



# THE SEMAPHORE

November 2017

FOX VALLEY DIVISION • MIDWEST REGION



## Bluff City Winners at Trainfest!

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**Next FVD Meeting:**

**Sunday, December 17**

**1:30 pm\* at the**

**Morava Rec Center in**

**Prospect Heights**

**Contest: Hopper Train—**  
**max 4 cars**

**Clinic: "Ramblings of an**  
**Old Railroader"**  
**by Fred Henize.**

**\*Note, regular start time;**  
**NO pizza lunch this year.**



Members of the Bluff City Modular Engineers proudly stand behind their "Best of Show" winning module following Trainfest 2017. The module features an accurate model of downtown Milwaukee's Everett Street Station and surrounding buildings. Three FVD members belong to the Bluff City group, and are in the photo above. They are Mike Hirvela (at far left) with Art Jones next to him, and Jim Allen next to Art. Also seen in the photo are Jim Jakab, Richard Plachter (Everett Station builder), and Richard's father, Rolf Plachter. Brian Hirvela photo.

## Fun Stuff by Jim Allen

In 2015 BNSF acquired TTS (Transportation Technology Services) whose primary business is the transporting of wind energy components. Pictured is BNSF's Blade Runner service begun in 2015. TTS has a fleet of 2000 cars, 1200 of which are specially equipped with patented fixtures for handling wind turbine components. The photo shows one set of the specialty cars carrying turbine blades.



## Bluff City Modular Engineers Winners at Trainfest article by Walt Herrick; photos by Mike Hirvela and Walt Herrick



The story of how the Everett Street Station module came to be is an involved one. Mike Hirvela and Jim Allen are regular operators on Rolf Plachter's layout in Racine, WI. About five years ago Rolf told the guys that his son Richard, a superb structure builder, was starting a new depot for the layout based on Walthers new Everett Station kit. The beginnings of the new station were on Rolf's kitchen table and the guys went upstairs and took a look. They loved what they saw. When the station was further along they asked Richard if they could use it on their Bluff City Modular Engineers layout at Trainfest and he agreed. For a couple of years the station rested on three existing Bluff City 2 x 4 foot modules. After Trainfest 2015 Jim Allen suggested building a special module just for the station. The proposed module's 42 inch x 12 foot size was an issue due to its expected weight. Art Jones said he could build a lighter frame using plywood and box girder construction. Over several weekends in the summer of 2016 the module was built, and over the past year additional structures and more detailing were added. A lot of prototype research went into the project. As new information surfaced, changes *con't*



While the entire Everett Street Station module is twelve feet long, its main focus is the beautiful kit-bashed depot seen above. Richard Plachter wanted to build a more accurate model of Milwaukee's downtown Everett Street Station than the kit Walthers produced of it (which was necessarily selectively compressed to make a reasonably sized kit). Two depot kits, three and a half station shed kits, and two and a half years of work later produced the model you see in the above photo. That's Jim Jakab and Tim Beuchler behind the module. The bottom photo shows an almost complete Everett Street station as it appeared at Trainfest last year. Top photo Mike Hirvela; bottom photo Walt Herrick .





## Layout of the Month: Bluff City Wins at Trainfest



The Bluff City Modular Engineers' layout is also home for other award winning modules. Above are two of FVD member Jim Allen's modules which have won awards. Jim won Trainfest's "Best of Show—Module" in 2012 for his 4 x 4 foot corner module for the Bluff City layout. The module featured the abandoned tower mini-scene (above left), and beautifully detailed fruit stand and barn mini-scenes along a curved highway. Jim's well known "Bomber Gas" module (above right) modeled after a prototype structure in the Pacific Northwest (though substituting a C-47 for the prototype's B-17) won the NMRA's "Most Photogenic Model" Award at the NMRA National Convention in Indianapolis in the 2016. Walt Herrick photos.

*con't from p.2* were made as needed. The result is a very representative rendition of downtown Milwaukee's Everett Street Station and its surroundings circa 1960s. The individuals contributing to the building of the Everett Street module are: Richard Plachter who built the station and its sheds, Bill Mielke the REA building, Mike Hirvela the public utility building, Art Jones added the backdrop flats, Jim Allen and Jim Jakab did the wiring and scenery, and Art Jones designed and built the layout's bench work.



The Bluff City layout features other excellent modules such as Art Jones' "Downtown Module" (left) and Mike Hirvela's "Asphalt Plant" module (above) which here appears in winter and was the cover photo for a past December Semaphore. Art Jones takes a cat nap under the Everett Street module after a hard day at Trainfest (right). Downtown photo, Walt Herrick; others Mike Hirvela.

