme should this route represent? I grew up around a lot of logging, but it was mining that took my interest. So, I "invented" mining operations. I didn't just make 1 mine; I made 3. The funny thing was is that the mines and their operations made me invent yet another railroad. It's like a railroad within a railroad. The Mt. Cascade Mining Company was born. I then proceeded to invent a livery for that too. I decided to make it simpler and a little more "colorful". So it was a "blue" thing that I created, and it seemed to fit well in the scheme of things. After 9 months of building Hoodoo Pass, I released the route in the form of a beta. I distributed 300 copies worldwide (no-foolin'). Right after that I updated the route to 2.0, then 2.5. That was when I uploaded the route to Train-Sim, where nearly 2000 users have downloaded it as so far.

To this day I still get questions about the PRRR. Is it real? Where is it really? Well...it's not real. It's fictional. It's like writing a book of a story that really didn't happen, but sounds real. This shouldn't be confused with fantasy. There is a vast difference between fiction and fantasy. To me, fantasy is not real and cannot be real...ever. Whereas fictional isn't real per se, but could be and be possible at the same time. There are perhaps about a dozen fictional RR's out in the MSTS world. There are twice that many, if not more, fictional routes. Meanwhile, many prototypical routes of real-life RR's are still being made. Fictional (and fantasy) routes will always be around, because they are testaments to people's creativity and artistry. The same goes for those that make real-life routes. To make a facsimile of anything real is difficult to do, but not impossible. Cajon Pass, Tehachapi, Kicking Horse Pass and many other attest to that fact.

To make your own RR and livery...take your time. Look at all the real RR's out there. See what is "feasible". Don't be in a rush. Make it as real as possible. Be prepared for your creation to evolve; what may look good now may have to be changed later. If you can fool someone into thinking it is real...you've succeeded.

5(a) Where did you learn to build an MSTS route? And how did you learn to model buildings and other route objects?

Michael Vone's book was a tremendous help, as were many other people who contributed to MSTs in some way, shape or form. Modeling isn't new to me. I have been dabbling in 3D-modeling for years with various programs. Modeling train stock and objects took a little time because of their unique purposes. I am by no means a "great" modeler ... just a "hobby" modeler. MSTs also taught me other forms of creation such as painting or skinning and file editing.

6. How did you discover the NERR?

By accident! Truly! There was a VR (now long defunct) that I tried to join. The owner basically dumped the responsibility on me without knowing what the heck I was doing. So, I said "screw this" and left. On that very day I went to a website that had a NERR link to it. I went there. I found that the VR was actually being run ... right. After watching in the wings, I pretty much gathered that NERR was a "keeper".

7. What persuaded you to do an NERR version of your route?

NERR deserved one out of loyalty ... which still exists now. Plus, I felt Hoodoo found a home. Not an easy thing in the cyberworld.

8. Where do you see yourself being with MSTs in 3-5 years' time?

I haven't a clue. However, I do keep abreast of things in the MSTs world and keep up to date.

9. Do you have intentions to do another route? How might it be different from the Hoodoo Pass route?

Not sure. I think I will wait for the next version of "MSTs" from the other software companies in the future. I feel I have made my mark. I am "resting" the RE for now, but I do go into it to hone my skills so I don't get rusty. As for another type route other than Hoodoo ... that indeed is a mystery.

10. What else do you do in your spare time? How do you relax?

I go to car shows, hockey games, train shows and occasionally ride the Talgo (Cascades) to Vancouver BC once in awhile. Lately I have been working on my N Scale layout. Having a blast!

Tuesday, 21 September

- One of our members (Casey, #180) has sent us a quick refresher lesson on how to use Route-Riter to decrease the number of consists that can clutter up your Consists folder. Many people report that they have strange problems with MSTs when the number of consists in the folder gets past about 900 (and many others report that they have strange problems with MSTs at any time!!).
 - Run Route-Riter.
 - Click on the second tab "Activities/Stock" .
 - Click on the "Check all Activities" button.
 - When it has finished churning, there will be a long-ish pause. Then it will come up with another page. One of the options at the bottom is "Unused services and consists". Click on that. Eventually, four listings are presented.

- Highlight whatever you want to get rid of, using the usual Ctrl/click or Shift/click methods. For example, to select *all* consists, click on the top one, move the "elevator" slider to the bottom of the shaft, press Shift, and click on the bottom one.
- Right-click on the listing to get a two-item menu for "Delete" or "Move". Choose "Move", as you might want to use them again at some time. (Suggest not choosing "Delete", as they go straight to the ether).
- After a second or two, the listing will turn green, indicating that the move has been accomplished.

