

# the Semaphore

Volume 21, Number 1

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## SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT

Welcome back fun seekers to another year of activities with the Fox Valley Division of the NMRA. The trainmasters have spent a busy summer trying to develop a fantastic program for this year. The board has been concerned with trying to increase the attendance at our monthly meetings. And, Art Roth has accepted the challenge.

Our division has had a number of successful High Wheeler shows which put us in a far better financial position than we faced when I was first elected to the

board nine years ago. We are no longer in the position of having to live hand to mouth in order for our division to survive. We can afford to spend some of our resources.

Our program will begin with a trip to the Illinois Railway Museum in Union, Illinois. The division will provide a bus and will pay the entrance fee for all members who join us on the bus. All we ask is that you call us and let us know if you are interested so we can order an appropriate size bus. Please call Art Roth at 708-577-4430. **Call Today.**

The October trip will also be a bus tour to the famous Batavia Model Railroad Club. There is a possibility that we may also visit some of the other clubs along the Fox River.

November will find us back at the Prospect Heights Park District for several clinics and a contest or two.

Because of the fantastic response of those who took the El tour of Chicago at the *Smilepost* convention, we are considering returning for a trip in December to see Chicago at night in the holiday season. This trip is still in the planning stages but will involve bus transportation to and from the beginning and end of the trip. Because it is **very expensive** to rent an El Train, there will be a charge for this trip, but we will try to keep it in line with our policy of using our treasury for the benefit of the membership.

High Wheeler is presenting us with problems this year. We have been informed that Forest View will be unavailable for a two day show. This leaves us with the choices of having a one day show, returning to Harper College, or having no show at all. We have been unable to find any other acceptable location for our show unless we were to consider a non-profit mall show or a one day show at a park district which would be much smaller. I will keep you posted as to the developments on this front. Stay tuned.

Please remember that this will be your last mailing from us unless you have attended a meeting within the past year. If you wish to continue to receive the *Semaphore* please let Jerry Hoffman know in writing.

Tom

## WHAT IN THE WORLD IS THE FOX VALLEY DIVISION?

*(And How Did I Get There?)*

Those were the thoughts running through my mind about four months after I joined the NMRA at the Chicago Model Hobby Show a few years ago. I had received a *Semaphore*, telling me about a club called the Fox Valley Division that was meeting in Arlington Heights. I had never joined the club, so I did not know what was going on. *The Semaphore* got put aside and forgotten for the next year; then they stopped coming.

Here's what I didn't know: The Fox Valley Division is one of nine divisions in the Midwest Region of the National Model Railroad Association. As a benefit of NMRA membership, all members are placed in a region and division. The region gets the new member's name from NMRA headquarters in Chattanooga, Tennessee. The region then notifies the correct division that they have a new member. New Fox Valley Division members receive *the Semaphore* for one year. After that, only active members receive it. An active member attends ONE meeting every year. Twice a year, the Fox Valley Division sends *the Semaphore* to all members, active or not. That is the reason many members are holding this issue.

I learned of the Fox Valley Division's NMRA affiliation three years later when I started working for Palatine Hobby. As the manager at Palatine Hobby, I worked closely with the *High Wheeler* '93 Planning Committee. That relationship continued, and I became the Membership Trainmaster in May.

I'm still learning all the little things about the Fox Valley Division, but I can tell anyone that we are a bunch of good-natured people who have a sincere interest in model railroading. You don't have to own any model railroad equipment to enjoy the meetings. Art Roth, our Program Trainmaster, has some great plans for trips and meetings. Why not stop by? We would love to meet you!

Erich Russ  
Membership Trainmaster

*Welcome Aboard!*

Steve King

Mick Haberkorn

Kathleen Ferrell

## FIRST ANNUAL MOSKAL AWARD PRESENTED TO PHIL VALENZO

Our congratulations to Philip Valenzo, winner of the 1993 Bob Moskal Award. The award was presented by Judy Moskal and her son Bob at the Sunday Brunch at the Smilepost '93 convention.

It was gratifying to see the award presented to a modeler whose participation in the hobby was encouraged by Bob himself. Phil had met and talked with Bob shortly before his death in 1992. Phil Valenzo has become one of the finest structure modelers in the Fox Valley Division.

