



THE SEMAPHORE

DECEMBER 2013

FOX VALLEY DIVISION • MIDWEST REGION



Layout of the Month: Mike Hirvela's CNW

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It's 7:15 pm, December 23, 1955 as a yard crewman shouts up to the engineer of CNW's old 3744, "The big boss wants to get the plow ready. The weatherman says lots of snow's comin' tonight!" The December action takes place on Mike Hirvela's CNW North Shore Subdivision layout. Layout photos by Walt Herrick.

***Happy Holidays
Everyone!***

***from all of us on
your FVD board.***

Mike Hirvela's prototype inspired HO Chicago Northwestern North Shore Subdivision is December's Layout of the month. Mike's double deck, full basement layout is located in his Waukegan home and depicts a double track CNW line from Chicago to Milwaukee based on the prototype Northwestern's Milwaukee Division. Mike models the railroad from Highland Park, Illinois to Milwaukee. Normally it is the spring of 1956 on the layout, but Mike was kind enough to let us shoot a winter scene for this December issue of the Semaphore. Thanks Mike! Follow along as we tour his CNW North Shore Sub.

Jim Allen's Fun Stuff

Here's a full size **brick** locomotive sculpture outside of Darlington, Durham City, England. Built in 1997, it is modeled after the London and Northeastern Railway locomotive "Mallard". The sculptor has sculpted a lot of smoke streaming out of the Mallard and sailing straight back over the train showing it running at a high speed—especially for a brick!



Mike Hirvela's Layout of the Month

A pair of Chicago Northwestern E6's pull one of the Northwestern's famous 400 Streamliners northbound across the Root River Bridge. The locomotives are from Proto 2000, and the passenger consist from Ahm. Layout owner Mike Hirvela hand painted the hard board back drop. Basic scenery is in place over most of the layout, though some areas await detailing and completion such as in this scene where track ballasting is next on the agenda.



CNW geep 7's in the Northwestern's classic yellow and green paint scheme, pull a southbound freight past the grain elevator near Somers, Wisconsin. They are just about to cross County Road KR. As a youngster, the editor remembers similar power going through his home town of Crystal Lake, Illinois on the CNW's northwest line to Janesville, Wisconsin.



Mike Hirvela's CNW North Shore Subdivision isn't just about beautiful yellow and green diesels. Here we see two E2 Pacifics at Milwaukee Terminal ready to depart south to Chicago with their 400 passenger trains. The CNW had the Pacifics built to burn oil to cut down on smoke emissions in the big cities and suburbs.

Mike Hirvela's Layout of the Month con't



A 400 Streamliner is now south bound going past Farmer Brown's farm. This typical midwest farm scene was created with old Revell (now Con Cor) structures and an Imex resin silo (above). Alco S2 #1005 (left) is just like the one Mike Hirvela used to watch as a kid in his home town of Two Rivers, Wisconsin. Mike wrote about it in his Mike's Minute column in last month's Semaphore. In past Semaphores Mike also wrote about building the hi-rail MoW truck and replacing the switch at the Mercks Cheeze factory. (lower left photo) Rail-water connections play a big part in North Shore Sub operations. In the lower right photo a tug is moving a barge near a Port of Milwaukee industrial pier on Jones Island. The tug is a modified old Lindberg model.



Mike Hirvela's Layout of the Month con't



Downtown Racine is a busy place this morning as CNW 5005-A glides into the depot for a station stop (left). GP7 #1519 is in local service today pulling a short freight past the trailer park at Pleasant Prairie, Wisconsin (right).