Stop Press! Stop Press!

New Stealth Loco

One of our engineers (GaryH, #100) has discovered a way to prevent the paint on his locos from fading. Take a look at the photograph below to see the results of his years of research and development work.

"This discovery will also save the NERR thousands of dollars each year in the costs of cleaning locos," stated the elated inventor. "But it might require some education of the general public before they will accept their trains being headed by something like this. And birds will have to adjust their flight paths sometimes!"

A representative of the NERR organisation, Mr A. Nonny Mouse, said that he was not sure whether the NERR will convert all its locomotives to use this new loco technology. However, he is certain that other forms of railroad equipment will not be suitable for conversion until further development occurs. "It might be rather difficult for people to find the doors of the passenger cars and for railroad workers to load freight," he said.

Research will continue.



- This is the meaning of the colours of your ID# entry on the Crew Callboard:

ID# Cell Colour	Meaning
ID#	Active - has submitted an NERR time slip in the past 30 days.
ID#	Warning - has not submitted an NERR time slip for about 30 days.
ID#	Inactive - has not submitted an NERR time slip for about 90 days - will soon not be able to access the downloads section in NETS.

ID#	On Leave - this status will last for up to about 90 days, and then you will become Inactive .
ID#	Special - for other VR owners, contractors, guest developers, ...
ID#	Retired ID number.

Monday, 20 September

- More changes to the **Crew Callboard**:
 - Inactive engineers, that is you have not submitted an NERR time slip for more than 3 months, are now on a separate screen on the Callboard. Your entry will remain there until you submit an NERR time slip, with a few exceptions as described in the following points.
 - For now, if you are on leave, retired, special, on a yellow warning, or inactive, you will be made Active again when you enter a trip report. Entering a trip report automatically changes your status to Y for "Yes, you are active".
 - By the end of this month, if you are on the Inactive list, you will not be able to download any files from the download area in NETS. You will have to become Active again before permission to download will be given.
 - Inactive engineers who have not replied to our emails and who have not submitted any NERR time slips since graduating from the WCN will be deleted from the Crew Callboard by the end of this month. You will have to re-apply for membership of the NERR and satisfactorily complete the WCN program again, before you can be reinstated to the Crew Callboard.

- So you have the **Tehachapi Pass II route** (the payware one from 3dtrainstuff.com)? And you like steam and diesel - of the vintage variety? Mal (airartist, #229) suggests that you take a look at the new package produced by 3dtrainstuff - **Vintage Trains Over Tehachapi Pass**. It contains Southern Pacific's AC-12 and AC-10 Cab Forward (Mallet) locomotives, the Santa Fe EMD FT diesel locomotives, 2 cabooses, 10 pieces of freight rolling stock, and 16 activities, plus documentation. It is not available by download. There has been a busy thread over at Train-Sim about this package - it's too expensive, it's great, can we just get the cab forward locos, We are not promoting commercial products; we are bringing you this item as a news message. These are the first cab forward locos to be made available in any way for MSTS (as far as we know) - they are an unusual piece of U.S. railroad history.

Sunday, 19 September

- In some forums (not ours), there is ongoing speculation about the **future of MSTS** now that MSTS 2

has been cancelled by Microsoft. In terms of new routes and material for MSTs, there is far more action in Europe than there is in any other part of the world. UKTrainSim (with its off-shoot EUTrainSim) is a very large site - similar to Train-Sim in the U.S.A. There are a large number of French and German sites, as well as sites in Italian, Czech, Danish and in several other European languages. Admittedly, since most of them are not in English, it sometimes takes a while to work out the various sections and content available, but the Europeans are certainly not sitting back waiting for MSTs to die through lack of interest. The reverse is true - they will wear it out through over-use! Yes, I know that is not really possible with computer software, but it reads better that way! And I know that their signals are different, and that they drive on the other side of the road (route), but there is plenty of material available if you want a different MSTs experience in your spare time - after you have brought in your share of revenue for the NERR, that is!

- Do you know how the **ranks on the NERR forums** are worked out? Check out the table below. There is one more rank - for over 500 posts, but I will leave that one unlisted for now - just for fun! Let's see who is the first to get there. You will also notice in the forums that members of the Administration group do not have ranks; they have titles. These ranks and posting requirements are set by the administrator of the forums.

Rank	No. of Posts in the Forums
Apprentice	1
Baggage Man	15
Porter	30
Hostler *	50
Switchman	75
Brakeman	100
Conductor	150
Engineer	200

Station Master	300
Yard Master	350
Superintendent	400

* Hostler = the person who takes charge of a locomotive when it is left by the engineer after a trip.

