

TINY TRAIN ON DISPLAY

Hobbyists Await Annual Show of Society of Model Engineers

By JOHN MARKLAND

ONE of the nation's model railroads will become one of the busiest also when the tenth annual show of the New York Society of Model Engineers gets under way next Monday at the club's headquarters, 152 West Forty-second Street. Eight scale-miles of steel tracks which make up the organization's famous Union Connecting Railroad will hum with "peak" traffic during the two weeks of the exhibition with crack train crews working day and night shifts to maintain service—and to answer the questions of the thousands of enthusiastic rail fans who annually visit the exhibition.

The O gauge tracks of the Union Connecting Railroad accommodate a heavy flow of traffic throughout the show, normal operations are speeded up until the U. C. R. line resembles those of any standard road over a busy holiday.

Dozens of tiny trains of every description, each one representing many spare-time hours of work by individual hobbyists, speed gleaming rails in response to deft manipulations of "ham" patchers, engineers, switchers, Transcontinental fliers, freights, electric commuter trains, snub-nosed streamliners, mountain switchers and work trains—all move on schedule, in conformance with regulation train orders. Ingenious signal towers and control boards keep things running smoothly on all parts of the system, no matter how heavy traffic may be.

Model Control Board

Of outstanding interest in this year's exhibition is a new electrical control board which members of the society say represents the very latest development in the field of rail signal and switching devices. Seated in his tower before this model control board, the chief dispatcher can control the movements of trains anywhere on the system simply by pushing the proper button. Indicator lights show him the position of trains at all times and interlocking switches eliminate all possibility of accidents.

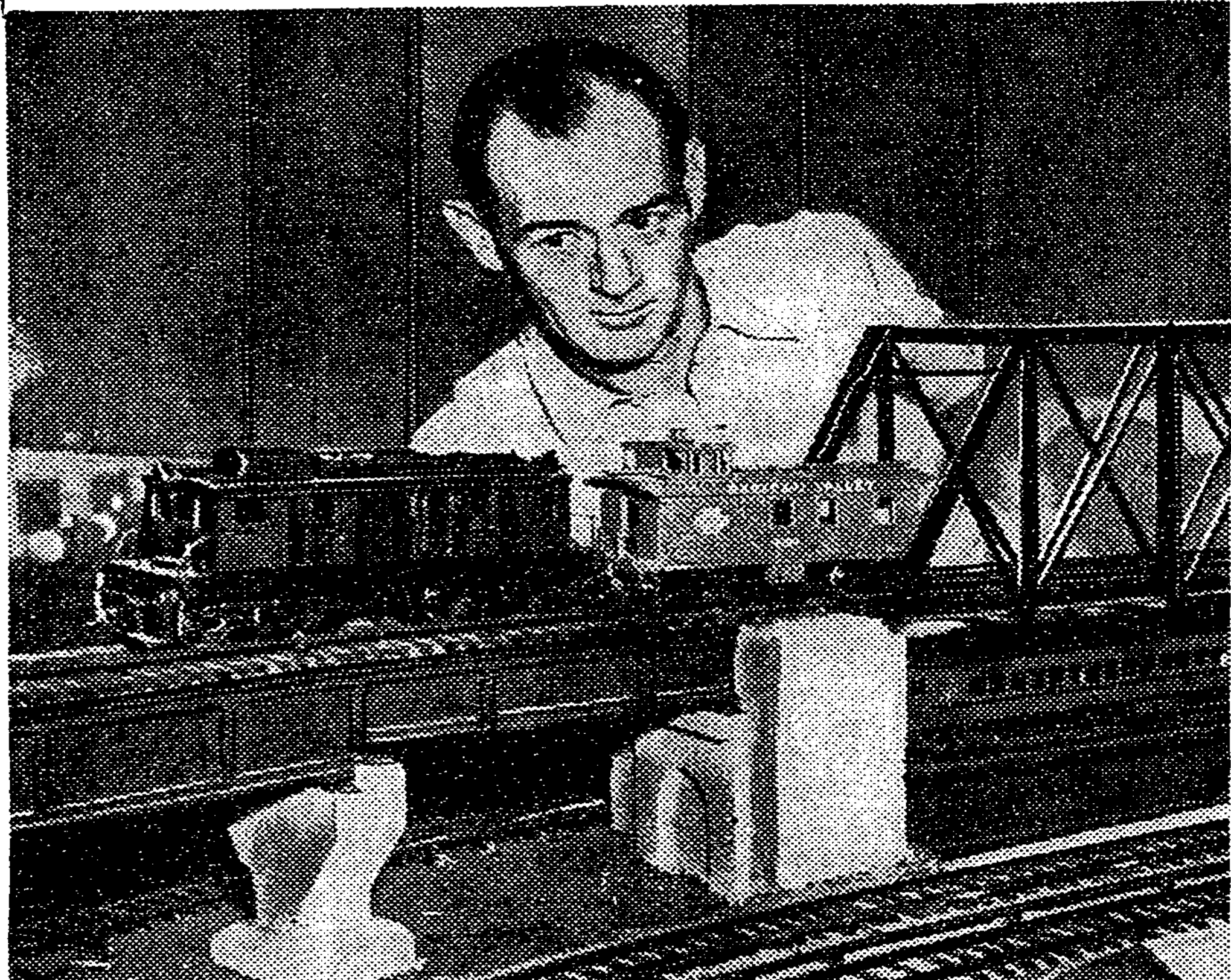
Modeled after a control board soon to be put in operation on one of the country's leading railroads, this newest addition to the society's elaborate miniature rail layout required more than a year to build. A number of the club members aided in the work. Club spokesmen say it is the most ambitious project of its kind ever undertaken by amateur railmen.