Basic Layout Information

Layout Builder:	Mike Hirvela
Layout Location:	Waukegan, IL
Layout scale:	HO
Layout Size:	22 x 38 feet, full basement layout
Layout Style:	Two decks around the walls with a peninsula; 44 inch high lower deck and 60 inch upper deck. One long grade connects the decks.
Layout theme/locale:	Prototype inspired Chicago Northwestern North Shore Subdivision from Highland Park, IL to Milwaukee, WI.
Layout era:	Spring 1956
Construction started:	1991
Bench work:	1x4 box frame modular sections on L girders cantilevered from the walls
Sub road bed/roadbed:	Sub roadbed: 1/2 or 3/4 inch plywood with Homasote road roadbed
Track:	Double track main with an outside curve minimum radius of 36 inches and in side curve minimum radius of 33 1/2 inches built with Atlas code 100 nickel silver flex track; Atlas #6 turnouts are used throughout with a few Pecos for particular situations, and a few #4's on industrial sidings
Scenery:	Foam base with hard shell cover; Woodland Scenics, Scenic Express and natural ground covers. Basic "roughed in" scenery covers most of the layout with many completed scenes.
Backdrop:	Painted hard board with hand painted scenes
Structures:	Plastic and wood kits, kit-bashed structures and flats with three original Art Curren kit-bashed structures
Locomotives:	RTR plastic diesel and some brass steam, all CNW or CNW influenced
Rolling Stock:	Lots of Athearn "blue box" kits with some Accurail and Intermountain kits
Control:	NCE DCC with tethered throttles and eventually some wireless throttles
Operations:	Sequential operations with car card forwarding. Passenger, commuter, through freight, and local freight trains are all modeled on a double track main line.
Favorite part of the hobby:	Track laying
Model RR influences:	Frank Ellison, John Allen and Art Curren
Other:	Mike started building his layout in 1991 with one module and continued building it module by module. The last module was completed in 2009. A couple years ago a return loop under his passenger terminal and around his furnace was added as an "afterthought" —something he doesn't recommend any sane model railroader try!

Workin' on My FVD Railroad

When it comes to building the structures on his layout, Mike Hirvela has had “a little help from his friends” as the Beatles put it. “Workin’ on your FVD layout” doesn’t always have to mean you are doing all the work! Many modelers with big layouts often enlist the help of others in doing various facets of layout building. Mike had the good fortune to be in the right place at the right time in the late 1990’s when he met Art Curren at a Badgerland S Gauger Swap Meet. Art was selling several of the many plastic kit-bashed structures he built and wrote about in *Railroad Model Craftsman* in the mid 1970’s and *Model Railroader* magazine in the late 1970’s through the early 2000’s. (Art died in 2000 but had completed several articles prior to his death.) Being a huge fan of Art’s work, Mike couldn’t help but purchase three Curren originals for his CNW layout. “I got the three structures for about \$75.00 as I recall,” says Mike. “Art was happy with the deal and so was I. He is one of my model railroad heros. I always liked his work. I look at some of his models and ask myself ‘How did he *do* that?’” The structures Mike purchased were, the Hyde & Ceak Shade and Blind Company, the Mt. Vernon Manufacturing Company, and A. Frugal Manufacturing Company. All are placed in prominent fore ground locations on Mike’s layout. The bottom photo to the right is a wood craftsman kit expertly built for Mike by the FVD’s Don Cook, MMR, in 2005. More structure building help came from Navy buddy Duke Yerman who stayed with Mike for a while after his house was destroyed by Hurricane Katrina. During his stay he built several structures for the layout. Mike is grateful to have had the opportunity to add the Curren and friend-built structures to his layout. They definitely make it more special.

Photos from top to bottom show Art Curren’s Hyde & Ceak Shade and Blind Co., the Mt. Vernon Manufacturing Co., and A. Frugal Manufacturing Co. MMR and friend, Don Cook, built the wood craftsman kit in the bottom photo. Walt Herrick photos.



Trains in Our Christmas's by Walt Herrick

Why do we love trains so much? One reason has to be that they are so closely related to the magic of the Christmas holiday. Who can forget receiving that first train set from Santa or the other Christmas model train gifts that followed in the years to come? Jim Allen provided us with a priceless image of "Trains in Our Christmas's" showing him as a youngster fully engrossed in some serious model railroading with his first train set on the living room floor of his family's apartment in Evanston. Mike Hirvela's first train set was a Hafner wind up set he got as a present from his Aunt Katherine. Katherine was afraid Mike might hurt himself with an electric set. Mike didn't care. He says he just "cranked the key on his wind up train and let her fly"! Jim Osborn received a couple of classic HO trains for Christmas presents. His first train set was a Mantua HO Dockside set which he received in about 1958. He