Friday, 17 September

- We've updated Rick's column with his 2nd article - don't forget to keep checking the dates in the box to the right.

Wednesday, 15 September

- We are going to try to update the columns by Claude and Rick on a monthly basis - can't give you too much of a good thing! Rick's September article will be added in the next few days, as will another interview with one of our members (this time a route developer).
- This is one of the best screenshots that we have seen for some time. It was posted in the NERR forums by John McEwen (mcewen, ID#117) recently. It shows Goat Canyon Trestle on the San Diego & Arizona Route. The trestle bridge was built in 1932 and is 633 feet long and 185 feet high, according to the Readme file. This route has beautiful desert scenery.



- Now that everyone knows about the NERR FAQ page on the web site (don't you!), there is no need for the Handy Hints page attached to this News page. We can put those sorts of helpful, handy hints on this page.
- **Handy Hint - Running Views:**
 - "I go to view 3 (end of the train), hit ctrl-shift 9 center is directly behind the train (or not) and go up as high as I can. Leaving it there knowing that there is a tunnel ahead. If the tunnel is under a high mountain, and you leave it in view3 (after you do what described above) once the end of the train goes into the tunnel the view reverts to the cab and stays there (you have no control of the views until the end of the train is out of the tunnel). What this will do is raise the view3 height considerable depending the mountain or hill height you went under.

Oh yes...while at that view (after the tunnel), you can use the mouse to pan around...but don't touch those arrow key, or it will revert back to the original height. You can still go back to the other views and the view 3 will still be there at a high altitude...until you end the sim or hit an arrow.

- When in the trackside spotters View... Use the CTRL key and left or right arrow to change the point of focus from the lead locomotive to any car in the consist. Comes in very handy when reversing at a bumper when focused on the last car when in reverse.
- I've started running with one of my views, usually the F3, about midway along the train (if it's a long one) and I use the ctrl-shift-9 mode. After doing that I use ctrl-up arrow to get as high above the train as possible. Gives me a great view of the train and surrounding terrain, especially in mountains, where things can sometimes seem too restricted with the normal views. In that mode, you can hold down the right mouse button and turn in any direction."

Tuesday, 14 September

- The 2nd episode of **Claude's Corner** is now online. [Click here to read it](#). And the links in the box to the right are now live as well.
- Have you read the reviews of some of the NERR work orders and a few other things (a book, a set of locos, ...) that have been published on our Work Order Sheets web page called "**Penned in the Crummy**"? There are currently 14 reviews on that page. You will find the reviews both helpful and enjoyable. In fact, why don't you write one and send it in? You must have a favourite work order - tell everyone about it and how good it is. Here's one of the reviews there already (please note that the SW Division paid no money to bribe the Editor to use this one - although donations will be gratefully received!). Now go and run the work order!

Review—NERP 090-01, 02 & 03 by HiLine (Jerry Matthews)

If you're an engineer who really enjoys hauling long, heavy trains over the sort of rugged rural real estate that has a pronounced vertical component, then you'll really like what Jerry Matthews has done with this trio of coal-dragging activities for Raton Pass. These acts will test your skills while they make an interesting story that'll be sure to keep your attention throughout the series.

Here, you're the operator of a twice-weekly, routine coal delivery from Wyoming to San Diego. In this case, however, lengthy repairs to the main have pooched the "routine", and operations are rather hectic as everybody – including yourself – tries to clear the backlog. You start-off in the first act heading for Trinidad, Colorado hauling 40 loaded Bethgons behind a pair of stately AC6000CWs and a trusty old SD40-2. You must make a pick-up in Trinidad and then take the whole caboodle over the pass to Raton.

Watch your step with this pick-up; get it wrong and you could find yourself in a bit of trouble. And then, climbing the Pass with this particular lash-up is no easy feat. It requires a deft hand on the power lever as you strive to keep the amps in the green without stalling the train. Not quite a sight-seeing tour, that's for certain!

Having arrived in Raton, you begin the second act with some housekeeping before picking-up your train again, along with a healthy handful of empty hoppers, as you

work out onto the main and get underway. It's a 25-mile jaunt down the line to French, where you take the branch line out to the York Canyon Mine – 35 miles and almost all of it uphill! Jerry explains that the reason for hauling the entire loaded coal train up to the mine is that there was a short window of time to move everything without a major impact on thru traffic. So conditions preclude parking the loaded train and just taking the empty hoppers. "All the more fun," says you, the stalwart, steely-eyed NERR engineer.