Recently Phil teamed up with Norb Lundberg to present a clinic on *Techniques Used In Building Structures*. They had the opportunity to present it at the April meeting of the Division. A few weeks later they presented it at Smilepost '93.

Phil is a modeler to watch. He will not be one to sit on the sidelines.

Bob Moskal was one of the founders of the Fox Valley Division. He had held the post of Superintendent. Bob was an officer of the Midwest Region, and, he was also an official of the National Model Railroad Association.

Bob was a true promoter of the hobby. He would man the NMRA table at the High Wheeler train show and literally sell the NMRA to all who stopped to look at the literature. He sold me on life membership. (ed.)

The Moskal Award is presented by the family of Bob Moskal. It is sponsored by the Fox Valley Division and the Midwest Region.

## THE HIGH WHEELER

The purpose of the Fox Valley Division is to promote model railroading as a group, together. Nothing does this better than the High Wheeler program.

In 1993 over six thousand people went through the turnstyle at Harper College. We had more than forty exhibits and more than a dozen hobby shops. Every gauge from Z to G scale was represented.

Railfans enjoyed movies and clinics throughout the two day show.

Ribbons were awarded to top rate contestants for some excellent work in model railroading.

As the show wound down to an end Sunday night, the people who had worked on the show for the last three days, started to gather around Tom Hoffman and Ray Pettersen near the contest table. The same questions were asked "How many people?" "How did we do?"

Everyone knew they had been part of "something worthwhile!" A smile of pride was on every face. At that moment we started to plan for next year. "What went well? What went wrong?"

The High Wheeler is a money maker for the Division, but the members get much, much more than money for the hours of work that are put into it all year.

*Rich Boettcher  
Ways & Means Trainmaster*

- ✓ JANESVILLE TRAIN TRIP
- ✓ HIGH WHEELER SHOW
- ✓ TRAINFEST SHOW
- ✓ ILLINOIS RAILWAY MUSEUM
- ✓ SMILEPOST CONVENTION

As Public Relations Trainmaster I will be informing not only the general public but the membership of events and programs sponsored by the Fox Valley Division.

Informing the public is one thing, informing the members is another. That's where *the Semaphore* comes in. To tell you what is coming up at our meetings. At the meetings we have clinics, contests, slide and video shows. A place where you can find answers to your questions and meet new friends with the same interests.

Right now there are 350 members of the Fox Valley Division. About 35 members take part in our monthly meetings. The division is here for you. As Public Relations Trainmaster I invite you to attend at least one of the meetings and voice your opinion. After all, how can we grow without input, your input. We're here for you, and we want to hear your thoughts on how we can advance our common interest, *Model Railroading*. I model ATSF and EJ&E in HO. Let us know what you're doing.

Hope to see you all at Union and I will be looking forward to talking with everyone there.

*Scottie Hicks*

*Public Relations Trainmaster*

P.S.: If you want, call me at 708-438-9109 after 5 p.m.

*the Semaphore* is published monthly by and for the members of the Fox Valley Division, Midwest Region, National Model Railroad Association. The September and April issue are mailed to all members. There are no issues for June, July and August. All other issues are mailed to members who attended at least one meeting the previous year or requested copies by mail. Articles pertaining to the model railroading hobby are solicited subject to editorial review. Address all inquiries and manuscripts to: Fox Valley Division, Publications Trainmaster, P.O. Box 1535, Arlington Heights, IL 60006.

### FOX VALLEY DIVISION OFFICERS

Tom Hoffman .....	Superintendent
708-299-6276	
Dave Flebbe .....	Assistant Superintendent
708-825-5931	
Irv Lange .....	Chief Clerk
708-577-0015	
Rich Sweet .....	Paymaster
708-459-1037	

### FOX VALLEY DIVISION TRAINMASTERS

Erich Russ .....	Membership
708-867-0223	
Art Roth .....	Programs
708-577-4430	
Rich Boettcher .....	Ways and Means
815-653-3146	
Scott Hicks .....	Public Relations
708-438-9109	
Frank Oldfield .....	Contests and Achievement
708-364-0153	
Bob Carney .....	Fox Valley Railroad
708-587-6213	
Jerry Hoffman .....	Publications
312-725-9159	

## PROGRAMS

For a long time now your board members have been trying to figure out why less than 10% of the division participates in division activities. Is it because the activities are boring and uninteresting?

