

THE SEMAPHORE



December 2016

FOX VALLEY DIVISION • MIDWEST REGION



**HAPPY HOLIDAYS
EVERYONE!**

Layout of the month: SDRT Modular Group Layout article and photos by Walt Herrick

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Our next FVD meeting is
**Sunday, December 18th
at 1:00 pm.** The contest
is "Odd Consist-max 4
units". The clinic is
"Midwest Modutrak" by
Mike Skibbe. **A pizza
lunch will be served! See
you there at 1:00 pm!**



First generation diesel power is seen above in the engine facility of the SDRT Modular Group's layout at this year's Trainfest. SDRT stands for "Some Dads Running Trains". The group got its start in 2007 when FVD member Mike Wood and his cousin Randy Take decided to use modules that were built by their Boy Scout Troop 63 in Carpentersville to form a modular layout group for dads to run as well. The concept was a hit. *cont'd on p.2*

Fun Stuff by Jim Allen

Some of you may have heard of the two Talgo train sets being stored at Amtrak's Beech Grove shops in Indianapolis. Mike Hirvela and I saw them on our tour of the shops at last summer's NMRA convention in Indy. These sleek, futuristic trains are built for speed and built for modern America. Designed and manufactured in Spain, and assembled in the US, they are this country's first new intercity train sets in nearly a decade. Unfortunately they have been moth balled since May 2014 because of politics, cost, and maintenance concerns. So the beautiful (some think they're ugly) trains sit dormant at Beech Grove much to the dismay of the manufacturer, Talgo, and rail fans who want to see the trains in action. Jim Allen photo.



Layout of the Month: SDRT Modular Group layout

The next thing they knew they were running a 24 x 32 foot modular layout at the 2008 Trainfest. Interestingly, SDRT's original name was "Six Dads Running Trains" with a core group of six dads including Mike Wood, Randy Take, Alan Sauer, Jim Albrecht, Tim Ahrens, and Mark Tracy. One of the guys asked, "What if more guys want to join the group?" The solution was to rename it "Some" Dads Running Trains.

Besides helping kids to enjoy model railroading, the SDRT group's philosophy is to have a modular group that has fun building and operating their modules with a minimum of organizational rules, regulations and hassles. The concept has worked well now for eight years with the core members plus some new ones going strong and enjoying their layout. Though the original program with the Boy Scouts has gone by the wayside as the kids got older and left scouting, the group still works with the scouts on occasion, and still very much encourages young people to run their trains at whatever show the group is attending. In 2008, SDRT was one of the first, if not *the* first, modular group at Trainfest to actually encourage kids to run their layout's trains under the supervision of an adult member. Back then letting kids actually run the adult's expensive trains was a new concept. SDRT had a member, the late Tim Ahrens, who really helped promote the idea. Tim was built like and looked a lot like Santa Claus. At shows he would wear red shirts and ask kids if they were "good little boys and girls" and would like to run a train. Not knowing just who this man actually was, but not wanting to disappoint *cont'd on p.3*



The SDRT group got its start in a Boy Scout/Venture Crew model railroading program in Carpentersville BSA Troop 63. Mike Wood was Scoutmaster at the time. Mike's photo (above left) shows a large modular layout built by the scouts at the Charlestown Mall in St. Charles in 2005. All of the layout's modules were built by scouts under the direction of scout leaders and dads Mike Wood, Randy Take and others. The top right photo shows the SDRT's newest TOFC/container yard modules. The subject of the center right photo is an SD70ACe, specifically CN 8100, the former EMDx #1206. A big Canadian National SD in red, white and black paint leads a long string of CN RoadRailer cars past a large grain elevator in the bottom right photo. Modern power and modern rolling stock were no strangers to the SDRT layout at this year's Trainfest.