The third act opens at the mine, where things appear to be just hunky-dory and smugly routine. But then comes the truly interesting part (Warning: "interesting" here is a euphemism for "difficult"!) Once you've coupled your original train to the long string of additional coal cars, you then find yourself in charge of a truly *long*, heavy train, whose immediate destination is the end of the branch line – all of it downhill! If you've ever wanted an "interesting" training run that's nicely tailored to giving you lots of hands-on experience in downhill braking, then this, Me Son, is the activity for you!

Once back on the mainline, it's a pleasant trip along to Las Vegas, with lots of practice on the power lever and dynamic brakes. But note I said "to" Las Vegas. As you begin to relax at the end of your epic journey, a word of caution is in order here, and that word is "slow"! Eleven miles past Onava, the switch leading to the Las Vegas siding *appears* to show "50" on the Track Monitor, like all the ones preceding it. Better look again! If you go smoking past that switch with the "Las Vegas" sign while you're doing 50 then you're in a heap of trouble! Read that number as "30"; but while you're at it, try 20! You'll see!

NERP 090-1,-2,-3 is a marvelously fun series that you'll want to run again fairly soon after you've completed it. What's even better, Jerry promises that the journey will continue on the *Glorietta Pass* route. The first leg of that section (from Las Vegas to Lamy) has been submitted to the feasibility team, and it will soon be followed by a side trip to Santa Fe while waiting for opposing traffic to clear. I can barely wait, Jerry. Many thanks!

-Casey

Jerry Matthews is a retired Electrical Engineer, living in Orlando Florida with his Missus. They have three children and 12 grandchildren, who live in suburban Washington D.C.

Monday, 13 September

- Have you noticed that we are testing a **new NERR corporate logo**? It was put together by Bob and Rick and will probably replace the "angry eagle" (my words, not an official statement!) that we've had for the past year or so. It's on the top of the **Crew Callboard** and at the top of the **NERR forums**.
- You will also notice that the Crew Callboard has changed in appearance. Bob has added colours to your ID# to show your current status in terms of MSTs activity. We will be adding a key to the colours shortly, so don't panic if you are shown as red or yellow (but you might submit a couple of time slips to get back to having green status - **"Green is Good!"**). We will be contacting the engineers with red and yellow status to ask if they want to remain as active members of the NERR. Inactive members will soon be moved off the callboard to a linked page.

Sunday, 12 September

- **ConTEXT Editor** is a useful Unicode-aware freeware editor that is excellent for editing and debugging MSTS files such as ENG, WAG, SD, CVF and SMS files. It uses colour and highlighting to show different elements of the file. A variety of custom highlight templates are available, including one for MSTS. The current version number is 0.97.05. There is a good [tutorial on its use at Steam4me](#), the large Australian MSTS web site. You can download the program and the MSTS template using links on that web page. It has a very good "match the brackets" feature - just put the cursor immediately to the left of the first of the pair of brackets that you want to check; the second one in the pair, if it exists (and that is one of the most common causes of errors in equipment files), will be highlighted.
- We have added the MSTS **Shape File Manager** utility to the Other Downloads page on this web site (log in through NETS). It is a small utility that allows you to make small adjustments to s files - but be careful what you change and how you change it. We might add a new section to the Other Downloads page for utilities for route developers and equipment modelers - having a range of useful programs, or at least links to them, all in the one place, might encourage other people to become involved in this aspect of the MSTS world.

Saturday, 11 September

- **Route-Riter** - There has been a lot of activity with new beta versions of version 6 of this essential utility. It is now up to 6.0.9, with at least 4 patches to fix errors that appear to have crept into the program. We will not host version 6 on this web site until it is taken out of the beta stage. If you want to try it out, you can get it from [Mike's web site](#). This program is starting to be referred to as the Swiss Army Knife of the MSTS world, because it now has the capacity to do so many different things!

Friday, 10 September

- Defying millions of years of evolution, one of our Kiwi members (MickyT, #102) has just flown home from a holiday in Bali. He says that he would rather have gone to Rarotonga, but that he did enjoy Bali. What a choice - Bali or Rarotonga!? Tough decision - but I believe that he did not have much say in it.
- And I believe that Brian (elementb, #7) and Claude Thibault (#23) might have had a long lunch together recently. But we haven't heard any reports from the event yet? Come on guys, 'fess up!
- Our first interview for this month is with Dandy1 (Dan Dierker, #10). The interview was compiled by Raymond (BeanCounter, #33).

I'm sitting here this evening with Mr. **Dan Dierker**, aka **Dandy1** in the NERR world. Dan has been a member of NERR almost from the beginning, and is the Director of the Central Division, Director of WCN, and the co-founder of Bison Rail along with the Bison Rail Director, Hans Groenenberg (Dutchie), among many other NERR duties. He also has the distinction of having officially run more hours than anyone else.

