



The Semaphore

Fox Valley Division • MWR • NMRA

November's Trip - Trainfest!

This month is our annual field trip to Trainfest in Milwaukee. We've hired a luxury coach that will leave Regency Shopping Plaza (Northeast corner of Quentin and Euclid Roads in Palatine) at 10:00 am on Sunday, November 14. We'll stay at Trainfest until 3:30 pm, and be back by 5:00 pm. The Fox Valley Division will pick up the tab for transportation for all who show up and admission to Trainfest for all Fox Valley Division members. This is one of the big events of the year, so if you haven't signed up yet, contact Steve Martinak at 847-854-7545 or email him at mart832@attglobal.net while there's still time.

You Can Win \$50!

Bring your Semaphore to the December meeting, and you will be entered in a special attendance drawing, with a prize of \$50. OK, it's a pretty blatant attempt to get you attend the meetings, but why not give it a try, at least for the December meeting? We'll start at 1:00 pm (a half hour earlier than the usual meeting time), have pizza and soda, there'll be a representative from Operation LifeSaver, and we'll wrap things up with an auction/swap meet. In addition, we'll have the attendance drawing that was originally slated for May, so those of you who haven't thrown out all those tickets will have a chance at some more cash! Hope to see you there

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Take a Model Train to Work Day

November 12 is the fourth annual "Take a Model Train to Work Day." Last year I took my trains to work (pretty easy for me, since I model in Z), and got some people interested in the hobby. At least three people from work at High Wheeler, and they sometimes stop by my cubicle with questions about how to do something they're having problems with, or just to talk about how they or their kids thought up a new thing to add to their layout. One fellow worker told me his daughter is more interested in model railroading than his sons, and she likes putting O-scale cows in the gondola cars in the HO layout they put up last Christmas. He keeps me up to date on how his kids are progressing from the "radioactive cow" stage to actually picking product from one siding and delivering it to another. And to think, I almost didn't take my train to work that day, because I thought it was too hokey.

Why aren't you at the meetings?

You're receiving the Semaphore because you are a member of the National Model Railroad Association. Included in your annual membership is the right to attend local division meetings. The fact that you receive the Semaphore means that you live in the area known as the Fox Valley Division (or have specifically asked to receive the Semaphore). As Membership Trainmaster and Publication Trainmaster, I get to see how membership changes from month to month, and what percentage of the paid-up membership attends the meetings. Sad to say, membership in the NMRA in general is declining, and so is membership in the Fox Valley Division, although not as badly as nationally. Also sad to say, and a little curious to note, is the fact that only about 10% of the FVD membership attends our monthly meetings, and, for the most part, it's the same 10%. So my natural curiosity, also known as being nosey, forces me to ask the following

This Year's Remaining Events

November 14, 2004

Trip to Train Fest

Lv: 10:00 AM Regency Plaza, Palatine

Ar: 11:30 AM Arr Trainfest, Milwaukee

Lv: 3:30 PM Leave Trainfest

Ar: 5:00 PM Regency Plaza

No Contest

December 19, 2004

1:00pm, Morava Center

General Meeting

Annual Auction/Swap

Attendance Drawing

Clinic – Operation LifeSaver

No Contest

January 16, 2005

1:30pm, Ted Schneff

General Meeting, Layout visit, and Operating Session

No Contest

February 20, 2005

1:30pm, Morava Center

Clinic – Details to be announced

Contest – bridge or structure (any scale – With or without background flat)

March 5-6, 2005

9:00am-5:00pm, Harper College

High Wheeler

No Contest

April 17, 2004

1:00pm, Morava Center

Annual Business Meeting

Contest – detailed engines
(steam, diesel, or traction)

May 15, 2004

10:00am, Regency Shopping Plaza

Field Trip - To be Announced

No Contest

question: Why are you spending half a hundred dollars and not taking advantage of the meetings or field trips? Send me your reasons, real or gag, and I will print a list in the February Semaphore. The real reasons will help the FVD know what we need to do to serve you better, and the gag reasons will help us all get a good laugh out of our hobby. Either mail to

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or email me at saviano@att.net, and I'll keep you posted on the results.

