



THE SEMAPHORE

APRIL 2015

FOX VALLEY DIVISION • MIDWEST REGION



Important April 12th Meeting Elections & “Future of High Wheeler” Discussion

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Thanks to all of our High Wheeler 2015 volunteers! And...

Members, please attend the April 12 FVD meeting where we will discuss the future of the High Wheeler Train Show! Your views and ideas are needed!

April's FVD Annual Meeting on April 12th is shaping up to be an important one for a couple of reasons. First, we'll be electing an Assistant Superintendent and a Paymaster. **Second, we'll be discussing the future of our High Wheeler Train Show.** This show has been a big part of the FVD since 1977.

As FVD Superintendent, Jeff Jarr, explained at our February regular meeting, through no fault of our own, we are in limbo right now with what is going to happen with next year's High Wheeler. Harper College is changing its focus regarding the rental of its gym space. Their new priority is to use the gym for their athletic and other school related activities and to book those first. Dates not used for those purposes would then be available for rental. Unfortunately this does not provide us with the necessary lead time to plan and prepare for High Wheeler. A second problem that has come up is the possibility that the college will be undertaking a large renovation project in the near future which would make the gym unavailable due to construction. Because of these factors, in recent months our FVD board has been searching for a replacement site to hold the show. So far all the locations we have evaluated have either been too expensive, or have had significant access problems for loading.

So, the board very much wants members' input at April's meeting. Should we continue looking for another site? Should we change dates? Should we look at doing a smaller show? Should we not do a show next year and wait for the following year? Or, should we not do a show *at all*? This last question is asked because member interest in show staffing has been on a noticeable decline in recent years. Without adequate help from the membership, we simply cannot continue running the show.

An open discussion on these High Wheeler questions and others members may have, will be had at the April 12th meeting. Please attend and make your views and ideas known. The future of High Wheeler is up to us! Thanks! WH

Fun Stuff by Jim Allen

Now here's an interesting situation! Look closely and you'll see an automobile wedged under the side of that Russian tram actually tipping the trolley up. Who knows what happened, but with the vast majority of Russian cars and trucks having dash cams these days, the police should easily be able to sort out this little fender bender. Luckily for the driver of the automobile, the tram gets its power overhead and not through a third rail!



Layout of the Month: Dan Sylvester's Rio Grande Southern

Article and photos by Walt Herrick

Retired railroader, Dan Sylvester, has created an outstanding model railroad in a relatively small space. His 4 x 8 foot HOn3 Rio Grande Southern features a well conceived and well executed plan, beautiful scenery, excellent scratch built structures, fine running steam locomotives with sound, and superb scratch built narrow gauge rolling stock. But, as nice as the railroad is, Dan's real passion is not in layout building or modeling. His real passion is in prototype operation.

You might think a modest 4x8 layout offers little opportunity for prototype operation. Think again. This layout is packed with it. Drawing on his own 38 years of experience as a brakeman and conductor for the Chicago Northwestern, RTA and Metra, as well as the knowledge and expertise of superb narrow gauge modeler, the late Allen J. Brewster, Dan has developed an operating scheme on his little 4x8 that rivals the operating schemes of much larger layouts.

Dan's relationship with Allen Brewster is an interesting story. "I had just retired and took a trip to Colorado and road the Silverton train out there. I fell in love with Colorado narrow gauge railroading. I wanted to model it but didn't know anything about it, so I asked Kalmbach Publishing to put me in touch with Allen who was a former art director for MR. From his MR articles, I knew he was an outstanding narrow gauge modeler. We hit it off and became friends. I learned a lot about the Colorado narrow gauge railroads and modeling them from Allen."

The result is the 4x8 layout gem you see in the accompanying photos. When you view them keep in mind almost everything you see is *scratch built*, with wood being Dan's preferred material to model with. "Nothing beats wood for modeling wood," says Dan who's era is the 1930's when almost *con't on page 3*



A leased D&RGW C-21 crosses the Howe truss bridge over Telluride (top), while a RGS K-27 pauses at the Vance Jct. depot (middle). The depot is a re-purposed passenger car. Both the 361 and 455 are 2-8-0s. The C-21 is seen again coming out from under the big red tram terminal at Alta Mine (bottom).