Q. Even though this isn't a job interview, tell us a little about yourself and your family.

A. I am 40 years old and have lived on a farm all my life. I have just been recently married to Teresa, on July 17th of this year. I have custody of two boys, 8 and 6 (Dustin and Dalton). She has a 14 year old daughter (Elizabeth) and 21 year old son (Trent).

Q. Any other juicy personal stuff you want to tell the world about?

A. My two boys are definitely all Boys. At school last year, a police officer discussed with my boys about calling 911. They put it to good use right away when I was outside talking with my neighbor. They called 911 that day when they couldn't reach the chocolate chip cookies. Really can't blame them a bit, for I would get a little grumpy when there is no cookies either, let alone when you can see them and not able to reach them.

Q Your farm is in Illinois. Where is it? How big?

A. My farm is in central Illinois near the town of Lincoln, and I raise corn and soybeans. My family owns 500 acres and I custom farm another 2200 acres.

Q. What goes to the market from your place? Does it go by rail or truck?

A. This harvest I will combine harvest just over 250,000 bushels of grain in about 45 days. We have grain bins and dry the grain ourselves; then it is shipped directly, by truck, to ADM in Decatur, Illinois. Since farming is seasonal, I do a lot of other jobs as well. I may be an electrician one day, welder, drive construction equipment, etc, and a horse show announcer the next. I truly love my life for the variety of things that I get to do.

Q How did you get started with MSTs and NERR? Did you have any other train related hobbies before such as a model railroad?

A. I have been a modeler all my life and have won several modeling contests over the years. I was doing electrical wiring when I was 10 years old, and with the love of trains, modeling, and (LOL) taking in voltage over the years, was a perfect fit. I have not modeled any trains or scenes for a while, and MSTs came along, and just sure an accident stumbling across NERR at the same time, and have not looked back since. I cannot imagine not running trains at NERR; it's just part of my day.

Q. What are your other interests besides virtual railroading.

A. My choices after trains are toy tractor collecting (over 650 pieces) and gardening. I am a Master Gardner and spend a lot of time raising flowers and vegetables. My specialty is roses, and I have bred together several types of roses to produce a new

variety - you just never know what you will end up with. I have been involved in basketball and softball as well. My nephews are playing, and now my two boys are as well. Players make the worst fans. I do not wear glasses, but I take them to the game with me. You will see me standing up waving them at the referees asking if they need a pair, because that was a bad call against me boyz.

Q. What's the last book you read? Last movie you saw? Favourite food?

A. Last book I read was "The Notebook". Last movie I went out to see at the theater was "Garfield". I like all sorts of food but, turkey, potatoes and sweetcorn - it just does not get any better than that.

Q. Why don't we see your picture in the forums?

A. Why would you want to see an ugly picture?

Q. If you didn't have the farm, what would you really like to do? (Besides running a train, of course.)

A. I've been a fireman, truck driver, and just about done everything a handyman could do. I guess it would be to drive a crane. I got to drive a bulldozer, road grader, earthmover one week out on a jobsite filling in for a friend, but a crane has the power but takes a light touch swinging things around. It was truly a blast, and I wanted to go around picking everything up. I think the ultimate type of crane work, would be on a high rise building.

Q. How much does Bob pay the Central Division Director? Is it enough?

A. This question should really be reversed. I should be paying Bob for all this enjoyment. I really don't think Bob Artim has fully comprehended all the enjoyment he has created for everyone here. You start looking at the hours people have logged in time slips, that's a lot of fun for a lot of people, let alone the countless hours that people put into routes, trains, and making the W/O getting to that point. It truly is amazing what he has accomplished here, and how everyone at NERR works together.

Q. What led to Bison Rail?

A. Bison Rail was formed from a friendship that I have with Dutchie. He coined the title, "Bison Rail", and the ideas took off from there. It's far from being done yet, and hopefully within a month you will see what Bison Rail has coming up soon. We will be extending Bison Rail further but will always be attached to NERR, for there is no place like home, and NERR is my other home.

Q. What irritates you the most?

A. Being old enough that I can't call 911 for Chocolate Chip Cookies. I really have no complaints, for life is too short to worry about it.

Q. What can you tell us about the rumors going around about the sheep in that "special" pen in the barn?

A. Sheep, well what can I say, there's a few people around NERR that keep sending me Velcro Gloves. What is interesting is when I met Teresa, she had a stuffed sheep in her living room right next to the TV, and I figured that had to be a sign that she was the one.