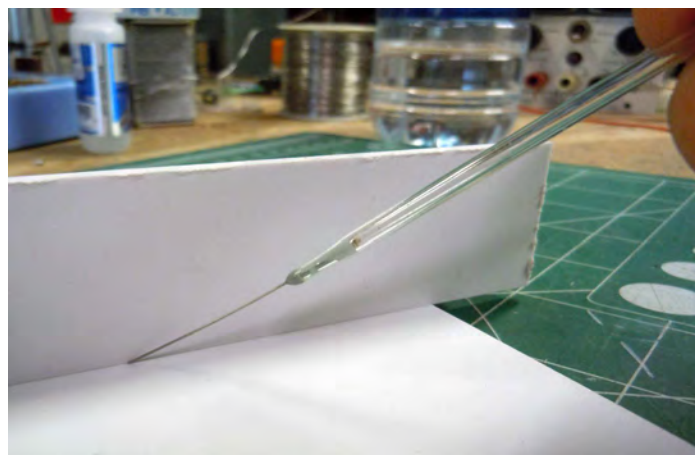


## Mike's Minute by Mike Hirvela

When attending TRAINFEST with the Bluff City Modular Engineer's layout, I have the chance to casually view the vendor's displays early on Saturday and Sunday mornings before the crowds arrive. It never ceases to amaze me the wide variety of the products available to today's hobbyist. Whatever your scale, whatever your interest, whatever your era, there is something you can find which will match your ideas, dreams and desires. Then reality sets in and we realize that we may not have "airplane hangar" space to build our empire, and we compromise. We reduce our dreams and desires to something more manageable for the space we do have. We may want to model the Santa Fe's mainline from Chicago to Los Angeles, but we compromise and focus on a junction, a yard, an interchange with another railroad, an intermodal terminal, or some other feature that provides the flavor of our favorite railroad but doesn't require tons of space. This, of course, brings up another set of challenges in planning and designing the layout to avoid cramming too much model railroad in too little space, ie., the "mostest model railroad in the leastest space". Here compromise can definitely be a good thing.

## Modeling Tip: Using the Touch-n-Flow solvent applicator by Jim Osborn

A Touch N Flow™ solvent applicator is an essential tool for every styrene or plastic model builder. A small amount of solvent is put in the glass pipette. The modeler simply drags the metal tip of the pipette along the joint to be glued and the solvent is pulled out of the pipette and drawn into the joint by capillary action. Simply hold the joint for a few seconds and the joint is fixed with no brush marks or solvent drips. There are four important points to remember in using this tool: 1) This tool will only work with *thin* solvents such as MEK, Acetone, etc. – Plastruct™ glue, tube glue or other liquid glues that have solid material dissolved in them will destroy the tool. 2) **DO NOT PUSH THE TIP ALONG THE JOINT – only drag it.** If you push it you will get plastic in the tip. This requires clearing the tip by soaking or heating it with a match and then blowing the tube out to clear the tip. 3) Make a small cradle to hold the pipette horizontal – you will not lose any solvent except for evaporation. 4) I always buy 2 Touch-n-Flows at a time. Dragging the tool off your work bench with a shirt sleeve and hearing the tinkle of glass on the floor will bring your project to a halt so always have a spare at hand. The Touch N Flow™ applicator is generally available. Ron's Mundelein Hobbies sells them for about \$7.



The Touch-n-Flow solvent applicator (top) is an essential tool for styrene and plastic modelers. Always drag the tool along the joint (bottom) so the tip does not become clogged, and only use *thin* solvents like MEK in the tool. Photos Jim Osborn.



## October's Clinic and Contest Photos by Jim Osborn

### October's Clinic

October's clinic was presented by **Rick Mahoney** from Michigan and it was a good one. Rick's topic was "**Quick Industries for your Model Railroad**" and he gave us dozens of examples of easy and quick ways to add industries to our model railroads. Many of Rick's examples also had the added advantage of taking up little space on the layout. Rick's numerous rail-fanning slides taken all over the Midwest showed how the prototype does it and how we could easily do the same on our layouts. Thanks, Rick for a really super clinic! **December's clinic, "Ramblings of an Old Railroader" promises to be a good one and will be given by Fred Henize .**  
WH

### October's Contest

We only had two entries for our "Reefer" contest in October. **Mike Hirvela** took **First Place** with his group of HO American reefers (top photo), while **George K.** took **Second Place** with his four TT scale European "Kuhlwagons" (middle photo). The bottom photo shows a pair of **Cook Orchard reefers** from the late **MMR Don Cook's** railroad. Don had special decals made to letter these cars which served the Cook Orchards packing plant on his Pacific Northwest, Great Northern Railroad. Cook Orchard reefers will soon be available for purchase from the Fox Valley Division who is doing a special run of the cars. **December's contest is "Hopper Train—max 4 cars".** WH