As you may or may not know, your division is pretty well self-sustaining financially, thanks to the profits of our Highwheeler shows. Only occasionally do we have an activity so expensive that we have to charge for it to defray the expense. The idea of having NMRA divisions is to bring the fun of railroading down from a national organization to a personal level so you can meet and enjoy your neighbors with the same interests. But enough from this old Program Trainmaster and on to what we have planned for your enjoyment at little or no expense to you. The only thing we ask of our members is to come and enjoy your division. We want to meet you.

Thanks.

Art Roth

P.S.: Need suggestions from you guys on what you want to do and see.

Sunday, September 19  
Illinois Railway Museum, Union, Illinois

Probably everyone is aware that Union is one of the Midwest's best operating railroading museums. The 19th is on their schedule as a Special Events Day. Don't miss it. Come out and do some 1 to 1 railroading with the Fox Valley. (We want you to feel you're with friends when you're with your division.)

Meet at Palatine Hobby (Regency Plaza, Palatine, Illinois). Bus leaves at 9:00 a.m. Call Art Roth 708-577-4430 or Scott Hicks 708-438-9109 for reservations.

Sunday, October 17, 12:30 p.m.  
Midwest Railroad Modelers, Batavia, Illinois

One of the finest, largest and completely scenicked operating layouts. This private club's layout is rarely open to the public and is a must see for any railroad or model railroad fan. The layout features Midwestern railroading at its finest. It runs through farm country, small towns with their grain elevators and lumber yards to small cities and their industries to big city yards and facilities. A must see to believe! Call Art Roth 708-577-4430 or Scott Hicks 708-438-9109 for reservations.

Meet at Palatine Hobby. Bus leaves at 12:30 p.m.

Sunday, November 17, 1:30 p.m.  
Dean Frytag  
Morava Field House, Prospect Heights, Illinois

Dean Frytag, truly a *dean* of model railroading. This name is a familiar one among most model railroaders. He has graciously consented to come in and visit with the Fox Valley Members for a Sunday afternoon. The Sunday before Thanksgiving. A great way to start a Thanksgiving holiday week. Dean's program will feature grain elevators and heavy industrial facilities such as steel mills.

Dean has developed an association with many modeling companies because of his expertise. They come to him for advice when developing their product lines. He will bring three industrial building kits as door prizes and 30% certificates for Fox Valley members.

Don't miss him. He's really a great guy and a very informative speaker.

Saturday, December 18, 5:00 p.m.  
El Ride — Christmas Magic Carpet Ride

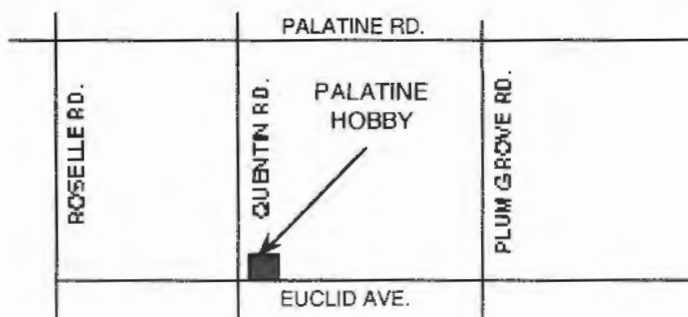
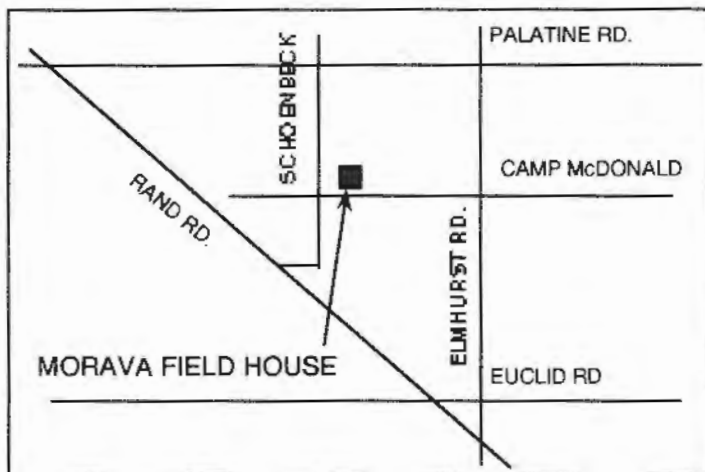
An absolutely don't miss trip on the El. Beginning in Wilmette at the north end of the Evanston line, all the way around the Loop on the elevated structure viewing the city's spectacular Christmas Light display at this magical time of the year. Leaving the Loop on the Ravenswood line with a little street running with flashing lights and gates at grade crossings, by private cars and a hand picked crew. This trip takes about three hours. No stops except for a completely restored 1890 station over Wells Street.