Q. Where do you see yourself and/or NERR in a year? In three?

A. NERR in a year will be just as strong as ever. MSTS is a long ways from being dead. There is so much more to do with operations, trains being more realistic, etc. NERR had a call out to a lot of other VRs to help each other out. As you can see, they are dropping like flies due to the incorrect people in key places and the inability to listen. What I see happening in the future is more spin-offs from NERR using the NERR structure - OVS for example. Bob and Jim are working on two payware VRs that will once again have the structure and support of NERR people. If any new VR wants to be successful, they will have to learn from NERR. Bob, Jim, Brian, John, MR are very seasoned, as well as numerous others at NERR, on what works and what does not. Will there be more spin-offs from NERR into smaller VRs? Time will tell, but what I will always keep in the back of my mind is what Brian told me when I first started getting really into NERR. Bob and Jim will never steer you wrong when you ask for help on direction. My experience since I've been here at NERR is that Brian was 100% correct, and if you want a successful NERR take the same advice that I have.

Q. What skills do you have that we haven't seen yet?

A. I really don't have any MSTS skills now, let alone bring any new ones. If it wasn't for Brian (elementb), I would have never written my first W/O. Was not for Dutchie, WCN would not run as smooth as it does. Not for Bob Artim, Bison would be buffalo burgers. Painting, lol - I'd still be wondering what an ace is, if it was not for Jim. Countless others to solve problems or to get -er-done. I have been working on websites, but there again, I'd be nowhere if it was not for all the friends who have helped guide the way. The only real skill I could bring is to give everyone some great advice. Be very patient, have some fun, ask for help, and when working on a project, finish it.

Q. If you could be any kind of railroad engine, what would you be and why?

A. Thomas the Tank Engine. Always saves the day, and the day ends in a smile. I had the pleasure to ride Thomas the Tank Engine with my boys at the Union Museum in Illinois. I have never seen so many kids in one spot, not making a sound with their mouths wide open when Thomas came out of the Train Barn. Truly was a magical day for all those kids to see Thomas and take a ride on the passenger cars with Thomas in the lead.

Q. Anything else for your division workers and fans out there in railroad land?

A. Bison Rail will continue to tie as much of the real world into MSTS RRing. Jay has done an outstanding job of masterfully tying together the history of Bison Rail train engines. Archer and JohnL have been working hard at revising the MOW department to work on the rails of Bison Rail. I am sure you will see some documentation on the MOW Manual in the near future, along with MOW work orders. The Bison Rail engineers will be called upon to keep the rails in great condition. Dutchie and I have been working on an Industry list. I think everyone will like what we have done, but it does take a lot of time to include the features it will have. It will be worth the effort and will be a nice add-on for other Divisions and Developers, to use as a reference for shipments. Some of the routes are getting close to being completed with this industry spreadsheet, and we will have a Bison Rail website for easy access. A lot more projects are on the drawing board, but harvest is coming soon, and will have to wait till my five month winter vacation starts.

Thank you, Dan, for taking time away from your very busy schedule to chat with us. We look forward to more from Bison Rail and more from your work with NERR.

Thursday, 9 September

- **Don't Forget!** We have a growing number of **maps** available for the NERR network routes. So far, our cartographers have produced:
 - Whitefish 3
 - Lehigh Version 2
 - ADFRR
 - Seattle
 - Hamilton Norfolk
 - CGW
 - East River
 - Full Bucket
 - Central Wisconsin
 - South Rail
 - East River
 - NERR Hoodoo Pass
 - Newark & Jersey City
 - Blue Mountains
 - Chippewa Valley
 - Full Bucket
 - Glorietta Pass
 - San Diego & Arizona
 - Raton Pass

You can find them on the **Routes Page**. There are a few different styles, depending on the map maker. In general, though, they are useful for both engineers and activity developers. You might print them out and use them when you next run or develop an activity. Just be aware before you start printing that the zipped pdf files contain up to almost 100 pages.

Wednesday, 8 September

- **ConBuilder** has been upgraded to version 2.1.6. Both the full install and the exe update versions are now available on the Other Downloads page of this web site. Log in through the NETS login page.
- I have just installed the **Clinton Subdivision** route, developed by Craig (CraiH, #191). It went in without any problems. Just remember that you need both XTracks and NewRoads (both available on the Other Downloads page of our web site). You can choose to install the three activities supplied with the route with one of three different sets of equipment (Default, NERR, or UP), depending on what you have already installed on your computer - of course, you would choose the NERR, wouldn't you!?? Also note that it installs to a folder called UPCS, not called Clinton - this gave me a small panic attack at first when I thought that I had put it into a totally different place. You can also now download a fix for a dead signal from Train-Sim.com (about 1 Mb file), or you can download the whole route, with an installer, in one large file (about 145 Mb) from the same place. I ran one of the activities for about 10 minutes just to have a quick look around - looks great, Craig.