Layout of the Month: Dan Sylvester's Rio Grande Southern

con't from page 2 all car bodies and structures on the Colorado narrow gauge roads were made of wood. Dan also knows his way around re-motoring and re-gearing locomotives to obtain optimum performance. This is important when prototype operations has such a high priority. Poor or even average performing locos detract from the business of running a railroad prototypically. And that's what it's all about for Dan Sylvester who, did we mention, writes a regular column on operations for the Operations Special Interest Group newsletter, *The Dispatcher*? Yep, he's that good!



RGS K-27 #455 pauses near the coal dock north of Vance Junction (top) as D&RGW #361 rounds the curve around Telluride (bottom). The 361 is also seen coasting into Vance Junction in the bottom photo. Dan Sylvester has skillfully used real dirt, volcanic ash, sand, ground foam and scratch built structures to realistically model rural Colorado circa 1935.

Basic Layout Information

Layout name:	Rio Grande Southern
Layout builder:	Dan Sylvester
Layout location:	Basement of Dan's Waukegan home
Layout scale:	HOn3
Layout size:	4' x 8'
Layout style:	4' x 8' island
Layout theme:	Freelanced version of the northern half of the Rio Grande Southern Railroad.
Layout era:	Mid 1930's--the depression era.
Construction started:	2004. Layout finished in 2007.
Bench work:	Grid & wheel shaped grids on the ends.
Sub road bed/roadbed:	½ inch plywood; ½ inch homasote.
Track and turnouts:	All hand laid code 55.
Scenery:	Foam base topped with Moclay. Ground foam, real dirt, volcanic ash, sand, etc. ground covers. Scratch built trees. Large photo backdrops.
Structures:	All scratch built of wood.
Locomotives:	Brass locos of appropriate prototypes. All have been re-motored and re-gearred. (See "Modeler Tip" on page 4).
Rolling stock:	All scratch built of wood to match specific prototypes.
Control:	PFM Sound System II on a tethered rolling control cart.
Operations:	RGS inspired operation scheme of the northern half of the railroad.
Favorite aspect of hobby:	Operations
Hobby Heroes:	MR's former Art Director from the 1960's and early 1970's, Allen J. Brewster. "Allen was an outstanding narrow gauge modeler who helped me a great deal with learning about the prototype and how to model it well. He was a good friend."
Other:	Everything on Dan's layout is scratch built except the locos, vehicles, figures, control system and photo backdrops.



Here's a Jim Osborn photo of the entire Sylvester layout.

Layout of the Month: Dan Sylvester's Rio Grande Southern



Our old friend, the 361, is seen in the two photos above pulling a train by the two stall round house at Vance Junction (left) and then exiting the tunnel north of Vance (right). Dan Sylvester's Rio Grande Southern runs as good as it looks thanks to reliable hand laid track and re-motored and re-gearred locos (see below).

Modeling Tip

When modelers operate on Dan Sylvester's Rio Grande Southern, one of the first things they notice is how slow and smooth running his steam locomotives run. This is not an easy feat in HO_n3. Dan's secret is two fold: excellent hand laid track, and re-motored and re-gearred locos. Dan uses German made Faulhaber motors with 6:1 gear heads in all his steam locomotives. His typical motor/gearhead combo is shown at the right. The unit is receiving ample power from a 9 volt battery. Re-motoring and re-gearing take a little work but the effort is well worth it. Dan says, "They do the trick!" WH



Midwest Region 2015 Spring Convention

This year's NMRA Midwest Region Spring Convention takes place April 15 – 17 in Manitowoc, WI. Convention headquarters is the Manitowoc Holiday Inn 4601 Calumet Avenue, Manitowoc 54220; ph 920-682-6000.

