

THE SEMAPHORE



January 2019

FOX VALLEY DIVISION • MIDWEST REGION



Happy 2019 Everybody!

The Ericksen's Milwaukee Road
article and photos by Walt Herrick

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

Pages

- 1-3 Ericksen's Milwaukee Road
- Page 1 Fun Stuff
- Page 4 Mike's Minute
- Page 4 Cook Special Run Reefer
- Page 5 December's Clinic & Contest
- Page 5 Modeling Tip
- Page 6 Finding local MRR Clubs
- Page 6 Member News
- Page 6 Meeting Schedule
- Page 7 Basic FVD info
- Page 7 FVD Board members

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Next FVD Meeting:
Sunday, January 20
1:30 pm at the
Morava Rec Center in
Prospect Heights

Contest: Trackage Indus-
try—one structure only

Clinic: "Train Communi-
cations in the 1940s" by Bob
Hanmer

Another excellent (and large!) Fox Valley Division model railroad is being built in Gordy and Gail Ericksen's basement. It is their HO scale Milwaukee Road-Southwest Division. Gordy and Gail have teamed up with professional layout builder, Darren Ferreter from Cedar Rapids, to produce in just two years, a very large, expertly constructed, prototype inspired, and about 25% complete, Milwaukee Road layout that occupies almost all of their 40 x 60 foot basement. Above we see Milwaukee Road RSC3 #977 heading up a local freight in the small *con't on p.2*

Fun Stuff by Jim Allen

Possible titles for this photo could be: "Mountain Goats Stand Guard on CP Locomotive", or "GN Goats Invade the CP". Anyway, the CP locomotive and its train to the right are stuck in heavy snow somewhere in Montana. Don't know why the goats thought the locomotive was better to climb on than rocks. Maybe the snow was too deep or they wanted to hitch a ride to the next mountain. Nuff said!



Layout of the Month: Ericksen's Milwaukee Road

from p.1 town of Linby, Iowa. Gordy and Gail are frequent FVD monthly meeting attendees, and lest you think Gail is there just to support her model railroading husband, think again. Gail is an excellent model railroader in her own right. She is playing a big role in the building of her and Gordy's Milwaukee Road-Southwest Division layout. Gail is quite knowledgeable about the prototype and its route from the Quad Cities to Ottumwa, Iowa—the portion of the Milwaukee Road's Southwest Division the Erickson's model. She is full of information and interesting details about the various towns and locations along the line. Gail is also an expert structure builder and, as an accomplished artist, is looking forward to building scenery on the layout when the time comes. Gordy enjoys all aspects of the hobby, but especially layout and track planning. This is evident in the well designed staging yard, town sites and mainline with beautiful, long cosmetic curves and S curves in several locations. Darren is a wiring and controls specialist but is also very proficient in building bench work and track work. Gordy says Darren is "the fastest and best track layer I've ever seen!"

At present Gordy estimates their huge 2450 sq. foot layout is about 25% complete. All of the bench work is in. The main staging yard is complete. Mainline trackage is about 75% complete going west to the current end of the line at Washington, Iowa. NCE DCC (with wireless throttles) has been installed and trains can run the length of the main as it exists at present. What needs to be completed is the main line all the way to west end staging, secondary trackage at various town sites, a large classification yard at Nahant, ballasting, and scenery. Gail has gotten a head start on structure building, but there will be lots more structures to be built both big ones and small ones. And then there is devising an operations scheme to keep the possible 5 to 10 operators busy during an op session. That's a big "to do" list to be sure, but the Ericksens are up for the challenge!



The top photo shows the Ericksen layout's 32 foot long, 47 inch wide main staging yard. Milwaukee occupies the near half of the yard, and Kansas City the far half of the yard. No scenic divider is planned between the two yards as Gail and Gordy like the open feel of the room without a divider. The middle photo shows the 28 foot long Muscatine peninsula and the seven foot wide aisle (which narrows down to 3 feet at the "blob") between it and the Washington, Iowa town site on the left. Orange was the prevalent color of Milwaukee Road locomotives and cabooses in 1950, the era of the Erickson layout (bottom right photo). Gail has her own large, well lit work bench with an appropriate selection of tools, jigs, clamps, glues, paints, etc. at her disposal (left photo).

Layout of the Month: Ericksen's Milwaukee Road



Basic Layout Information

Layout Name:	Milwaukee Road-Southwest Division
Layout Builders:	Gordy and Gail Ericksen, and Darin Ferreter of Model Railroad Dreams, a custom layout building company
Layout Location:	Ericksen basement
Layout Scale:	HO
Layout Size:	40 x 60 U shaped space
Layout Style:	Single deck, around the walls with peninsulas
Layout Locale:	Southeastern Iowa
Layout Era:	1950
Construction begun:	2016
Bench Work:	Hybrid 1 x 4 grid and L-girder made of 1x4s cut from 3/4 inch plywood
Sub Roadbed/ Roadbed:	Homabed on 3/4 inch plywood
Track:	Code 83 Atlas flex track and turnouts
Track specs:	Min. radius is 30 inches Min turnout is #5 Max grade is 2%
Scenery:	Yet to be built, but will seek to replicate the prototype
Structures:	Kits and kit-bashed
Locomotives:	Mostly Proto2000
Rolling Stock:	Mix of manufacturers
Control:	NCE wireless DCC
Operations:	Plans to duplicate prototype ops as much as possible
Other:	Gordy and Gail wish to credit the excellent help and knowledge of Darren Ferreter in the building of their layout.

Building the huge Milwaukee Road-Southeastern Division HO layout has definitely been a team effort by Gordy and Gail Ericksen (upper left photo), and Darren Ferreter (middle photo) of Model Railroad Dreams, a custom layout building company located in Cedar Rapids, Iowa. Gordy is the chief track planner for the railroad and designed the beautiful sweeping S curve seen in the bottom photo. Curves on this and other sections of the railroad are super-elevated. Also note the hybrid open grid and L-girder bench work constructed of 1 x 4s cut from 3/4 inch plywood. Plywood is used because it is straighter and resists warpage better than standard dimensional lumber.

Mike's Minute by Mike Hirvela

Where Are We Headed?

One only has to listen to a few conversations among model railroaders and invariably the talk comes around to the topic of “where the hobby is headed”. And the consensus of many conversations lately is that in the U.S. the hobby is shrinking, that “no one is interested in model trains anymore” and “the hobby is dying out” with old folks who either leave the hobby because they are too old to enjoy it any more, or pass away. Evidence is cited as prototype rails are pulled up all over the U.S. following mergers which leave some track redundant, and railroad corporations merge or go out of business due to various reasons. Of course, the railroads aren't the only ones feeling the pinch of the “new” economy. Gone are K-Mart, Woolworth, Montgomery Ward. And could it be true, the one time giant Sears, Roebuck and Co. is also up for sale or liquidation? Certain automobile brands such as Plymouth, Pontiac, Oldsmobile, and others are no more. And, it seems like every week we hear of other long-time iconic automobile models being discontinued. Those decisions may have unintended consequences. Oh, it goes on and on, to the deepest depth of dire predictions you'll hear. Change—economic and otherwise—it seems, is the only constant, and its affecting our beloved hobby.

But, our predecessors effectively dealt with change and we can too. There *are* things we can do to enhance the continuation of our favorite hobby in spite of the dire prognostications. At the recent train shows in Grayslake and Schaumburg, I was having conversations with families with youngsters looking for a hobby in which the entire family can participate. You can imagine what I advised. Yes, I believe model trains are for everyone and are an equal opportunity, wholesome family hobby activity that brings enjoyment and fun to folks and sexes of all ages. All you have to do is look into the eyes of youngsters (and oldsters, too) to see the sheer joy of watching trains, no matter the scale. No other hobby touches as many different types of things as model trains do. You can learn and become involved in so many different, yet related, areas of interest. It's a life-long learning experience where the learning is fun and you really don't want to stop learning. There is always something new to discover. And once you learn about something in the hobby whether it be the carpentry used in building bench work, the electrical knowledge used in model train control systems, or the research done to find out how railroad signal systems worked in the 1930s as a few examples, this knowledge can be put to *active* and maybe *immediate* use on your model railroad. So, you get to see the results of your learning efforts right away.