### Member News

Let's lead off with an important item: there'll be **no pizza lunch at this year's December 17 meeting.** Sorry!... Membership Services Trainmaster, **Bert Lattan**, reports that the FVD's October membership report shows the division down one from September currently standing at 211 members. We've added a new member, however. His name is **Ronald Walker** from Evanston, IL. Welcome aboard, Ron!...**Mike Hirvela, Jim Landwehr, Bob Landwehr,** and **Jim Osborn** attended the Midwest Regional fall board meeting held November 12 at Trainfest....**Walt Herrick** has been appointed Midwest Region Photo Contest Chair. He replaces the late **Ingrid Drozdak** who held that position for many years....The FVD is currently doing a run of **Cook Orchard reefers** in honor of our late member **Don Cook**, MMR. The new cars should be ready some time after the first of the year....On behalf of the FVD Board of Directors, **Happy Thanksgiving** to you, your family, and all our model railroad friends! WH

### Little Northwestern Open House December 2

Looking for a little nostalgia this holiday season? Remember the Little Northwestern layout in the loft of the a small red barn near the Illinois Railway Museum? Ted Voss will be hosting an open house of his Little Northwestern Railroad on **Saturday, December 2 from 2 to 5 pm.** Ted regularly had his layout open on weekends during IRM's summer season, but in recent years he's only had it open for an annual open house. The Little Northwestern is located at **17108 Highbridge Road in Union, IL.** The Little Northwestern models the Chicago Northwestern in the "yellow and green" era from downtown Chicago out to the country. WH

## 2017 - 2018 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](http://www.foxvalleydivision.org).

<u>Date</u>	<u>Clinic</u>	<u>Contest</u>	<u>Other</u>
Nov. 19, 2017	“Signaling the CNW Western Division” by Jim Osborn	Small Structure—max 300 scale square feet	
Dec. 17, 2017	“Ramblings of an Old Railroader” by Fred Henize	Hopper Train—4 cars max	1:30 pm start; <u>No pizza lunch</u>
Jan. 21, 2018	TBD	Large Structure—5000 scale square feet or larger	
Feb. 18, 2018	“Mid 20th Century Box Cars by George Trandel	Gondola with load—4 cars max	
March 18, 2018	“Using Ground Goop for Scenery” by Art Jones	Diorama with On Line Structure	
<b>April 13–15, 2018</b>	<b>2018 Midwest Region Convention “Capital 400” hosted by the South Central Wisconsin Division at the Radisson Hotel in Madison, WI. More information at the convention’s web site: <a href="mailto:Capital400@charter.net">Capital400@charter.net</a></b>		
April 22, 2018	“Two Rivers Wisconsin 20 Years Later” by Mike Hirvela	Maintenance of Way Train	
May 20, 2018	“Building My Great Midwestern Layout” by Pete Walton	Illuminated Structure—any size	<b>Last monthly meeting for 2017 – 2018</b>
<b>August 5–12, 2018</b>	<b>2018 NMRA National Convention in Kansas City, Missouri. See the convention’s web site for more information: <a href="http://www.kc2018.org">www.kc2018.org</a></b>		





### About the Fox Valley Division

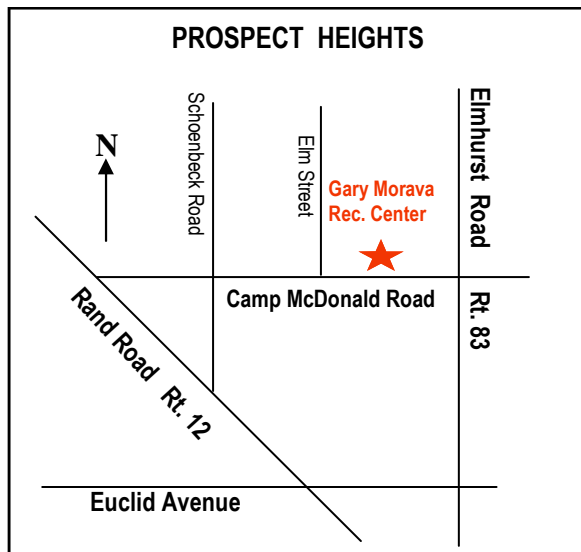
If you receive this newsletter you live in the Midwest Region and Fox Valley Division of the National Model Railroad Association or NMRA. The Fox Valley Division (FVD) includes all of Lake and McHenry, and parts of Cook and Kane Counties in northeast Illinois. About 210 members of varied ages and modeling 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 Recreation 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](http://www.foxvalleydivision.org).

Questions? Contact FVD Superintendent, Mike Hirvela, 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.
- 2015 – 2016 meeting dates, contest and clinic info are on page 6 of this newsletter.

FVD web site: [www.foxvalleydivision.org](http://www.foxvalleydivision.org)

FVD mailing address: Fox Valley Division  
Midwest Region-NMRA  
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Ways & Means TM—TBD

Note: TM designates "Trainmaster"