Tuesday 7 September

- Even if you read *Roundhouse Ramblings* each day, check the earlier days occasionally, as sometimes we have to update an item from earlier in the month, e.g. the listing below of the work orders that have not been run at all yet. Generally, we will put the updates on the current day, but that is not always sensible.
- At the start of each month, we will publish some statistics for the NERR, as shown below. We are not listing the work orders with the largest number of runs for one particular month because the maximum number is usually about 4-8, with large numbers of work orders with equal numbers of runs. The table (as shown below) will list the work orders with the largest accumulated number of runs since NETS started in January 2004.
- One of our members has asked for the **number of time slips submitted for each route**. The table below shows that information for the period from January 2004 to the end of August 2004. The numbers are approximate, as my counting ability is not always 100% accurate. You also need to remember that the various routes have been part of the NERR network for varying lengths of time this year, and that there are different numbers of NERR work orders for each route. This table will not be produced each month!

Blue Mountains - 40	Chippewa Valley - 352	Dual Fictional - 996	East Metro - 38
East River - 306	Full Bucket - 721	Florida HSR - 35	Glorietta Pass - 299
Hamilton Norfolk - 181	Hoodoo Pass - 209	LGV Med - 83	Lehigh Valley - 189
Melbourne - Ballarat - 24	Montgomery - Mobile - 101	Monon - 253	Marias Pass - 539
Niederelbebahn - 48	North East Corridor - 683	Newark & Jersey City - 294	Ohio Rail - 554
NERR PR - 148	Raton Pass - 247	San Diego - 62	Seattle - 256
South Rail - 42	Unterland - 78	Wisconsin Central - 198	Wupper Express - 56
Whitefish - 287			

Monday/Tuesday, 6/7 September

- **NERR statistics for August:** 124 engineers submitted 795 time slips - 652 NERR activities and 143 non-NERR activities. The total hours for the month amounted to 1443, which is an average of 1.8 hours per activity.

- The **Top 10 work orders** for the period 1 January 2004 to 31 August 2004 were the ones shown in the table below. All of them were Diesel / Freight work orders. The top ranked Electric / Passenger work order (ranked 18th) was NENE-018-1a (30 mins) with 27 runs since pre-2004.

No. of Runs	Work Order Name	Length	When Developed
45	NEWC-1-Grainmove	1 hour	January 2004
44	NENE-KA-001	2 hrs 45 mins	Pre-2004
39	NECV-007-03a	45 mins	June 2004
37	NEER-110-01	1 hour	Pre-2004
32	NEWH-100-01	1 hr 18 mins	February 2004
31	NEWH-150-01a	30 mins	January 2004
31	NEFB-100-05a	50 mins	February 2004
30	NEDF-109-X01	1 hr 50 mins	Pre-2004
30	NEMM-110-01	1 hr 40 mins	February 2004
30	NECV-007-03b	1 hr 30 mins	June 2004

- 12 activities have 0 runs. Why don't you run these work orders and submit the time slips - the NERR needs the revenue, the activity developers need the royalties, this freight needs shifting, and the passengers want to get home for Christmas!!!
 - NEMP-KA2002 (30 mins) - freight - *for MP3.0, so don't try it yet, unless you still have that route.*
 - NEMP-KA2003 (30 mins) - freight - *for MP3.0, so don't try it yet, unless you still have that route.*

- NEMP-KA2005 (1 hour) - passenger - *for MP3.0, so don't try it yet, unless you still have that route.*
 - NEDF-Christmas-Eagle (3 hr 43 m) - passenger - *for version 1, so don't try it yet, unless you still have that route.*
 - NEEM-007-001 (1 hour) - passenger
 - NESE-XMAS-EAGLE (4 hr 50 m) - passenger
 - NEFB-LTP101 (1 hr 50 m) - passenger - the only steam one on this list
 - NEWC-Xmas-Train (41 mins) - passenger
 - NEMM-260-03a (30 mins) - freight
 - NEMM-260-04 (1 hour) - freight
 - NEMM-260-02 (1 hr 25 m) - freight
 - NEDF-026-23H (5 hr 30 m) - freight
- 26 activities have 1 run - I won't list them for a few days. Go and run the ones listed immediately above first!