Layout of the Month: SDRT Modular Group layout

Basic Layout Information

Layout name:	SDRT Modular Group layout
Layout founders:	Mike Wood and Randy Take
Layout builders:	Boy Scouts and SDRT members
Layout Philosophy:	Have fun sharing the hobby with kids; Keep rules and regulations to a minimum; keep layout work fun and relaxed
Layout location:	Area train shows
Layout scale:	HO
Layout size:	40 x 40 feet at the 2016 Trainfest
Layout style:	Modular using BSA Model Railroading Program standards for modular layouts
Layout theme:	Freelance Class I in the mid-west
Layout era:	1950's to modern
Construction started:	2007
Bench work:	2 x 4 foot modular sections built with 1x4 inch lumber in grid fashion
Sub road bed/roadbed:	Cork on plywood, or 2 inch foam board
Track and turnouts:	Various commercial track manufacturers; codes 100 and 83
Min Radius :	30" min. mainline, 24" min. yard and branch line radii
Max Grade:	No grades on the layout
Scenery:	75% complete at present
Structures:	Kits, kit-bashing and scratch built by Boy Scouts and SDRT members
Locomotives:	Members' locomotives of choice
Rolling stock:	Members' rolling stock of choice
Control:	NCE DCC
Signals:	Full layout signal system 50% complete
Electronics:	Special routing, mainline turnouts lockout and other features
Module storage:	Members store their own modules
Favorite Aspects of the Hobby:	Each member brings his own set of interests and talents to the layout.



Santa—if it in fact *was* Santa—the kids usually said “yes”. Tim would then send them down to Mike who would hand them a throttle and get them running a train!

The SDRT guys are always improving their layout. Between model railroad shows electronics projects, signaling projects, scenery and structure projects, wiring projects, and track projects are undertaken. The layout was originally a DC layout. DCC was tried on one of the mains for one show, and after the show the layout was converted to all DCC because the guys liked it so much. Of course, there is a lot of maintenance required on a layout the size of the SDRT layout. Sometimes entirely new modules are built to replace older modules.

As the SDRT layout moves into its 9th year, there may be modular layouts that are better looking and/or better running, but there are few layouts that have the spirit of just plain relaxing and enjoyable model railroading “fun”, and sharing the hobby with kids the SDRT has.

Corner modules (top photo) were used by scout leaders to teach scouts how to apply basic scenery techniques. Large structures were also scouting projects with building finishes often made using enlarged photos glued to the structure shell (center photo). Milwaukee Road Heritage unit #1985 heads up a grain train in the bottom photo. This module features more advanced scenery techniques including layered ground foam, tall grass, and detailed foreground trees.

Mike's Minute by FVD Superintendent, Mike Hirvela

A Model Railroader's Autobiography

When I was in high school if you told me that some day I would be writing a monthly column for a newsletter, I would have said, "Sorry, I don't think so." If you would have told me that some day I'd write my autobiography, you'd have gotten the same answer. But, today I *am* writing a monthly column for the *Semaphore*, and believe it or not, I am about to write my autobiography, at least my *model railroading* autobiography. Here goes.

Well, I'm a modeler just like you. Although I mostly model in HO scale, I have a great appreciation for all things model railroading. It's all my Aunt Katherine's fault. She bought a Hafner wind-up train set for a birthday present when I was quite young, and playing with trains has never really stopped. I still have a number of Lionel pieces from my younger days, plus the memories of working with my Dad on track plans, track laying, wiring, and running trains. Even though my Father passed on more than a few years ago, I still feel his encouragement. I have other O scale pieces that mean much to me, and some HO European equipment picked up over seas during my time in the U.S. Navy. I always had trains with me, whether on land or sea. (OK, I mostly used them when in port!) I was always amused by the look on the USO ladies' faces when I asked them for directions to the nearest train store.

I have been a serious modeler since the 1960's and even got a kit-built Hobbytown RS unit to run pretty well back then. I was an NMRA member on and off in the 1970's and '80's, and have been a steady member since 2002. I'm happy to say in that time, I've seen lots of changes in the association for the better. I know the NMRA has definitely made me a better, more knowledgeable modeler, and you can't beat the great people you meet here. To me, it doesn't matter which scale or gauge is your favorite – you are welcome here. Whether totally immersed in the hobby, or an armchair enthusiast, a rail fan, or rare rail mileage rider, if it's a flanged wheel on rail (metal, wood or plastic), you're a model railroader in my book. There is something in the NMRA for everyone.

