

# THE SEMAPHORE

APRIL 2018

FOX VALLEY DIVISION • MIDWEST REGION



## Scale Rails of Southwest Florida N Scale Layout Article & photos by Walt Herrick

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Semaphore Editor:

Walt Herrick, Jr.

[waltherrickjr@gmail.com](mailto:waltherrickjr@gmail.com)

815-355-2003 (c)

Next FVD Meeting:

**Sunday, April 22**

**1:00 pm\* at the**

**Morava Rec Center in  
Prospect Heights**

**\*ANNUAL ELECTIONS\***

**Contest: Maintenance of Way  
Train**

**Clinic: Connecting Arduinos  
for an ABS or APB Signal Sys-  
tem by Gary Saxton**



CSX SD70ACe #4850 and sister SD70ACe pull their train over the large, three track bascule bridge on the Scale Rails of Southwest Florida's Ntrak layout. The 4 x 27 foot modular layout travels to local train shows two or three times per year, and is set up at the SRSWF club's "Depot" clubhouse otherwise. The clubhouse in North Ft. Meyers, is also home for a large, double deck HO/HOn3 layout, work shop, and meeting rooms. The club and its layouts were featured in *Great Model Railroads 2017*. *con't on p.2*

## Fun Stuff by Jim Allen

We've all seen the orange Asplundh trucks and crews trimming trees around power poles. But, did you know that was only part of their overall business? They also have a railroad division that provides vegetation management. The photo shows one of their herbicide application units. In addition, they provide tree/brush trimming, land clearing, mowing, mulching, chipping and Hy-Rail fire suppression services for railroads.





## Scale Rails of Southwest Florida N Layout

I can hear the questions coming already: why are you featuring a layout in the *Semaphore* that's from *Ft. Meyers, Florida*? Don't you know we're in the *Chicago* area for cryin' out loud?! And my response is, "You are absolutely right. The Fox Valley Division is in Chicago and its north and northwest suburbs and 'super boonies.'" But, by way of explanation, as I write this, I am right now in Isles of Capri, Florida near Marco Island and I don't have a "Layout of the Month" for the April *Semaphore* except for this one. In addition, the Scale Rails of Southwest Florida club is an all NMRA member club, and the *Semaphore* would like to cover an N scale layout when it gets the chance. Soooo, the SRSWF's N scale layout it is this month!

I found this layout in February at a Ft. Meyers Train Show. In talking with SRSWF members who were manning the layout, I found out it was started in 2005 about two years after the SRSWF club moved into its permanent residence on Piney Road in North Ft. Meyers, FL. Member Dan Cermack (now deceased) built two 6 foot Ntrak modules. An additional two end modules were built and the N scalers at the SRSWF club were in business with an operating layout. Over the years more modules were built. A total of 11 modules now exist. Not counting the two end modules, they range in size from four to six feet in length. The theme of the layout is the Tidewater region of Virginia and the scenery does a nice job of depicting this area. Interestingly, Dan Cermak came to the SRSWF club from Minnesota where he was an avid ore roads modeler. When it came time to ballast his modules, he used the red ore colored ballast so prevalent up in the ore mining region he was familiar with! A couple of other module modelers followed Dan's ballasting lead. Many of the layout's structures were donated to the club while *con't on p.3*

The upper right photo is from the SRSWF club's web site, and shows one side of their 27 foot long N scale layout set up at their club house. Amtrak P42 #150 speeds its train along a thickly treed hill-side in the center photo. The bottom photo shows the layout's nicely done industrial harbor scene





## Scale Rails of Southwest Florida N Layout

all the scenery was done by the individual module builders. A variety of motive power and rolling stock from different eras are run on the layout. Modern power and rolling stock were the order of the day when I visited. While the layout has several switching areas, normally it is operated in “display mode”. If the guys want to switch, the layout has an N scale Timesaver module to use. All in all, this is a neat Ntrak layout with a lot going on. I enjoyed seeing it while here in Florida. My thanks to the SRSWF guys for their help with this article.



This engine terminal and repair facility occupy a corner module on the SRSWF club's Ntrak layout. Note the cut up diesel bodies detail.