Here are some examples (decide for yourself which are real and which are gag answers):

- Sundays aren't good days for me
- If I go to the meetings, when will I find time to read *Scale Rails*?
- I'll come to the meetings as soon as I finish my layout

Hints, Tips, and Innovations

Share your expertise with other members

Rick Saviano- Publications / Membership Trainmaster

This month I've got two tips. First, add a little whimsy in your layout. If you've been to Highwheeler you may have seen some, and if you go to Trainfest, take a few extra minutes and see if you can notice some instances of whimsy in the layouts on display. The motivation is pretty obvious: If you notice something unexpected on a layout, you're apt to spend some time looking for other unexpected items, and probably see some details you would have otherwise

overlooked. It's all designed so as not to take the layout for granted. Take the Museum of Science and Industry's layout, for example. There is so much to see, literally from Chicago to Seattle, that some of the details get overlooked, especially those in the wooded areas, and especially if you've seen the layout a few times. Then, either you notice, or someone tells you about, the campsite that is being raided by bears. Once you notice that, all of a sudden, it's like looking at a brand-new layout. You notice the path of the stream, the rock placement; in short, you look at every detail with fresh eyes. And isn't that what the builder wanted?

So, how do you create whimsy? There's always the nude sunbather at the beach, or the dinosaur in the forest, but you can also make more subtle changes to your layout, like giving one of your businesses a tongue-in-cheek name. I plan to place protesters around some of my downtown businesses, like people claiming, "Morton Salt is unfair to umbrellas," in hopes that the viewer will then notice some of the building details I worked so hard to add.

My second tip is: attend your local division NMRA meeting. Reasons for joining the NMRA are pretty basic. According the NMRA website (www.nmra.org):

Why should you join the NMRA? Because:

*You like trains...
You have built, are building or would like to build a model railroad.
You need information and advice and maybe just a little help.
You have information and talents that you would like to share with others who share your interest in trains*

Call for Layouts!

Share Your Layout with Others

Did you enjoy the layouts we've visited last year? Have they provided inspiration for your own layout? Here's the perfect opportunity to share your layout with the rest of the Fox Valley Division.

Contact our Events Trainmaster, Steve Martinak at 847-854-7545 or email him at mart832@attglobal.net

Call for Clinics!

Did you enjoy Tim Kleimeyer's clinic? It was based on a clinic he attended while at the National Convention. Have you been dying to share a special technique with other NMRA members? Contact our Events Trainmaster, Steve Martinak at 847-854-7545 or email him at mart832@attglobal.net. We may devote a meeting for your clinic!

You've joined the NMRA, and that's great. Some divisions don't hold meetings, but since the Fox Valley division does, it's a real shame if you don't take advantage of them. It's amazing how much you can learn by talking to others that share your interest in model railroading. Discover a new technique, find out what works and what doesn't work, and find out what others think the most important part of model railroading is. It could also change the focus of your own feelings about what model railroading is. If it weren't for attending the meetings, and especially going on some of our outings, I would never have known how much fun participating in an operating session could be. Before that, I had looked at model railroading as more of an individual hobby, so you could say that attending the meetings changed my views about a hobby I've had for over 40 years.

Which brings me to a question: What

one thing changed how you "play with trains?" Email me at saviano@att.net or mail to:

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I'll compile a list of the top ten (more or less, depending on how many replies I get and how much space I have) in the January issue of the Semaphore.

Here are some examples:

- I love the amount of detail I can get in my scale
- The article on TimeSaver helped me realize there was more to model railroading than just running around in circles

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Model Railroad Puzzler

Hoping that the hosts of NPR's Car Talk haven't copyrighted the term "Puzzler," I've got a model railroad puzzle that might make you scratch your head a little and have a little fun:

Let's say I bought enough track to go around the equator two times (don't tell my wife, she says my layout's too big already). My intent is to run two trains side by side. If I buy another three feet of track (any more would be just way too much track) and decide to run one on top of the other instead (an "L" track over a grade-level line), what is the largest scale train I can run, using standard NMRA clearances?

Send me an email at Saviano@att.net. I will select one email at random from all the correct answers (if any) and publish the winner's name in the January Semaphore. Please title the email "FVD Puzzler" and give your answer as a scale: Z, N, HO, O, S, or G (and let me know what scale of G you mean). Yes, I know that there's a difference between scale and gauge, but one or two letters will be easier than having someone try to enter 1:180 (not necessarily a correct answer) because that was what the calculated scale might have been.

Happy Puzzling!

Dust off your layouts!

Another reminder - the DuPage Division and the Fox Valley Division will be hosting the 2006 Spring Convention, and we'll be looking for layout tours and (shudder) the "V" word - Volunteers. Details in a future Semaphore.

Location for General Meetings

General meetings of the Fox Valley Division are held at the Gary Morava Center in Prospect Heights (See map at right).

Why Are You Receiving this Newsletter?

You are a member of the National Model Railroad Association. Part of your National dues includes membership in the Fox Valley Division. The Semaphore is your guide to the monthly meetings, clinics, field trips, and layout tours of the Fox Valley Division



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ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED

