

# THE SEMAPHORE



February 2017



FOX VALLEY DIVISION • MIDWEST REGION

## Op Session at Osborn's Article & photos by Walt Herrick

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**Next FVD Meeting:**

**Sunday, February 19**

**1:30 pm at the**

**Morava Rec Center in  
Prospect Heights**

**Contest: The exterior detail  
of a structure—including  
walls and roof**

**Clinic: Computer modeling  
by Carl Wagus**



It's 10:15 am on the first Thursday of the month. Jim Osborn's operating session only started about ten minutes ago, but his crew is already hard at work turning his model railroad into a living, breathing Chicago and Northwestern-Western Division transportation system moving freight and passengers to and from Chicago and Omaha, Nebraska. In the photo above you see Jim (center in blue shirt) with eight of his 12 man crew. Before the op session started Jim and his crew had a delicious breakfast at the Whistle Stop Café a half a block west of the Milwaukee North mainline in Fox Lake. The rest of the "Op Session at Osborn's" story continues on pages 2 & 3.

## Fun Stuff by Jim Allen

Passengers climb aboard an overcrowded train in Dhaka\*. And we think our rush hours are bad!

\*Per Wikipedia, Dhaka is the capital and largest city in Bangladesh which is located in southern Asia. Dhaka is one of the world's most populated cities with 17 million people in the greater Dhaka area. WH

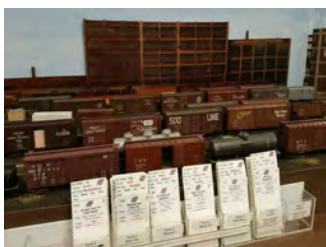


## Op Session at Osborn's

The eastern terminus of Jim Osborn's CNW-Western Division railroad is Proviso Yard in Chicago (right). On Jim's layout, Proviso is a scened and partially hidden, five track staging yard. The throat of the yard was designed to be open so operators would have easy access to the turnouts there. Scenery is in its beginning stages, but we can already see a great industrial scene being developed with a backdrop of tall, heavy industrial buildings in the foreground, and smaller commercial buildings in the background. The buildings frame the yard and separate it from other areas of the layout. A car card rack and lighted track occupancy panel for operators are located on the layout's fascia at Proviso.



Just west of Proviso is West Chicago. One of the day's first orders of business is to get things moving at West Chicago's large classification yard. Yardmaster Jim Allen at right, is busy directing train movements there. Note the caboose track in front of him. Car waybill cards are neatly organized in car card racks, and turnouts are thrown manually with push-pull knobs as seen below.



While Jim concentrates on the West Chicago Yard activities on the top level of the layout, Bert Lattan prepares to switch the Sioux City industrial area on the lower level directly below. He sorts through a short stack of Sioux City car cards to organize his switching moves. Jim Osborn uses the popular "4-cycle car card" system to route cars throughout his Chicago & Northwestern -Western Division layout. Every car on the layout has a car card assigned to it listing the car's road name, number, car type, color, and length. This information is invaluable when trying to find and spot a particular car among those in a train, a yard or a switching area. A small 4-cycle waybill fits in a pocket of each card providing the car's routing information to cities and specific industries. Jim and Bert are Fox Valley Division members.



West Chicago occupies a significant amount of layout space stretching the full 42 foot length of the layout room. Besides its classification yard, West Chicago has a large engine facility and sizable industrial area (far right photo). Tom Mabie from the WISE Division moves a loaded gondola using the 120 foot turn table at the West Chicago engine facility. One of the operating positions on the Western Division is "Yard Hostler".



## Op Session at Osborn's



Along the CNW-Western Division main-line we see FVD member and Midwest Region Secretary, David Johnson (left), making a run around move at Belle Plaine with his Fairbanks-Morse switch engine. Working Belle Plain is made easier using a chair which puts the operator right where the action is. Mike Jorgenson (right) is at the Cedar Rapids/Sioux City interchange uncoupling cars from his Alco RS1 and a loaded flat car. Like its prototype, the CNW-Western Division has a wide variety of diesel motive power.



Wellsburg, IA is a community served by a CB&Q branch line. It is one of the more challenging switching areas on the layout. Engineer/brakeman, Dan Sylvester (above), is in charge of today's Wellsburg Local which is parked on the main (right) while he makes out a switch list. Wellsburg is the perfect assignment for Dan who is a retired CNW brakeman, and columnist for the OpSig newsletter.



Layout owner, builder, and its operational scheme developer, Jim Osborn, is all smiles during another successful CNW-Western Division op session.

### Some Basic Layout Operations Information

Layout name:	CNW-Western Division
Layout builder:	Jim Osborn
Layout scale:	HO
Layout size:	16 x 42 feet irregularly shaped
Layout style:	Walk in; double deck
Layout theme:	The CNW as Jim remembers it
Layout era:	Early 1960s
Control:	NCE DCC; JMRI Decoder Pro
Signaling:	Operating target and semaphore signals using JMRI Panel Pro
Operations:	Point to point; single and double tracked main lines; 3 switching oriented branch lines; 4-cycle waybill car routing; dispatcher authority; 12 operating jobs; freight and passenger operations
Other:	Jim's layout normally operates the first Thursday of the month with a crew of 12 operators. Contact Jim if you'd like to attend a session. His contact info is on page 7.

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

A belated Happy New Year to one and all! My wishes for the new year last month were superseded by the loss of friend, mentor and MMR Don Cook who I wrote about in the January *Semaphore*. With such a loss, comes the realization that life is fleeting and we need to make the most of every minute we have. So let's resolve to do just that! The new year means a brand new year full of model railroad activities. In the coming months there are opportunities to experience what others have done, to share ideas and gain knowledge. Our monthly division meetings have events and topics of interest that any member will find informative. (See page 6 in this *Semaphore* for a complete listing of our meetings.) There is always something new to learn about and some railroad feature we may not be too sure about before. Here are some other upcoming model railroad opportunities for your learning and enjoyment:

- February 19 Mad City Train Show in Madison, WI
- March 25 & 26 Rock River Train Show in Rockford, IL
- April 28-30 Midwest Region Convention "Golden Rails" in Rockford, IL
- April 29 & 30 Titledown Train Show in Green Bay, WI

In addition to these, local RR club open houses and op sessions on various model RRs around the area will also be occurring. See the "Railroad Related Events" section on our division's web site for a complete listing of these. Finally, April brings another FVD election, this time for Asst. Superintendent and Paymaster – two key functions on our Board of Directors.

Walt Herrick's cover story this month on a recent Jim Osborn op session, brings to mind fond memories of the many op sessions I've attended over the years. As you may recall from past Mike's Minute columns, I very much enjoy operating—or op—sessions on other peoples' model railroads. I have been participating in op sessions on model railroads in the Fox Valley Division and WISE Division for many years now. While I have been privileged to have run on more than 15 layouts, none of them have the same theme, same era, same geographic area, same railroad (OK, there are 3 UP layouts, but all are in different states), same control system, or same operational method. It's the variety that is the spice of model railroading life, let alone the variety of gentlemen (and sometimes ladies) who you meet at these gatherings. For many of years I was "lone wolf" modeler, keeping to myself and learning all that I could on my own. But it was not until I started participating in op sessions did it dawn on me that I had been missing out on a valuable resource – other modelers! It was like plugging in to a vast network of information. As a result of my experiences, I would urge you to consider participating with others in operating sessions in your area. You'll be glad you did!



Mike Hirvela has operated on more than 15 layouts including the ones in these photos. Mike and his son Brian (top) are operating on the Bluff City club's modular layout at a recent TrainFest. Jim Allen, Art Jones, and Kurt Youngman discuss branch line operations on the Lechtron Branch on Art's B&O layout (middle). Below, Walt Herrick switches the town of Alpine on Rolf Plachter's layout in Racine during Optoberfest 2015. Top photo by Jim Allen, others by Mike Hirvela.



## January's Clinics and Contest—photos by Mike Hirvela

In January, FVD members were treated to *two* clinics! The first was by Operation Lifesaver spokesman and Chicago & Northwestern Historical Society member, **Dave Phillips** (below left). Dave encouraged members to support Operation Lifesaver's rail safety efforts in their own railroad/railfan experience, and to promote rail safety to others as well. Dave then went on to show us glass plate, high resolution photos from the CNWHS archives. He asked everyone to support and contribute to the new CNWHS archive building to be built at the Illinois Railway Museum. Special guest speaker **Gary Cohn** (below right) of GoodDealsDCC, told the story of how he started his model railroad products business with his Test Tracks programming tracks in various scales with various options. Gary's presentation included developing and marketing Test Tracks, his experiences at TrainFest, meeting and dealing with the Model Railroader Video Plus staff, and lots of humor!