### Basic Layout Information

Layout Name:	Scale Rails of Southwest Florida Modular N Layout
Layout Builder:	SRSWF club members
Layout Location:	Club house & train shows
Layout Scale:	N
Layout Size:	4 x 27 feet
Layout Style:	Ntrak Modular; island
Layout Theme:	Virginia Tidewater area
Layout Era:	Mixed
Construction begun:	2005
Bench Work:	2 x 4 foot and other size modules per Ntrak specs
Sub Roadbed/ Roadbed:	per Ntrak specs
Track:	Atlas, Peco code 80
Scenery:	100% complete
Structures:	Kits, kit-bashed, scratch built
Locomotives:	Kato, Atlas, etc. N scale
Rolling Stock:	Various N scale mfgs.
Control:	DC & Digitrax DCC
Other:	The SRSWF club is located in North Ft. Meyers, FL and is open to visitors. See their web site for times: <a href="http://www.scalerails.org">www.scalerails.org</a>

## Mike's Minute by FVD Superintendent, Mike Hirvela

We've turned the clocks ahead 1 hour again for Daylight Saving Time, and that's a sure sign that Spring isn't too far behind. Weather in Prospect Heights on March 18<sup>th</sup> was a mostly sunny, spring like day with temperatures in the low to mid 50's—perfect for a FVD meet, right? Well, I guess not because attendance at our March meeting was less than I had anticipated. A big THANKS! to those who did attend and became totally absorbed in watching Art Jones' clinic on Ground Goop and other scenic items and effects. Those who weren't there missed out on Art's lively demonstration of how he does his colorful scenery techniques so quickly. We were able to show Art *in action* on the big “movie” screen as we figured out we can use our video camera as a live feed going through the digital projector. Talk about an up-close and detailed view! Jim Osborn's great camera work kept up with Art's imitation of “The Flash” as he quickly moved from mixing up a concoction of ground goop, to applying it, to roughing-in scenic forms, to adding static grass, and finally adding ground foams and trees. And you thought model railroading clinics could be a little... um, slow? Not this one!

We have two more FVD monthly meetings this season. April's meeting will be on the 22<sup>nd</sup> with election of officers, and a special preview of an NMRA National clinic presentation. Gary Saxton asked us if he could try his new clinic on Arduino circuits for block and other signals for your model railroad, before he gives it in Kansas City this summer, so we obliged. (You'll see my previously scheduled April clinic next fall.) If you feel intimidated by these fancy electronic circuits, don't be. They're really not bad once you get the hang of them. Our May 20th meeting wraps the 2017-2018 season with Pete Walton's clinic on building his now nationally famous Great Midwestern Railroad, seen in *Great Model Railroads 2018* and several YouTube videos. We'll also look to finalize our summer outing with a location and date, as well as look ahead to the 2018-2019 season. In closing, please remember the Midwest Region Convention in close-by Madison is coming up fast April 13—15. It promises to be a good one, so I invite you to consider attending. See you April 22th, or maybe sooner in Madison!

## April Elections Information

The FVD's upcoming April 22, 2018 meeting is our Annual Meeting for the year. At that meeting we will hear year end reports from our board officers, and hold elections for two of our four board officers. **This year per our bylaws, we elect a Superintendent and a Chief Clerk.** Any member wishing to run for either of these two offices should contact our Chief Clerk, George Trandel ASAP, and tell him of your intentions to run for office. Also, the FVD is still looking for an individual to assume its important **Ways & Means Trainmaster** position. Contact FVD Superintendent, Mike Hirvela, about the Ways & Means opening. George and Mike's contact information is on page 7 of this Semaphore. **Job descriptions for all of the above positions were given in the February 2018 Semaphore. Bios for candidates who have expressed an interest in running for office prior to the Semaphore's April issue publication deadline appear below.** WH

