

## *Palmetto Excursion - 2015 SER-NMRA Convention Summary*



After 2 years of planning, the convention was a great success. We had 240 registered attendees plus a few clinicians only and either Op-Sig or Home Layout hosts. The Greenville Marriott was a great venue and provided us great service (although we did have a little problem with hotel reservations as our weekday allotment sold out!)

At the Marriott we conducted 43 clinics out of 45 possible time slots. The Clinics were well attended with standing room only for a few. The topics were diverse and well presented. We received very positive feedback from the attendees. The 15 minutes between the 1 hour clinic time slots proved to be liked by clinicians and attendees both as there was time for questions and for packing up to make way for the next clinician. The Contest Room ran smoothly and there was a need for more judges than we had available! The special convention theme was "heavy loads". Winners should be recognized in the next issue of the SouthErneR. The hospitality room for the non-rail activities was excellent, with separate sitting area and room with a large table for activities. Many of the ladies planned their own outings to the local shopping mall and downtown Greenville activities. All seemed to always have a smile on their faces, so they must have been having fun! The Registration/Company Store/Raffle Room was a busy place. Quite a few members brought "stuff" to sell and we had 51 donated products from various manufactures in our raffle. Many attendees went home happy with their purchases or winnings; but there were a few very disappointed raffle ticket purchasers as their tickets did not match the winning numbers!

The Saturday evening banquet activities consisted of a social hour followed by a Carolina buffet. The banquet program featured recognition of the convention committee, special awards by region president Glen Hall, an entertaining view of life married to a model railroader presented by Lorraine Garner, the presentation of Contest winners by Howard Garner, the keynote address by Mr. Steve Hawkins (owner of 2 area short line railroads), and ending with a preview of the 2016 convention in Huntsville, Alabama by Sandy Warrington. Mr. Hawkins took us on a trip through his life as it centered on railroading and concluded with a PowerPoint presentation of his current short line railroads and nicely tied in a bit of humor and "heavy loads" with his presentation. His talk was both informative and entertaining.

Away from the activities at the Marriott were Prototype Tours, Home Layout Tours, and Op-Sig sessions. Home Layouts were open for viewing and operation from Thursday through Sunday. 51 attendees enjoyed up to 9 operating sessions and all ran extremely well. We heard nothing but praise from the attendees. 30 Home Layouts were offered for viewing and the turnout for these was heavy. Again, nothing but positive feedback was received. The two Prototype Tours were also great. Republic Locomotive showed their assembly line and offered all attendees the chance to drive a real locomotive! Also offered there was the opportunity to ride in a motorcar. This tour was a huge success. The Industrial Tour took attendees to the Inland Port (intermodal distribution center) to get an up-close and personal view of the operation. They also toured to the Wye leading to the BMW plant and ended at the Hub City Museum in Spartanburg. Another well planned, informative, and entertaining tour.

### **Ron Lown**

Chair, Palmetto Excursion