Folks who attend the shows are thirsting for knowledge about trains, both real and model. It is up to us to provide the information and resources that are the ways to quench that thirst. I ask each member of the FVD to make it a 2019 resolution to bring a guest to a member meeting some time in the new year. It is really up to us. We *can* do it. Now let's go run some trains (and perhaps invite a non-model railroad friend to join us?!).

Honoring Don Cook with a Special Run Car

The FVD is honoring our good friend and late MMR, Don Cook, with a special run **Cook Orchards reefer car**. This car was produced for the division by Accurail and is a close replica of the Cook Orchards cars that traveled on Don's layout. Each car costs \$23.00 plus shipping and handling of \$7.50 for one car, and \$14.00 for 2 to 4 cars. You may save shipping costs by purchasing your car(s) at a FVD monthly meeting. Go to the FVD's web site:

www.foxvalleydivision.org

for complete purchase and shipping information, and then buy one soon before they're gone! Also see page 13 of the January 2019 *Model Railroader Magazine* and page 80 of the November 2018 *Railroad Model Craftsman* for more info on these cars. (Photo by Jim Osborn taken on his layout.)



December's Clinic and Contest Photos by Jim Osborn

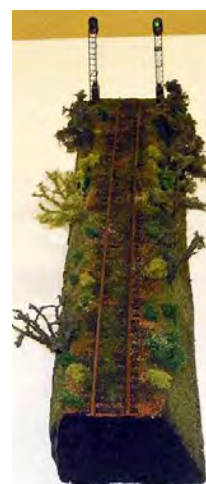
December's Clinic

Veteran clinician **Rick Mahaney** traveled from his home in Flint, Michigan to present our December clinic on **“Junctions, Interchanges, and Diamonds for your Model Railroad”**. Rick gave us an interesting and informative clinic using numerous prototype and model photos from his extensive travels around the U.S. We came away with lots of good ideas on how to incorporate junctions and interchanges into our model railroads, and how diamonds are used by the prototype. Thank You Rick for a great clinic! **January's clinic** will be presented by **Bob Hanmer** who will talk to us about **“Train Communications in the 1940s”**. Bob's clinic should be a good one as he explores railroad communications as they existed more than 70 years ago during and after World War II. WH



December's Contest

“Super-detailed Section of Track” was December's contest. Entries could be no longer than 18 inches and no shorter than 12 inches. **Walt Herrick** took **First Place honors** with his HO scale section of abandoned track (top right). Walt used Micro-scale code 70 flex track on N scale road bed. The track was painted, weathered, and ballasted. Finally lots of weeds and junk were added. **David Crement, MMR** took **Second** with his On3 section of track (below left). A nicely scratch built, and finely detailed East Broad Top water spout sits next to David's section of track. **Leif Hansen's** signaled section of HO track **placed Third** in the contest (below middle). Leif's model depicted a well worn section of track which featured lighted block signals. David Crement also brought a very nicely done O standard gauge/On3 narrow dual gauge track turnout for display (below right). **January's contest** should be a fun one. It is: **“Track-side Industry”-one structure only**. There's room for lots of different and interesting models in this one! WH



Modeling Tip—On-layout Track Planning

Gordy Ericksen finds the best way for him to plan track locations is to do it directly on his Milwaukee Road-Southwest Division (see p. 1-3 of this Semaphore) layout surface. He usually has an idea about what he wants in any given location on his layout, and may also do a rough sketch of a possible plan on paper. But, when comes to making the final plan, he does it directly on his layout using white vellum and a pattern wheel used in dress making. Light pencil sketches are made on the vellum using various turnout cut outs as a guide for turnout locations. The pattern wheel is used to transfer the final plan to the layout surface. The plan is then traced on the layout surface following the indentations of the pattern wheel. Gordy now has the exact location of the track to go by when laying his track. WH



Where to Find Chicagoland Model Railroad Clubs

Looking for model railroad clubs in our area? The FVD web site www.foxvalleydivision.org lists 25 clubs in Chicago and its suburbs. Click the “Community” tab, and then “Local Clubs”. You can also go directly to <http://www.foxvalleydivision.org/fvd2016/clubs.v2.html>. Most clubs feature regular open houses to view the layouts. Club memberships are also often available if you’d like further involvement. Jim Osborn

Member News

Check out the Fox Valley Division’s **model railroad display** in the front lobby of the **Mt. Prospect Public Library!** The display runs through the end of January....Note the February Clinic change in our Meeting Schedule below. **Mike Wood** is replacing Mike Hirvela and will give us an up to date account of **railroading in Japan** where he recently stayed for 26 days on business. In his off hours he traveled the country by train and took railroad photos. (Big Thanks! to Mike Hirvela who once again allowed his clinic to be changed to help accommodate other clinicians!)....**Bob Shlemon, Jr.** and family has now, finally, moved to Tennessee after a delay of a couple of weeks....Again we point out that **the division is looking for Ways and Means, PR, and Member Services Trainmasters.** Contact FVD Super Mike Hirvela for details....**Walt Herrick** recently snapped the photo to the right showing **Metra’s 2018 Operation North Pole** train’s power and a new Jimmy Johns wrapped loco. The locos were parked in Crystal Lake. WH



2018 - 2019 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.

<u>Date</u>	<u>Clinic</u>	<u>Contest</u>	<u>Other</u>
Jan 20, 2019	Train communications in the 1940s by Bob Hamner	Trackside Industry—one structure only	
Feb. 17, 2019	“Modern Railroading in Japan” by Mike Wood*	Kit-bashed structure or car	
Mar. 17, 2019	Arduino Devices by George K.	Over, Under, Around & Through—bridges, signals, tunnels, etc.	
Apr. 28, 2019	Keeping Your RR in Focus by Jim Osborn	Humorous Open Load	1:00 pm start for Officer Elections
May 19, 2019	Midwest/Thousand Lakes Joint Regional Meet in LaCrosse, WI. Questions, email Reid Kahrs MWR Convention Chair at: rkahrs@charter.net. See pages 9—12 of the Winter issue of the Midwest Region <i>Waybill</i> newsletter for convention registration details and convention information.		
June 2, 2019	Modular Construction of User Objects in AnyRail by Carl Wagus	Vehicles—limit 3	Last monthly meeting for 2018 – 2019
July 7—13, 2019	NMRA 2019 National Convention in Salt Lake City, UT. See the convention’s web site for more information: www.nmra2019slc.org		

***Note, this change in February’s clinic!** Mike Wood just returned from a 26 day trip to Japan with lots of photos of contemporary railroading in that country. Mike Hirvela graciously gave Mike Wood his clinic spot so we could see the latest in modern railroading in Japan. Fear not, the Hirvela clinic is being rescheduled!



About the Fox Valley Division

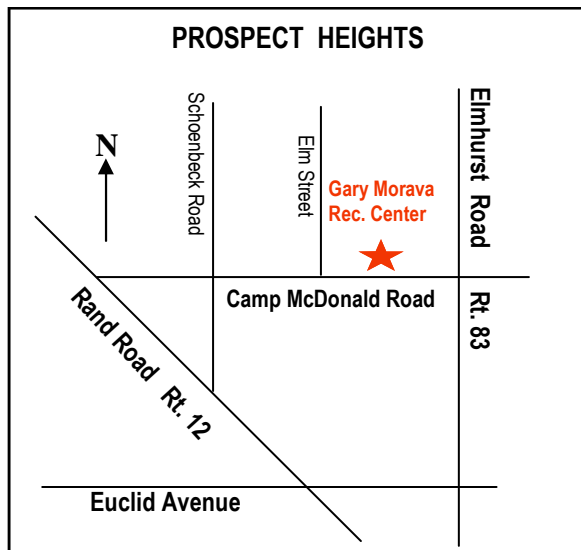
If you receive this newsletter you live in the Midwest Region and Fox Valley Division of the National Model Railroad Association or NMRA. The Fox Valley Division (FVD) includes all of Lake and McHenry, and parts of Cook and Kane Counties in northeast Illinois. About 190 members of varied ages and modeling 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.

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 3:30 p.m.
- 2015 – 2016 meeting dates, contest and clinic info are on page 6 of this newsletter.

FVD web site: www.foxvalleydivision.org

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Midwest Region-NMRA
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