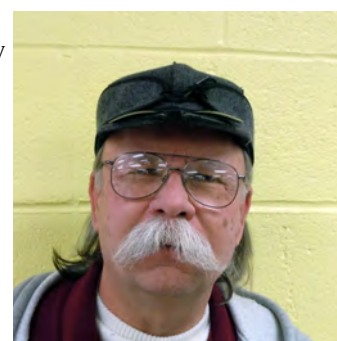
## April Election Candidate Bios

### Mike Hirvela for Superintendent

I was elected as the FVD's Superintendent in 2016 and have enjoyed serving the division in this capacity for the past two years. I would like to continue serving as Superintendent. By way of my background, I have been interested in trains since I was a young boy. I got back into the hobby seriously after retiring from a 24 year career in the Navy in 1995. Since 1995 I have been employed in the field of industrial safety and am currently the Safety Director for Stuckey Construction. In my spare time, I've built a basement sized HO scale, CNW layout.

I have been an NMRA member since 2002, and have been the FVD's Member Promotions Trainmaster since the Fox Valley and the former North Shore and Western Divisions merged in 2010. As our Member Promotions Trainmaster I've enjoyed representing the division at local area train shows and events such as the DuPage County (Wheaton) Train Show. I also write the Mike's Minute column for our FVD *Semaphore* newsletter. I am a member of three model railroad clubs and president of one of them. One of my favorite parts of the hobby is prototype operations and I attend many op sessions around the area each year.

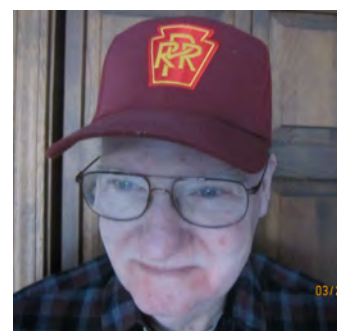
I want the FVD to be an important part of the Midwest region of the NMRA, and have a voice in the ways and means of the region's organization and operation. If elected I hope to continue to encourage and foster the enthusiasm I see in FVD members for the hobby of model railroading, for learning and growing in the hobby, and for enjoying the camaraderie that is such a big part of the NMRA. There is something here for all of us, and I believe the FVD and NMRA is a "win-win" for all of us. I hope you'll consider voting for me again as Superintendent.



Jim Osborn photo.

### Carl Wagus for Chief Clerk

I am a retired mechanical and industrial engineer with three engineering degrees and many years of work in the fields of engineering and consulting. I've been married for 50 years and have moved more than a dozen times while in the service and during my engineering and consulting careers. Trains entered my life with a Lionel train set my uncle gave my brothers and me when I was eight years old. My grandfather was a locomotive engineer on the Pennsylvania Railroad so you could say railroading was kind of in our family! While in the service I modeled in N scale, but as I got older my interests changed to the larger HO scale which I continue to model in today. When I lived in Kokomo, Indiana in the 1970's I belonged to an active train club which I very much enjoyed. We'd get together regularly to run trains on guys layouts or just "talk trains". I still have our old club jacket from that club! In 1996 we moved to Cary, Illinois where we still live today. Right now I am in the process of doing room preparations for a new layout. I am designing the layout using Cadrail computer software and using the same procedures I presented in my February 2017 FVD clinic, "Computer Modeling". I have been an NMRA member since about 2000. When I heard there was going to be need for a new FVD Chief Clerk, I told Mike Hirvela I'd like to run. I have served in similar capacities in several organizations over the years, and I would like to serve the Fox Valley in this way. I feel I would do a good job in this position, and would appreciate your vote on April 22!



Carl Wagus photo



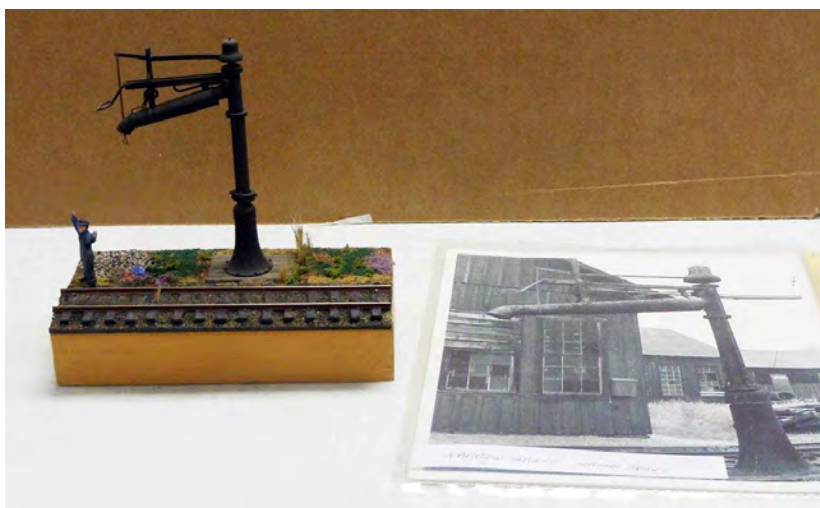
## March's Clinics and Contest—all photos by Jim Osborn