WinnebagoLand Division Superintendent, James Cruthers, extends a very warm welcome and invitation for you to attend the **Lake Shore Limited MWR Convention**. This year's convention is shaping up to be another super event with clinics, layout tours, op sessions, Saturday night banquet, and non-rail activities all part of the fun. Go on line to:

www.wld-nmra.com/?action=meets or www.mwr-nmra.org

for all the details and registration information.



April Elections

Our April 12th regular monthly meeting is also our Annual Meeting. Two of our four elected officers will be elected to two year terms at this meeting. This year we elect an Assistant Superintendent and Paymaster. At present Bob Shlemon, Jr. is running for Assistant Super, and Tim Kleimeyer for Paymaster. Both Bob and Tim are incumbents. Their bios are given below. **Anyone else desiring to run for one of these offices needs to contact our Chief Clerk, Leif Hansen, immediately.** Leif's contact information is on page 7.

Bob Shlemon, Jr. Bob has served as the FVD's Assistant Superintendent since 2012 and would like to continue in that capacity. The position has involved Bob in many different parts of the FVD and the hobby which he has enjoyed. Bob started in the hobby at age 6, attended the 1976 National Train Show in Rosemont and joined the NMRA in 1977. In 1980 he became an NMRA Life Member. In the old NS&W Division, Bob served in various capacities including Assistant Super, 400 Bulletin newsletter editor, and as a member of the NS&W Modular Group. As a FVD member you are likely to see Bob doing almost anything including helping with refreshments!



Tim Kleimeyer. Tim has been the FVD's Paymaster since 2004 and would like to continue serving the division as our Paymaster. Before becoming Paymaster, Tim was the FVD's Assistant Superintendent. As Paymaster Tim has a big job. He is responsible for managing all aspects of the divisions finances including High Wheeler Train Show finances. He is on site all day at High Wheeler both days of the show. Each month Tim prepares a financial statement for the FVD BoD, and each year he presents an Annual Financial Report for members at the FVD's Annual Meeting. Tim also does the FVD's IRS filing each year.



Mike's Minute by Mike Hirvela

Your First Op Session

You've been invited to operate on someone else's railroad. That is, attend and participate in a formal operating session with other people present. And they do more than just run trains around in a circle. You said, "yes". Now what? Does just the thought cause apprehension, nervousness, fear, or even absolute panic? It is entirely understandable. To many folks, doing something out of your comfort zone for the first time, especially something you think others know well, can have an adverse effect on a person. Some may recall back in school being called on to get up in front of class and having ALL eyes focused on you. It might feel the same way for the "new kid" at his/her first op session. Oh my! Perspiration City! Pass the Right Guard, please!

But gentle reader, fear not. We're all friends in this hobby and everyone who is an experienced operator now, was once a rookie just like you. We've all been there and have overcome the apprehensions we brought with us to our first op sessions. I remember the first op session I attended. Heading toward the host's house, I caught myself uttering the Astronaut's Prayer: "Please Lord, don't let me mess (the more descriptive word not used) up." After entering the railroad room and going through introductions, I was assigned to an "Old Head" to help pilot me over the rails. His counsel and guidance were invaluable to gaining an understanding about how the railroad was built to operate, and how to derive enjoyment from the experience. As the evening continued, I found a new confidence I didn't know I had, and I became comfortable being considered part of the operating crew. The experience led to new invitations for further opportunities to run on other's railroads in the future. And today, I am fortunate to have been invited to and have operated on about 15 model railroads in the FVD and WISE Divisions.

So, if you get an invite to operate on someone's railroad, GO FOR IT. You'll be glad you did. More next month. *Editor's note: Mike is the recent recipient of the NMRA's Dispatcher AP Certificate, the certificate specifically dealing with model railroad operations.*

Member News

We are sorry to report that long time NMRA member Gordon Johnson passed away on March 2nd. Gordon was a member of the NS&W Division for many years before it merged with the FVD. He attended several FVD meetings before moving to Rockford three years ago. Gordon was an active NMRA member who was a past NS&W Modular Layout Superintendent. Our sincere condolences go to Gordon's wife Jan, his family, and many friends....Membership Services Trainmaster, Bert Lattan, reports that February's FVD membership stands at 220, up 1 from January....Speaking of Bert, after 15 years of excellent service, he will soon be retiring from his position as the Midwest Region's Secretary. As MWR President, Paul Mangun, said in the Spring *Waybill*, "I believe we all owe Bert a very tremendous thank you for his service to our hobby and the NMRA." Well said, and let us add our thanks and "Great Job" to Bert, too! WH



Mike Bychowski and Gordon Johnson are at a NS&W Modular Layout event several years ago. Jeff Jarr photo.

2014-2015 Meeting Schedule

The remaining FVD/NMRA meeting schedule is given below and on the on the FVD web site:
www.foxvalleydivision.org.

Schedule changes or additions are posted on the FVD web site as soon as they are known. Our meeting place is the Gary Morova Recreation Center, 110 Camp McDonald Road in Prospect Heights, 60070. Our meeting time is 1:30 pm except as noted below.

<u>Date</u>	<u>Clinic</u>	<u>Contest</u>	<u>Other</u>
April 12, 2015	“1970's and Earlier Soo Line” by MMR, Don Cook (last minute clinic change)	Open load spanning 2-3 cars	1:30 pm start. Officer Elections
April 17 - 19, 2015	Midwest Region Spring Convention hosted by the Winnebago Land Division at the Holiday Inn, 4601 Calumet Ave. in Manitowoc, WI. Go to: www.wld-nmra.com/?action=meets or www.mwr-nmra.org for convention information on clinics, tours, non-rail activities, etc., and a registration form.		
May 17, 2015	<u>TBD check web site</u>	Unfinished project of your choice	
<i><u>Note: there are no FVD monthly meetings in June, July or August</u></i>			
August 23 - 29, 2015	NMRA National Convention in Portland, OR. Check the convention’s web site: www.nmra2015portland.org for complete information.		

NMRA Web Sites

Fox Valley Division	www.foxvalleydivision.org
Midwest Region	www.mwr-nmra.org
National	www.nmra.org



About the Fox Valley Division

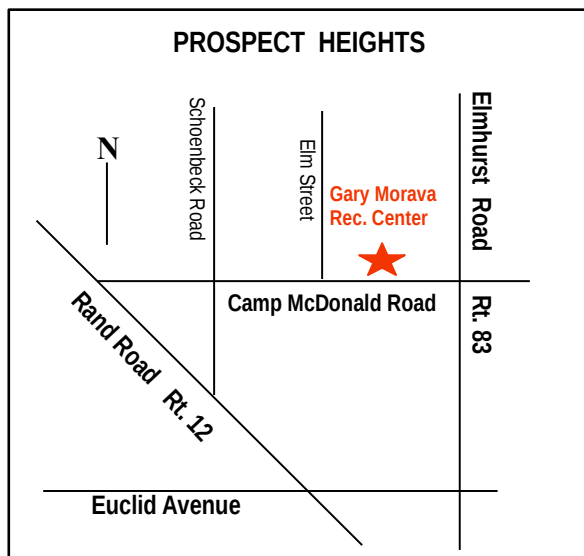
If you receive this newsletter you live in the Midwest Region and Fox Valley Division of the National Model Railroad Association or NMRA. The Fox Valley Division (FVD) includes all of McHenry and parts of Cook, Kane, and Lake Counties in northeast Illinois. About 225 members of varied ages and modeling 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 monthly 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 monthly meetings. To promote the hobby of model railroading, the FVD sponsors and runs the large train show called "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 and bring a friend. We'd love to see you. Also visit us on the web at:

www.foxvalleydivision.org.

Questions? Contact FVD Superintendent, Jeff Jarr, or any FVD Board member listed below. We are here to help!



The FVD's monthly meeting is at the :

Gary Morava Recreation Center
110 Camp McDonald Road
Prospect Heights, IL. 60070

Our regular meeting time is:

1:30 to about 4:00 p.m.

2014 – 2015 meeting dates, contest and clinic info are on page 6 of this newsletter.

FVD web site: www.foxvalleydivision.org

FVD mailing address: Fox Valley Division
Midwest Region-NMRA
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