



THE SEMAPHORE

DECEMBER 2014

FOX VALLEY DIVISION • MIDWEST REGION



Layout of the Month: Bluff City Modular Engineer's HO Layout

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December's regular meeting is December 14th at 1:00 pm with pizza being served for lunch! Our contest is "Double or Triple Headed Diesels". Our clinic is "Easy Roads and Parking lots" by the FVD's, Jeff Jarr. See you there!

Mike Hirvela shot this great, "cold to the bones", early evening, snow scene on his BCME asphalt plan module while it was sitting.... in his living room! He'll tell you how he did in January's "Mike's Minute".

The Bluff City Modular Engineer's Modular layout group has existed since 1994 when it amicably broke off from the large Waukegan Modular RR Club. FVD members Jim Allen, Mike Hirvela and Art Jones belong to the current BCME group. *con't on p.3*

Fun Stuff by Jim Allen



These images are of a vehicle built for the "Burning Man" event in Nevada's Black Rock Desert. The Burning Man event is actually an annual celebration of a year round culture of art, self expression, community and self reliance. This vehicle is sort of a cross between a locomotive, trolley, boat and house. It would make a great kit bashing project. Maybe there's even a new contest category here! How about, "If it Rolls, Anything Goes"? Anyway, remember Model Railroading is FUN!

Layout of the Month: Bluff City Modular Layout

Best of Show-Modules

Jim Allen took “Best of Show-Modules” at this year’s Trainfest with his “Bomber Gas” module (right) on the BCME layout. This is the second Best of Show-Modules he has won at Trainfest in the past three years. FVD members may recall seeing Jim’s Bomber Gas model (before he turned it into a BCME module) at a FVD monthly meeting where it was also a contest winner. The model is patterned after the actual “Bomber Gas” gas station which was located near Portland, OR for many years. Jim had to settle for using a Douglas DC-3 airplane model because the prototype’s B-17 is not available as an HO scale model. The module includes a tiny “milk can” soft serve stand Jim built



before Bachman came out with their whimsical Roadside USA Structure series. “Bomber Gas” has won several awards and it’s easy to see why. The modeling is superb, the prototype unique, and the lighting effects simply splendid. It is a true “attention getter” wherever it goes!



Three new partially finished BCME modules made their debuts at Trainfest this year. Art Jones demonstrates the new access bridge (above) he built for this year’s Trainfest. Constructing and fine tuning the bridge’s operation took many hours of work, but the result is a bridge that works flawlessly. Jim Allen (above right) watches his big SP cab forward cross the new “Canyon” module he brought to Trainfest. Like Art, Jim needed to construct his bridge to withstand the rigors of transporting it to and from train shows, as well as the handling received during set ups and take downs. Art and Jim’s modules will have more scenery added to complete them. A partially finished but very impressive BCME module was Richard Plachter’s Milwaukee Road Everett St. Depot module (right). Richard, from Racine, is kit-bashing Walther’s kits to accurately model the Milwaukee Road depot and train shed which Walther’s selectively compressed in their kit. He added another 8 1/2 inches to each end to match the prototype.



Layout of the Month: Bluff City Modular Layout

con't from p.1 Though the BCMEs once traveled to 4 or 5 train shows a year, they now only make an appearance at Trainfest. "It takes a lot of work to go to a show (see Mike's Minute p. 4), so we've decided to just do Trainfest. We've only missed one in the past 23 years," says Mike Hirvela. During the year work is done by members upgrading existing modules or building new ones. "It's always a 'work in progress,'" says Mike. It is work at the show as well. Mike wants to especially thank non-members Dave Flebbe, Bob Teuberg, and son Brian for their help with this year's layout. More BCME at Trainfest coverage is on pages 4 and 5. Article, photos by Walt Herrick.



Jim Allen's corner module above, was the 2012 Trainfest "Best of Show-Module" winner.

Basic Layout Information

Layout name:	Bluff City Modular Engineer's
Layout builder:	Many individuals over the years
Layout location:	Model Train Shows—at present the layout only appears at Trainfest
Layout scale:	HO
Layout size:	14 feet wide x 20, 24, or 28 feet long
Layout style:	Modular. Rectangular shape with an open center and a center staging peninsula
Module size:	Normally 2 feet by 6 feet with special corner sections
Layout theme:	Generic mid-west
Layout era:	Varies depending on member's equipment being run
Construction started:	1994 with various sections added, rebuilt or replaced over the years
Bench work:	1x4 box frame with plywood deck
Roadbed/sub-roadbed:	cork on homasote or foam board
Track and turnouts:	Commercial code 100 flex track with Peco or Atlas turnouts
Scenery:	Variety of scenes as built by members
Structures:	Kits, kit-bashed, and scratch built
Locomotives:	Variety of member owned locos some with sound
Rolling stock:	Member owned kits and RTR
Control:	Double track main line with one DC line and one DCC (NCR) line
Operations:	Train show display running
Module storage:	At member's homes
Other:	The BCMEs are open to adding new members. Contact Mike Hirvela at 847-360-9579 for information.