The Fox Valley Division's own Art Jones presented March's clinic "Use Ground Goop for Scenery" and it was a great one. Art brought in a finished scenic module and then did a live, large screen "TV" demonstration on how to quickly produce a similar module using ground goop as a scenery base. Jim Osborn expertly filmed the event. Art has provided notes on his "recipe" for ground goop, and a list of useful scenery making tools for our web site: [www.foxvalleydivision.org](http://www.foxvalleydivision.org). This was an excellent clinic by one of the division's master scenery makers. Thank you, Art for a great job! **April's clinic has changed. The new clinic is: "Connecting Arduinos for an ABS or APB Signal System"** by Gary Saxton. Mike Hirvela's originally scheduled April clinic will now be given next fall. WH



**March's contest was, "Diorama With On-line Structure".** Three well done entries were received. **Jim Osborne's beautifully crafted "Animation Demonstration" diorama took First Place.** Jim's HO diorama featured working semaphore signals and crossing gates on a single track line. Details included telephone poles with strung lines, and a CNW hi-rail MoW vehicle. **Leif Hansen placed second with his nicely modeled** (though as yet unpainted!) **and lighted, brass HO NYC signal bridge** and nearby MoW shanty. **Third Place went to MMR David Crement for his scratch built, On3 East Broad Top water column.** David's model was patterned after an actual EBT column on the railroad. Great job everyone! **April's contest is "Maintenance of Way Train".** WH

**Jim Osborne's 1st Place CNW Animation Demonstration diorama** is shown in the photo to the right, while **Leif Hansen's NYC signal bridge diorama** is seen below on the left. **MMR Dave Crement's East Broad Top water column** was modeled after the real thing and is shown in the below right photo.



## Cook Orchards Car Now Available!

The FVD is pleased to announce that our **Cook Orchards reefer car** is now available for sale. This car is a replica of the Cook Orchards cars that traveled on our late FVD member, MMR Don Cook's, Great Northern—Spokane Division layout. The car is being sold as a fundraiser for the division and was produced by **Accurail** from artwork that faithfully represents Don's original design. Each car costs \$23.00 plus shipping and handling of \$7.50 for one car, and \$14.00 for 2 to 4 cars. Members may save shipping costs by purchasing their car at a FVD monthly meeting. Otherwise, go to the FVD's web site: [www.foxvalleydivision.org](http://www.foxvalleydivision.org) for complete purchase and shipping information. Members should act quickly as only 100 of these cars were produced! WH



## 2017 - 2018 Fox Valley Division Meeting Schedule

All meetings are held from 1:30 to about 3:30 pm (except as noted under "Other" below) 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>
<b>April 13–15,</b>	<b>2018 Midwest Region Convention "Capital 400" hosted by the South Central Wisconsin Division at the Radisson Hotel in Madison, WI. Get more information at the division's web site: <a href="http://nmra.scwd.org">nmra.scwd.org</a></b>		
April 22, 2018	"Connecting Arduinos for an ABS or APB Signal System" by Gary Saxton. (Note clinic change.)	Maintenance of Way Train	<b>1:00 pm start time.</b> <b>FVD board elections.</b> <u>(No pizza lunch.)</u>
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>		