January's "Reefer Train" contest was won by **Harry Meislahn** with his nicely weathered, 6 car, HO scale "PFE Reefer Train" (entry "G"). Coming in second was **Bert Lattan** with his large scale "Cook Orchard Reefer Train" (entry "B"). Bert had special decals made for his big 1:29th scale cars. 3rd Place went to **Denis Zamirovski's** "Mixed Reefer Train" featuring a nice variety car types and road names (entry "C"). Great entries guys! See all seven contest entries on our FVD web site [www.foxvalleydivision.org](http://www.foxvalleydivision.org) under the "Contests" tab. February's contest is "The Exterior Detail of a Structure". WH



## Fox Valley Division Shirts Available!

A limited number of our famous maroon Fox Valley Division polo shirts as seen at the right, **will be available for sale at February's regular meeting on February 19th**. Several sizes are available. Cost is \$25.00 per shirt payable by cash or check. Ring the new year in right with a stylish FVD maroon, short sleeve polo shirt!



## April Elections; Ways & Means Trainmaster still needed

The FVD's April 23, 2017 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 we elect an **Assistant Superintendent and a Paymaster**. Any member wishing to run for either of these two offices should contact our Chief Clerk, George Trandel, and tell him of your intentions to run for office..... Also, the FVD is still looking for an individual to assume the important **Ways & Means Trainmaster** position. This position is responsible for organizing and running our High Wheeler Train Show which is usually held each year in early March. (This year's High Wheeler has been suspended due to construction at the Harper College gymnasium normally used for the train show.) Contact FVD Superintendent, Mike Hirvela, about the Ways & Means opening. George and Mike's contact information is on page 7 of this Semaphore. WH

## Member News

A special train honoring **MMR Don Cook** was run on **Mike Ritchdorf's** N&W layout January 1st.....**Walt Herrick** installed a special model railroad display featuring trolleys at the Prairie Lodge in Sun City Huntley for the month's of December and January.....**Mike Hirvela and Jim Landwehr** installed an NMRA/model railroad display at the Mt. Prospect Public Library on January 3rd. The display went through the month of January and "was one of our most popular displays" according to a MPPL librarian. The display will move to the Arlington Heights Public Library during the month of February..... Membership Services Trainmaster, **Bert Lattan**, reports our newest FVD members are **Dan Luby from Highland Park**, and **Charles McClenanhan from Glenview**. Welcome aboard Dan and Charles! We're glad to have you with us! WH

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

<u>Date</u>	<u>Clinic</u>	<u>Contest</u>	<u>Other</u>
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	<b>1:00 pm start.</b> Pizza lunch. FVD officer elections.
<b>April 28–30, 2017</b>	<b>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: <a href="http://rrvd-nmra.com">rrvd-nmra.com</a>.</b>		
May 21, 2017	"Introduction to Operations Under Time Table and Train Order Authority" by Chris Czyzewski	Exposed or Open Load of Your Choice	<b>Last monthly meeting for 2016 –2017</b>
<b>July 30–August 6, 2017</b>	<b>2017 NMRA National Convention "Orange Blossom Special" in Orlando, FL. See the convention's website for complete information: <a href="http://nmra2017orlando.org">nmra2017orlando.org</a></b>		



### About the Fox Valley Division

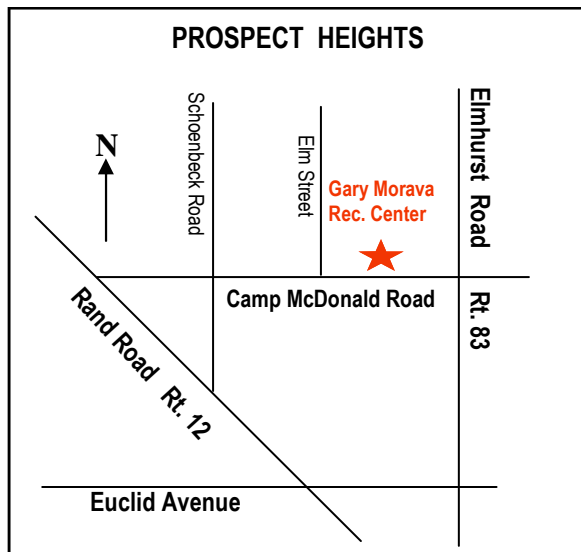
If you receive this newsletter you live in the Midwest Region and Fox Valley Division of the National Model Railroad Association or NMRA. The Fox Valley Division (FVD) includes all of McHenry and parts of Cook, Kane, and Lake Counties in northeast Illinois. About 220 members of varied ages and modeling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

FVD mailing address: Fox Valley Division  
Midwest Region-NMRA  
P.O. Box 1535  
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**VACANT**