A Mike Hirvela SD 40-2 (above left) with a train of empty Commonwealth Edison hoppers, holds the main next to the lumber yard module he built for the Bluff City Modular Engineer's layout. Mike's train is on the layout's "DC main". His son Brian is in the orange t-shirt behind the module. Art Jones' B&O E7 (above right), in the road's original blue, grey and black paint scheme, passes the "Big City" corner module he created. The E unit is pulling B&O varnish also painted in blue, black and grey. Art's module has building and street lighting, and several of its structures are five stories or taller.

Mike's Minute by Mike Hirvela

How BCME Prepared for Trainfest 2014

Our Bluff City's Modular Engineers modular layout group now only participates in one train show a year, but its the granddaddy of all Midwest train shows—Trainfest in Milwaukee. Preparation for Trainfest in any year involves a lot of work. Preparations for Trainfest 2014 involved a ton of work. It started at Trainfest 2013 when we engaged in some brainstorming about what improvements we would make for Trainfest 2014. Basically we wanted get an incomplete corner module complete for the next year and add a two foot module. Fast forward to mid July 2014 and that two small project list had grown to include these additional projects:

- Art Jones would build a new 2x4 foot lift bridge access module. Jim Allen would build the model bridges to go on the module's deck.
- Jim Allen would build a new 2x4 "Canyon" module with a 40 inch high trestle.
- I would build a new 2x4 "Hill" module to go next to Jim's Canyon module.
- I would rebuild two "blank" 2x6 modules I had in my garage, and build a new 1x6 "bump out" section to accommodate Richard Plachter's gorgeous Milwaukee Road Everett Street depot kit-bash.

All of these new projects came about innocently enough in discussions we had in the spring at a Rolf Plachter (Richard's dad) op session in Racine, an Art Jones' op session, and various email and phone conversations among us. In August we learned that the individual who was going to finish the corner section would not be able to do it. So, I took on that additional project, too!

Member News

Big FVD "Congratulations!" go to **Jim Landwehr** who was recently named the Midwest Region's new Achievement Program's Committee Chairman. Jim has handled similar responsibilities for the FVD for many years as its Achievements and Contests Trainmaster, and now takes over at the region level from long time AP Chair, Marv Preussler. Jim will be a busy guy, as he is continuing his FVD A&C Trainmaster duties, too....Congratulations also go to FVD Assistant Super, **Bob Shlemon, Jr.** who recently underwent successful knee replacement surgery. The procedure went so well Bob was at November's monthly meeting only two weeks after his surgery....Former FVD Assistant Super, **Harry Sorenson**, is making good progress after suffering a stroke in October. Harry is rehabbing in Elgin and is now able to see visitors....Membership Services Trainmaster, **Bert Lattan**, reports FVD membership standing at 218 which is down one since September.... Help Wanted: **Harry Meislahn** of Winnetka is in the middle of building a nice HO layout and needs help finishing it. Contact him at meislahn@sbcglobal.net if you'd like to give him a hand. Tell him "the Semaphore sent ya"!...Send your news items to waltherrickjr@gmail.com. Thanks! WH



Mike Hirvela rebuilt two 2x6 modules and built a new 1x6 "bump out" to accommodate Richard Plachter's beautiful and large kit-bashed Milwaukee Road depot on the BCME layout.

From August through the start of Trainfest November 8th, the three of us basically worked continually on our modules. Though Art and Jim only had one module each, the engineering, and intricate construction involved with their modules meant they had about as much work as me (maybe more?) and my four modules. I was happy when my son Brian asked if he could work with me on my 2x4 foot "Hill" module. "Yes!" was my quick reply and thankfully he took over the scenery work on it.

Our original plan was to test fit the new modules sometime before Trainfest but it never happened. On Friday we loaded our modules into our trucks and headed to Trainfest. The layout was almost ready Friday night. I say "almost" because an electrical short was causing havoc. After two hours of trouble shooting, we found the gremlin and had the layout up and running by 8:30 Saturday morning, a half hour before Trainfest opened for business.

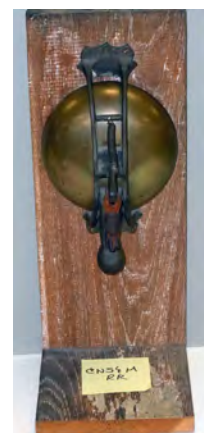
Was it all worth it? You bet! But we are all looking forward to much less work to prepare for 2015!