I will say that largely because of the NMRA and the many folks who have helped me and my modeling efforts along the way, I now have a basement sized HO model railroad, and belong to four—yes four—model railroad clubs all of which have a strong core of NMRA members. And last spring I became Superintendent of a very active NMRA division with a lot of great members. My model railroad autobiography just keeps getting better and better!



In the top photo, an elegant CNW 400 streamliner glides past a Wisconsin farm on Mike Hirvela's CNW North Shore Line home layout. Mike built the asphalt plant module (center photo) for the Bluff City club's modular layout, one of four clubs he belongs to. Mike added snow to the scene and took a cold, early winter evening shot for the December 2014 *Semaphore's* "cover". To promote the hobby with younger children, Mike built a small 4 x 6 foot HO "Isle of Sodor" layout featuring Thomas the Tank Engine and Thomas's friends. Mike credits a wind-up train gift from his Aunt Katherine for getting him started in what has developed into *very* active hobby for him. Center photo by Mike Hirvela, others by Walt Herrick.

November's Clinic

FVD member **Brian Williams** presented November's clinic "Modeling Under a Microscope" which gave us a fascinating look at modeling Z and *smaller* scales. Unbeknownst to many of us, there are several smaller scales below Z scale and Brian gave us a good look at them. Yes, using a microscope is often required for modeling in these scales! Brian also showed how using a microscope and other special small scale tools can help those modeling in larger scales as well. All in all, this was a very interesting clinic on a subject many of us (well, at least your editor!) didn't know a whole lot about! **Mike Skibbe** joins us December 18th with his clinic "Midwest Modutrack". If you've ever (or never) seen the beautiful Midwest Modutrack layout, you'll not want to miss this clinic. WH



November's Contest Winners Contest Photos by Jim Osborn

November's contest was "Structure of Your Choice"—2000 to 5000 Scale square feet. Seven well done entries were received for this contest. Jim Osborn took nice photos of all of them and they all can be seen on the division's web site: www.foxvalleydivision.org. First Place went to **Bruce Reuter** for his HO scale Oak Glen Grill (right). This well done model was built from a craftsman kit and featured excellent construction and finishing, as well as lots of extra interior detailing. Second Place went to **Bob DiDomenico** for his HO scale Freight Station (below left) built from a plastic kit back in Bob's "pre-O scale" days. Bob's structure was expertly built, weathered and detailed. **Chuck Rita** took Third Place with his nicely kit-bashed HO scale Arval Manufacturing (below center). Excellent construction, weathering— *cont'd below right*



particularly his excellent brick work—and detailing was also displayed on Chuck's model. December's contest is "Odd Consist"—**max four units**. Remember, we start at 1:00 pm at our December 18th meeting, and we'll be dining on delicious Lou Malnati's pizza for lunch. See you then and, what the heck, why don't you bring a friend or two for pizza and trains?! WH

Member News

FVD Membership Services Trainmaster, **Bert Lattan**, reports that FVD membership currently stands at 221, and that we have recently gained three new members! They are **Bob Kuchar from Lake Forest**, **Mark Pippel from Burlington**, and **Thomas Rotti from Palatine**. **Welcome to the Fox Valley Division Bob, Mark and Thomas!** We're glad you are with us. Please let us know if we can help you in any way with the hobby....As usual, lots of FVD members either participated in this year's Trainfest with layouts, historical society booths, displays, etc., or attended the show at the Wisconsin State Fair Park in West Allis, WI....Sun City Huntley's Holiday Train Display is up and running in Sun City's Prairie Lodge. FVD member, **Pete Walton** co-chairs the Display which runs until December 28 (see the FVD web site's "RR Events" for details)"Congratulations !" to **Jim Allen** for his three NMRA National Convention, **1st place models**, being featured in this year's NMRA calendar. "Congratulations!" also go to **Don Cook**, MMR, for his Trackside Photo on page 81 of the **January 2017 Model Railroader Magazine**. Also, please keep some good thoughts and/or say a prayer or two for Don who is battling a serious health issue at this time. WH

Modeling Tip: Sharing Talents

One of the great positive aspects of our hobby is the willingness of modelers to share their talents and knowledge with other modelers. At almost any layout visit you'll hear, "How did you do this?" And the layout owner will then gladly share how he, or perhaps his crew, accomplished the task being asked about. When you are visiting a new layout don't be afraid to ask questions of the layout owner when the opportunity arises. It's a great way to learn first hand how things are done on a model railroad. To the right we see how expert wood workers and SDRT members, Terry Frisch and Dan Prysby, shared their talents in building beautiful and functional fascia on one side of the SDRT Modular Group's Layout. Turnout "keys", as seen in the photo, are used to throw recessed turnout controls. Photo by Walt Herrick.



2016 - 2017 Fox Valley Division Meeting Schedule

Except as noted under "Other", all meetings are held from 1:30 to about 4:00 pm at the Gary Morava Recreation Center, 110 W. Camp McDonald Road, Prospect Heights, IL 60070. Visitors are always welcome per the NMRA's visitor policy. Note that clinics are subject to change without notice. For the latest clinic and all FVD news and information, visit our web site at www.foxvalleydivision.org.

<u>Date</u>	<u>Clinic</u>	<u>Contest</u>	<u>Other</u>
Dec. 18, 2016	"Midwest Modutrak" by Mike Skibbe	Odd Consist—max 4 units	1:00 pm start. Pizza lunch.
Jan. 15, 2017	"Operation Lifesaver" by Dave Phillips	Refrigerated Train—Mechanical or iced; 6 car max	
Feb.19, 2017	"Computer Modeling" by Carl Wagus	The exterior detail of a structure including walls and roof	
March 19, 2017	"GN Ore Modeling" by Bob Hammer	Structure of Your Choice—any size or type	
April 23, 2017	"A Ride on Africa's Blue Train, Rovos Rails Pride of Africa" by George Ferraro	Yard Switchers—max 2	1:00 pm start. Pizza lunch. FVD officer elections.
April 28–30, 2017	2017 Midwest Region Convention "Golden Rails" hosted by the Rock River Valley Division at the Holiday Inn in Rockford, IL. Complete information on the division's website: rvd-nmra.com.		
May 21, 2017	"Introduction to Operations Under Time Table and Train Order Authority" by Chris Czyzewski	Exposed or Open Load of Your Choice	Last monthly meeting for 2015 –2016
July 30–August 6, 2017	2017 NMRA National Convention "Orange Blossom Special" in Orlando, FL. See the convention's website for complete information: nmra2017orlando.org		



About the Fox Valley Division

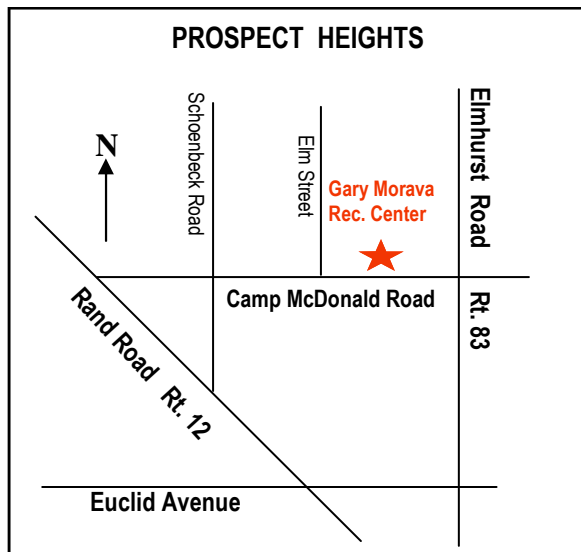
If you receive this newsletter you live in the Midwest Region and Fox Valley Division of the National Model Railroad Association or NMRA. The Fox Valley Division (FVD) includes all of McHenry and parts of Cook, Kane, and Lake Counties in northeast Illinois. About 220 members of varied ages and modeling 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 normally sponsors and runs a large train show called "High Wheeler" in early March each year at Harper College in Palatine, Illinois. (Note: the 2017 High Wheeler is cancelled due to a major renovation of the Harper gymnasium used for the show.)

We encourage you to take advantage of all the FVD has to offer. We are here to answer your questions 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, Mike Hirvela, or any FVD Board member listed below. We're 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.
- 2016 – 2017 meeting dates, contest and clinic info are on page 6 of this newsletter.

FVD web site: www.foxvalleydivision.org

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