Sunday, 5 September

- One of our members, Craig (CraiH, #191), has uploaded his route to Train-Sim.com. It is the **Clinton Subdivision**, representing the main UP east-west line. This is from the ReadMeFirst file: "The Clinton Sub consists of approximately 210 miles of dual track mainline (except for one single track river crossing). Clinton Sub is a former CNW route that runs from Clinton, IA on the Mississippi River and heads west to Boone, IA where it connects to the Boone Sub. It is now owned by the Union Pacific railroad. The Clinton Sub is a freight route carrying grain, intermodal, autorack, coal, and general freight. It sees in excess of 40 million tons of freight per mile per year. This rendition of the Clinton Sub covers 115 miles of the eastern end of the route, including East Clinton in Illinois, and terminates at Belle Plaine, IA. It includes 6 large yards and many, many sidings and spurs. The route also includes a branch at Cedar Rapids, IA and a small portion of the CRANDIC route in Cedar Rapids. The route is not purely prototypical, having modifications that will hopefully improve the playability of the route. It has been set up with stations for passenger activities, but only along the mainline. The sidings and industries are not accurately named. The route includes siding names, platforms, mile markers, speed limits, signals, crossings, and sounds. Scenery is complete through the entire length of the route. For activity builders, all crossovers on the mainline are automatic switches, all other switches are manual. There is a tight curve into the CCP yard at north Cedar Rapids that doesn't tolerate long rolling stock. It is possible to create a loop in the Cedar Rapids area, starting at the power plant beside the Cedar River and looping through Cedar Rapids to the east side of the Cedar River."

Congratulations, Craig, on completing this huge undertaking. There are some good, positive messages already on the NERR forums (and other places) about the route.

- When you visit the Crew Callboard, you will see the new graphics being used for the ranks that you all currently hold. They were developed for the NERR by Rick (silvermeteor, #42). They add to the appearance of the callboard. Thanks, Rick! You can see larger versions of the graphics on your profile page accessed by clicking on your username in the callboard.
- Robert Reedy, the developer of the Dual Fictional route, has posted a file in the NERR forums with the following comment: " If anyone is interested this is a complete (I think) listing of sidings, capacities, call names, and usage for the ADFRR that might help with activity making." Maybe we could build up a web site page with the same sort of information for all the NERR network routes. It might give some other engineers some ideas about possible activities for the routes.

Saturday, 4 September

- Month 2!! We hope that you enjoyed the first month of Roundhouse Ramblings. PM or email me with your thoughts and suggestions.
- You will notice that there is a link to last month's Roundhouse Ramblings on the menu at the left side of the screen. We'll keep previous months' news pages available as a growing archive of news about the VR world. The other connected pages - those in the box to the right - will be allowed to grow for a few months.
- One of the useful utilities that have become available recently is the group of 3 utilities called the **TK_Utils**, put together by OkrasaGhia. Archibald is a tree view editor for MSTs files capable of reading/writing compressed shape, terrain and world files. Horace is a route converter when doing changes to the tsection.dat file, like installing XTracks first time. Zipper is an easy to use (de)compression utility supporting drag-n-drop that also handles folders. You can download it at Train-Sim.com and UKTrainSim. UKTrainSim also has a new version of **FCalc** (v2.0). This new version of FCalc enables designers of new and reskinned rolling stock to calculate the correct friction values. Many more types of rolling stock are now supported. The download file includes documentation and spreadsheets in Microsoft XL format.
- Another is the beta version of the **TrainSim Consist Manager**. This project early in 2004 when Paul Gausden converted his Shape Viewer utility to use an ActiveX viewer control. The aim was to put together a simple tool for MSTs fans to view and change their consists without having to sue the MSTs Consist Editor. TSCM was developed in parallel to, and with no knowledge of, the Conbuilder / Shape Viewer integration project. TSCM is NOT a replacement for ConBuilder. You can use it to view many consists at once, create consists (but not loose or random ones) and to do basic usage checks on consists and stock. It does not have nearly as many features as ConBuilder (plus it has bugs, - listed in the readme.txt file).
- There is another new route at Train-Sim.com - the **Frisco Fort Smith Subdivision**. And there's also an update of it to version 1.1. It is a route without signals, which makes it harder to set up activities with AI trains - but so was the original route. Some more information about the route can be found [here](#). Apparently, the scenery is excellent, with the most significant parts of the towns and countryside being reproduced very well - including the 2000 foot-long Winslow tunnel.
- There is also a fix for the Whitefish 5 route at Train-Sim.com (info sent in by Intelvet). There are several versions of this route available in various places on the internet, with several different developers working on this route.

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