Another new feature—and one that will appeal especially to apartment dwellers with a liking for miniature railroads that can be set up in crowded quarters—is a kind of subsidiary road to the main line, a spur line of OO gauge trackage. Called the Union Dock and Terminal Line, the new road measures only three-quarters of an inch between rails, as compared with one and one-quarter inches for the O gauge road. Accommodating engines and rolling stock that are proportionately smaller, the model OO gauge systems, members point out, represent a substantial saving in space and in cost of construction and operation as well.

Realistic Appearance

Such features as the tower control board and the new spur line serve to emphasize the highly realistic look of the tiny rail system, which has served as a model for miniature railroads built by fans in many other parts of the country. Diminutive towns and way stations, water towers, roundhouses, freight yards, lift bridges, tunnels and mountain trestles strike the same realistic note.

A backdrop painted by one of the members provides pleasing rural vistas and picturesque mountain scenery. Another member with a knack for stage lighting has rigged up a battery of floodlights for this year's show. Even such details as miniature billboards and cattle grazing in sloping meadows along the right-of-way have not been overlooked. Another realistic touch—one which stands in dramatic contrast with the modern electrically operated master control board—is an old-style signal tower, now



A miniature switching engine, of the New Haven type, in "operation."

boarded up, with a semaphore of the hand-operated type standing near by.

Against such a realistic background, members point out, it is not surprising that the tiny scale-model trains create a lifelike illusion as they speed over straightaways and around curves, through tunnels and across mountain gorges. The tiny trains themselves are masterpieces of detailed construction; they are not to be confused (and all model engineers are highly sensitive on this point) with ordinary "toy" trains.

Engines and equipment which operate on O gauge track are built on a scale of one-quarter inch to a foot. Despite the fact that they are only one forty-eighth the size of real

trains, and although their actual speed may be only a mile or two an hour, these painstakingly built models, when seen in action on the Union Connecting Railroad, give sufficiently realistic performances to draw exclamations of surprise and admiration from even the most skeptical of visitors to the society's exhibits.

Although the model railroad is the outstanding attraction at the Model Engineer's show, many other examples of model making are on display. The society's marine division presents many model boats, both power and sail, including miniature self-powered gasoline speedboats, which have national championship rating in their individual classes.