November's Clinics

In November we were treated to *two* clinics! The FVD's Mike Wood introduced members to the basic electronics used to produce two different types of light animation for your layout. The first was a simple flashing circuit which could be used on any number of things on the layout having a flashing light such as emergency vehicles, radio tower flasher, road maintenance barricades, etc. Mike's second animation device was an intersection stop light controller which ran through a standard "red, yellow, green" sequence on both streets of a typical intersection. Mike brought examples of both of his devices for us to see. His clinic is now available as a download from this web site. FVD member Dave Johnson presented a photo log of the replacement of the Metra's bridge over Golf Road in Des Plaines. The log traced the project from its inception in the spring of 2010, to its completion in the summer of 2011. Though an extensive project, Metra was still able to keep at least one lane of traffic flowing in each direction on the busy four lane highway. *Thank you* Mike and Dave for your excellent November clinics! WH Mike (top) and Dave's photos by Jim Osborn.



November's Contest Winners Photos by Jim Osborn



November's contest, "Anything Related to Trains", got a huge and varied response. 17 entries were received making it one of the largest contest responses we've ever had. Entries ranged from old brake hoses to a detailed layout plan with the extensive research materials used to develop it. Walt Herrick's caboose marker lamp took first place honors, Mike Hirvela's lighted switch lantern came in second, and Barry Cutaia's unique North Shore and Western motorman's gong was third. Congratulations to our winners, and to the 14 other members who brought in entries! December's contest is another good one: "double or triple headed diesels". WH

Modeling Tip:

To make his new BCME club's Canyon module's trestle strong, Jim Allen decided to build the bridge's concrete pier (seen in front in the photo at right) around a piece of 1x4 inch, clear pine lumber firmly attached to the plywood base of his module. The 1x4 was accurately cut to fit and securely fastened and braced to the module's base. Care was taken to insure the 1x4 stayed perfectly vertical and in correct position while fastening it the base. Once fastened, a "concrete" pier of styrene was built around the 1x4. Bridge shoes were added, and the pier then painted and weathered a realistic shade of concrete. Scenery will be added below the pier, using the 1x4 as a center brace to build around. WH



2014-2015 Meeting Schedule

2014-2015 orange Meeting Schedule cards were mailed to members the second week in September. Contact the Semaphore's Editor if you did not receive yours. The complete meeting schedule is also given below and 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>
Dec. 14, 2014	Easy Roads and Parking Lots by Jeff Jarr	Double or triple headed diesels	1:00 pm start. Pizza lunch.
Jan. 18, 2015	Custom Transfer Cabooses by John Drozdak	Large structure—5000 scale feet or more	
Feb. 15, 2015	<u>TBD—check web site</u>	Double or triple headed steam	
Feb. 28 & March 1, 2015	High Wheeler 2015 Train Show at Harper College in Palatine sponsored by the FVD. 9 am to 5 pm each day. <u>FVD volunteers needed.</u> Contact Jeff Jarr at jjarr@comcast.net or 773-286-8755. <i>Note: there is no March FVD monthly meeting due to High Wheeler 2015.</i>		
April 13, 2015	<u>TBD—check web site</u>	Open load spanning 2-3 cars	1:00 pm start. Officer elections
April 17 - 19, 2015	Midwest Region Spring Convention, “The Lake Shore Limited” , hosted by the WinnebagoLand Division at the Holiday Inn, 4601 Calumet Ave. in Manitowoc, WI. <u>See the Winter issue of the Midwest Region Waybill newsletter for complete information and a registration form.</u>		
May 17, 2015	<u>TBD—check web site</u>	Unfinished project of your choice	
<i>Note: there are no FVD monthly meetings in June, July or August</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

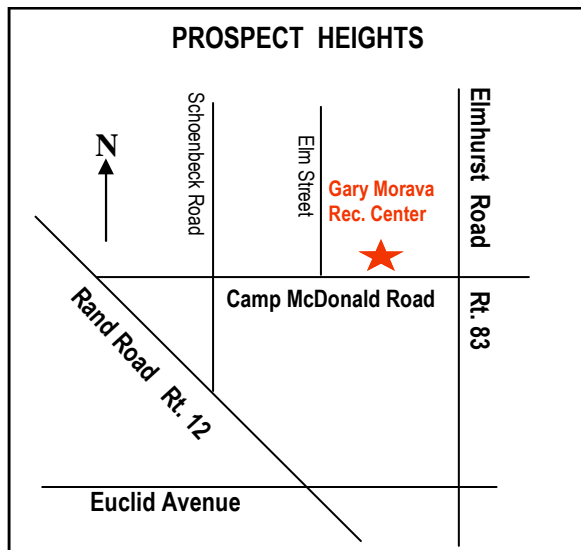
If you receive this newsletter you live in the Midwest Region and Fox Valley Division of the National Model Railroad Association or NMRA. The Fox Valley Division (FVD) includes all of McHenry and parts of Cook, Kane, and Lake Counties in northeast Illinois. About 225 members of varied ages and modeling 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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