Three year old Jim Allen is hard at play with his first train set at Christmas time in 1948. It is a Marx O scale set with a loop of track, transformer, steam loco and passenger cars. Note the other accessories such as the figure, bus and truck. Photo courtesy of Jim Allen.

says he wore out white metal loco's plastic gears with "my race track running." Included with the set were three freight cars and a Mantua "Bobber" caboose all with talgo trucks and X2F couplers. Jim received a Varney Casey Jones steam locomotive kit in 1963. "The kit only had a few pieces to assemble....It never did run very well," Jim remembers. Will Westfall received a large Lionel train set in 1948 when he was quite young. He still has the die cast Hudson locomotive which sits proudly on his family room fire place mantel. The big set was only put up over the holidays, but that was enough to spark a love of trains Will still has to this day.



Above is Mike Hirvela with his first train layout. It is a wind up train set on a plywood Christmas tree base with a white skirt. A big stamped metal barn sits behind Mike. Jim Osborn's first train set was an HO Mantua Dockside set circa 1958. Jim's classic HO Varney Casey Jones loco kit came in a bright orange box in 1963. Will Westfall's die cast Lionel Hudson (right) was part of a large set. Photos courtesy of Mike Hirvela, Jim Osborn, and Will Westfall.

Mike's Minute by Mike Hirvela

Things You Think About at Trainfest

This year's Sunday afternoon at Trainfest, was slower probably because the Packer game was going on at the same time, and there are a LOT of Packer fans in Milwaukee. So on Sunday afternoon, with some down time between the groups of attendees, our minds had a chance to wander. There we were, Art Jones and I, watching Jim Allen's Action-Reaction RR going round and round, and the question occurred to us: How far has the A-R RR train traveled since it has been in operation? We decided to do some basic math calculations to find out.

—The A-R has a 15" track radius and 30" diameter.

—Times Pi equals 94.2477 inches in circumference, or about 8 feet to simplify the calculations.

—We clocked the RPM's. They averaged about 8 revolutions per minute. So in 1 minute, the train travels about 64 feet.

—64 feet x 60 minutes = 3,840 feet /hour.

—We run the A-R RR about 9 hours per day for a total of 34,560 feet per day.

—34,560 ft. divided by 5,280 ft/mile = 6.55 real miles/day

—6.55 real miles x 2 days = 13.1 real miles during a single Trainfest.

With appearances at 4 Trainfests, 3 High Wheeler Shows, 15 DuPage Swap Meets and 2 iHobby Shows, we figured Jim's train has traveled 14,850 HO scale miles and over 180,000 revolutions in three years of running. That translates to about 180 actual miles! We think it is a real tribute to Jim Allen's craftsmanship. Thanks Jim, for 180 *real* miles of great running!



Fox Valley Division members played a part in producing this year's big Trainfest show in Milwaukee. FVD Superintendent Jeff Jarr and Mike Bychowski were on the NS&W modular layout's crew (top photo). David Leider, Mike Hirvela and Art Jones pose in front of the Bluff City Modular Layout (middle photo). David manned the Soo Line Historical Society's booth, while Mike and Art manned the BCML. Trainfest runs all day Saturday and Sunday so the guys you see above put in two long but worthwhile days in Milwaukee. The Action-Reaction RR photo below is by Denis Zamirowski, with the other photos by Walt Herrick.



Past FVD Assistant Super, Harry Sorenson (left), FVD Trainmaster, Bert Lattan and FVD member Paul Allodi crewed on the Midwest RAILS big G gauge layout. In some Sunday afternoon Trainfest down time, Mike Hirvela and Art Jones did the math and determined the trains on Jim Allen's Action-Reaction RR shown at the right, have traveled 180 actual miles in three years of train show running!



NAPM's Open House

Milwaukee's North American Prototype Modelers club holds an annual Open House the Saturday night of Trainfest after the show closes down for the day. One of the premiere clubs in the nation, the NAPMs have built a large, beautiful HO layout featuring state of the art construction and electronics, and highly prototypical operations. Several FVD members make it a point to visit the layout each year after the Saturday Trainfest show ends. To see more NAPMs photos and information go to their web site: napmltd.org.



The huge Union Station greets you as you enter the NAPM's layout room. (upper right photo). The station building is beautifully constructed of Legos (yes, Legos!). The train shed stretches a full eighth of a scale mile behind the station with several platforms extending farther beyond that. Urban scenery and structures are all carefully planned and effectively executed (lower left photo) as are mountain and rural scenery (lower right photo). All work including bench work, track laying, wiring/controls, structures and scenery, is held to very high standards. Walt Herrick photos.

Only \$45 for 3 1/2 days of RailFun?

"Winfred, are you telling me RailFun 2014 is only going to cost me \$45? That's cheap for a 3 1/2 day regional convention!"

"Yep, only \$45 for the whole thing if you register early."

"Then I'm signing up today, Winfred. How 'bout you?"

"I'm already signed up, Al. I did it on the web site yesterday."

"Only \$45 and you can register on line? How sweet is that?!"



Winfred Al

Tip of the Month

When painting with acrylics does your paint job sometimes come out with a slight white "haze" to it, or perhaps the color is lighter than it should be? MMR, David Crement says using distilled water will end the haze problem and make your paint colors true. Using tap water is usually the cause of the haze and lighter colors. David also recommends to always shake your paint thoroughly before mixing or applying it.

November's Contest

November's contest was "Passenger Cars" with a limit of four cars. Jeff Jarr continued his string of first place finishes (he placed first in September and October) with his HO Cass Scenic Train cars. Don Cook placed second again this month (Don was second last month, too) with a unique Great Northern "boiler car" in HO. Dick Kock's N scale Santa Fe four car set earned him third place honors. Congratulations to our winners and to all those who entered! "Tank Cars" (limit 6) is December's contest. Contest photos by Jim Osborn.



FVD Superintendent, Jeff Jarr, again places first in November's "Passenger Car" contest with these HO Cass Scenic R.R cars he "just had to model" after visiting the real Cass Scenic. Jeff also won our September and October contests.



MMR Don Cook's unique HO Great Northern "boiler car" placed second in October's "Passenger Car" contest. Don sure has knack for finding interesting and unusual Great Northern equipment to model, doesn't he?



Third Place went to Dick Kock for his mix of N scale, Santa Fe light weight and heavy weight passenger cars.

November's Clinic

The Fox Valley's own David Crement, MMR, presented November's clinic on "Painting People". Lots of good stuff in this clinic including what paint to use (David recommends Vallejo brand—check the Squadron.com web site if you can't find it locally), priming the figures with solvent base paints and then painting with water based paints, drilling holes and sticking thin rods in the feet of the figure so they can be easily moved around the layout (just drill a small hole where you want the figure to go), and using pin vises to hold the figures by their "pins" while painting. Thank you David for an excellent clinic and Q&A session following the clinic! Jim Osborn photo.



Check it out!

'Hey Winfred, you checked out the **Railfun web site** lately?"

"Nope. "

"Well, please do! They've got new stuff on it! "

"Like what?"

"Like on line registration, and some new layout photos. "

"Well, OK then. I'll head home right now and take a little peak!"



Winfred Al

2013 – 2014 Meeting Schedule

The complete schedule is given below and also on the FVD web site: www.foxvalleydivision.org. Any schedule changes or additions are posted on the FVD web site as soon as they are known.

<u>Date</u>	<u>Clinic</u>	<u>Contest</u>	<u>Other</u>
Dec. 15, 2013	Module Scenery, Part 2 by Mike Wood	Tank Cars Limit 6 cars.	1:00 pm start. Lunch provided.
Jan. 19, 2014	Building Benchwork by Bill Kirchmeyer	“Rescue the Rolling Stock” Re-purposed rolling stock.	
Feb.16, 2014	How the CP Replaced the Duck Creek Bridge by photographer Ed Oom	Hopper Train Limit 6 cars.	
March 1, 2, 2014	High Wheeler 2014 Train Show at Harper College in Palatine Sponsored by the FVD. 9 am to 5 pm each day. <u>FVD volunteers needed.</u> Contact Jeff Jarr at jjarr@comcast.net or 773-286-8755.		
April 13, 2014	TBA	Diorama	1:00 pm start. Lunch provided. FVD officer elections.
May 16, 17, 18, 2014	Rail Fun 2014 Mid West Region Convention hosted by the FVD In Schaumburg, IL. <u>FVD volunteers needed.</u> Contact Jeff Jarr at jjarr@comcast.net or 773-286-8755.		
Note: <u>there will be no May FVD monthly meeting in lieu of the Rail Fun convention being hosted by the FVD.</u>			
July 13 - 19, 2014	NMRA National Convention in Cleveland, Ohio. Check the national web site www.nmra.org and <i>NMRA Magazine</i> for further information.		

NMRA Web Sites

Fox Valley Division	www.foxvalleydivision.org
High Wheeler 2014	www.highwheelertrainshow.com
Railfun 2014	www.foxvalleydivision.org/2014railfun/welcome.html
Midwest Region	www.mwr-nmra.org
National	www..nmra.org
2014 National Convention	www.2014cleveland.org

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*Do you have a question or two? Visit our website at: www.foxvalleydivision.org.
Or, call or email one of us above. We're here to help you!*

About the Fox Valley Division

If you receive this newsletter you live in the Midwest Region and Fox Valley Division of the National Model Railroad Association or NMRA. The Fox Valley Division (FVD) includes all of McHenry and parts of Cook, Kane, and Lake Counties in northeast Illinois. About 240 members of varied ages and modeling ability levels belong to the FVD. Almost all modeling scales are represented in our division. Membership in the division is free as are the Semaphore newsletters.

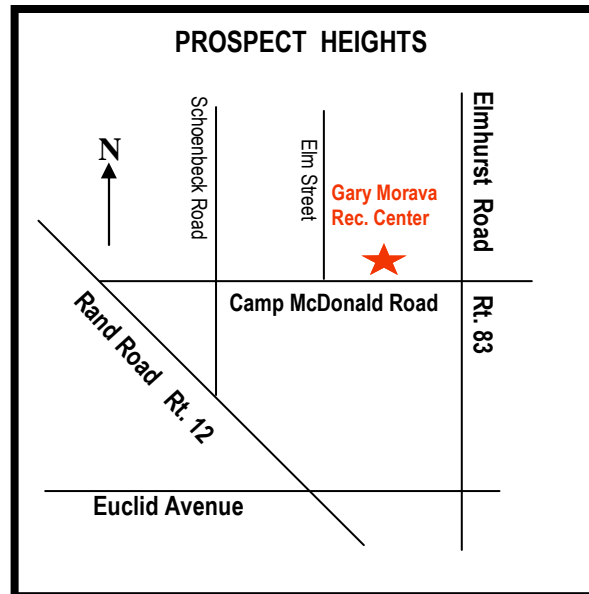
FVD general meetings are held September through May at the Gary Morava Center in Prospect Heights from 1:30 to about 4:00 pm. Each meeting features a clinic, model contest, information of interest to the membership, and a time for socializing. Outings, layout tours, and operating sessions are also held periodically in addition to, or instead of, the general meetings. To promote the hobby of model railroading, the FVD sponsors and runs the large train show, "High Wheeler", in early March each year at Harper College in Palatine, Illinois.

We encourage you to take advantage of all the FVD has to offer. We are here to answer your questions, help improve your modeling, and help you better enjoy the great hobby of model railroading. Join us at a FVD meeting or outing. We'd love to see you.

Visit us on the web at:

www.foxvalleydivision.org.

Questions? Contact FVD Superintendent, Jeff Jarr, or any FVD Board member listed on the previous page of this newsletter. We are here to help you!



Regular Meeting Location: Gary Morava Center,
110 Camp McDonald Road, Prospect Heights, IL

Regular Meeting Time: 1:30 to 4:00 p.m.

NOTE! December's meeting starts at 1:00 pm
with a pizza lunch!



Fox Valley Division
Midwest Region-NMRA
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