## "Capital 400" Convention April 13-15 !

In a few short weeks on April 13—15, the "Capital 400" Midwest Region Convention in Madison, WI will take place. Legendary rail photographer **O. Winston Link's assistant, Tom Garver**, will be presenting a special clinic there on his work with Link, and popular model railroader, author, and editor **Tony Koester** will present a clinic and also be the convention's **banquet speaker**. The rest of the convention will be great, too! Madison is the home for many excellent layouts such as **Bill and Rose Weber's** huge UP layout seen at the right. Besides Tom and Tony's clinics we have other super clinics, MWR model and photo contests, and fun non-rail activities. See full convention information and a promo video on the South Central Wisconsin Division website: [nmra-scwd.org](http://nmra-scwd.org). Registration has started and is now in full swing. So, "c'mon on up" to Madison for a great time at a great MWR convention April 13—15!





### About the Fox Valley Division

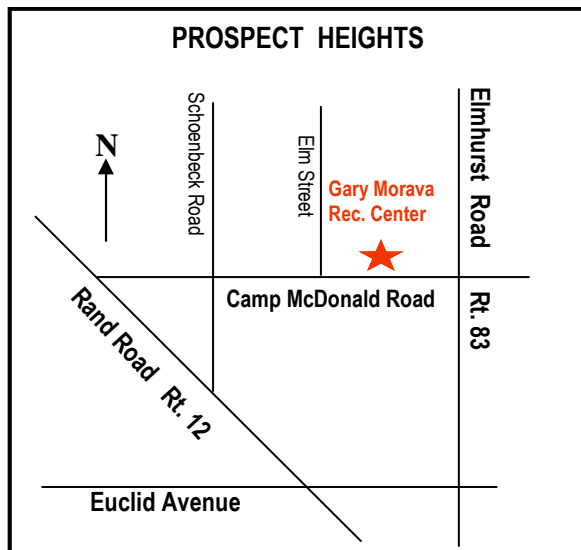
If you receive this newsletter you live in the Midwest Region and Fox Valley Division of the National Model Railroad Association or NMRA. The Fox Valley Division (FVD) includes all of McHenry and parts of Cook, Kane, and Lake Counties in northeast Illinois. About 220 members of varied ages and modeling 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 suspended 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](http://www.foxvalleydivision.org).

Questions? Contact FVD Superintendent, Mike Hirvela, or any FVD Board member listed below.



- 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](http://www.foxvalleydivision.org)

FVD mailing address: Fox Valley Division  
Midwest Region-NMRA  
P.O. Box 1535  
Arlington Heights, IL  
60005-1535

## Fox Valley Division Board Contact Information

Superintendent, **Mike Hirvela**  
[mhirvela1@gmail.com](mailto:mhirvela1@gmail.com) 847-360-9579

Acting Ass't Supt., **Bob Shlemon, Jr.**  
[shlemonjr2@gmail.com](mailto:shlemonjr2@gmail.com) 773-334-4208

Chief Clerk, **George Trandel**  
[georgetrandel@rcn.com](mailto:georgetrandel@rcn.com) 773-975-7366

Paymaster, **Tim Kleimeyer**  
[kleimeyert@comcast.net](mailto:kleimeyert@comcast.net) 847-426-4732

Achievements & Contests, **Jim Landwehr**  
[Jlandwehr901@yahoo.com](mailto:Jlandwehr901@yahoo.com) 847-577-7984

Clinics & Programs, **David Leider, MMR**  
[sooauthor@netzero.com](mailto:sooauthor@netzero.com) 847-253-7484

Membership Services, **Bert Lattan**  
[nswnmra@comcast.net](mailto:nswnmra@comcast.net) 847-295-7959

Membership Promotions, **Mike Hirvela**  
[mhirvela1@gmail.com](mailto:mhirvela1@gmail.com) 847-360-9579

Public Relations, **Chuck Rita**  
[carita@ameritech.net](mailto:carita@ameritech.net) 847-328-1914

Web Technologies, **Jim Osborn**  
[FVDWebsite@comcast.net](mailto:FVDWebsite@comcast.net) 815-578-8315

Publications/Semaphore Editor, **Walt Herrick**  
[waltherrickjr@gmail.com](mailto:waltherrickjr@gmail.com) 815-355-2003

Ways & Means—High Wheeler Show Manager  
**VACANT**