This completely private V.I.P. ride by private cars is very expensive. So, in order to defray the expense to your division treasury we will have to ask \$10.00 per person. First come, first on list. This trip will accommodate about 90 people, 45 per car — 2 cars. A minimum of 60 persons is needed for this trip. This will only pay about half the cost. The division will pick up the rest. Send your reservations and check to the division by October 15, 1993.

Meet at Palatine Hobby. Board buses at 5 p.m., return at 10 p.m.

Sunday, January 16, 1:30 p.m.  
Jeff Kehoe, caboos expert  
Morava Field House, Prospect Heights, Illinois

Jeff puts on an absolutely great show on cabooses, early history through disuse, with an emphasis on the Milwaukee Road. He is an expert on Milwaukee Road cabooses and no Milwaukee Road fan should miss this program. A great program for all railfans. Now realize there's two ends to every train and the hind end can be every bit as exciting as the head end.



# Flight of the Mighty El

Heads bobbed and weaved trying to look around the high-backed school bus seats.

"Where is it?"

"Over there!"

"Where, I don't see them?"

"They're across the street, through the station."

The conventioners piled out of the school buses and headed toward the station, marched through the turnstyle, passed the newsstand, out onto the platform, and boarded the two elevated cars that were to take us on a magic carpet ride.

Somehow I thought the cars would be green and white. I, like a lot of people hadn't been on the El for ten or fifteen years.

We started in Wilmette at ground level, and were soon climbing above the streets. We picked up speed, heading for the Chicago Loop.

I had the best seat in the car. My private guide, Jerry Hoffman sat next to me. He knew every street, building, and lamp post. He pointed out where he had worked for many years, and all the landmarks.

Tom Hoffman wandered up and down the cars all smiles. The trip was perfect. All your planning can go wrong. That was not the case on this trip.

Steel wheels on steel track rumbled smoothly toward Chicago as the sun went down. The conductor ordered the motorman to turn out the interior lights, and the light show began.

High rise buildings lit up to the right of us. T.V. towers flashed to the left of us. Street lights popped on, as well as, kitchen and hallway lights in the houses on the edge of the

track.

A rainbow of colors were represented by the neon signs that were everywhere.

The light show intensified as we snaked past the stations like a phantom ship, dark and mysterious, toward the lights of downtown Chicago.

As we approached the Merchandise Mart, and crossed the Chicago River, no one could stay in their seats. The view from the El, at night is like no other. The marble, granite, and brick buildings soar like canyons high overhead. The Elevated holds you on a pedestal up above the clutter of noisy streets below. The tracks go everywhere. Neat pairs running in a grand plan. I'd like to see the control board on this layout.

We stopped at Quincy Station. We had to stop to and catch our breath. Flash bulbs popped like a Hollywood opening night. Art Roth and I had our picture taken with the Mighty El as our backdrop. Every one lined up to have their picture taken in front of the Magic Carpet Ride. We boarded the cars like children chattering in a school yard.

The motorman switched onto the Ravenswood line and we headed back north. The chatter started to die down. The flashing street gates told us we were coming down to earth and the ride would soon be over. I watched the faces of the passengers as their faces flashed red, a warm glow of melancholy settled in around the eyes. Everyone gathered in small groups, looking out the windows for a last look.

The trip on the El at night is a kind of magic. It's like no other trip, yet for little more than a buck you can buy a ride any night. Sharing the magic carpet ride with friends who love and appreciate trains is part of the magic.

Thanks for letting me ride a small corner of the carpet.

*Richard Boettcher*

**Fox Valley Division**  
P.O. Box 1535  
Arlington Heights, IL 60006



Thomas A & Peter T Hoffman  
Superintendent  
691 Kenilworth Ct.  
Des Plaines IL 60016-3143