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Fox Valley Division
Midwest Region - NMRA
P.O. Box 1535
Arlington Heights, IL 60005-1535

The Semaphore

Fox Valley Division • MWR • NMRA

Second Vote on the New FVD By-Laws

Inserted in last month's Semaphore was a reduced copy of the proposed By-Laws. The current By-Laws call for votes on two consecutive Business meetings. September's meeting/field trip accounted for the first vote, and the first vote passed. October's meeting will be the second vote. Get out your magnifying glasses, read through the By-Laws and be ready to vote at October's meetings.

Hide That Helix!

One of the most interesting universal truths of model Railroading is that every solution creates one or more new problems. Perfect example: the Helix.



The helix solves the problem of smoothly changing elevations in a layout. But the helix is not very prototypical, unless you model amusement parks. Come to this month's meeting and see some ways to handle this problem.

Jim Osborn's HO Scale C&NW 1960-ish Model Railroad Layout.

[Editor's Note: Jim Osborne sent me this article so that he could share his layout with the rest of the FVD. Why not share your layout? Send me a description of your layout, the era you model, and any interesting points, and I'll include it in a forthcoming Semaphore. Send it to Saviano@att.net Include the words "FVD Semaphore" and I'll give it the attention it deserves. Don't consider yourself a Hemmingway? Don't worry, I'll add the words to connect the facts.]

The track plan for the HO scale Chicago and Northwestern 1960ish layout design came to be on a Macintosh 128kB computer using Mac Paint software in Hampshire, United Kingdom. I was on an overseas assignment. It seemed like the right thing to do while being separated from the hands-on aspects of the hobby for 3 years.

The "folded dog bone" layout in the spare bedroom had to be torn down so our house could be rented during the UK assignment. Since the room was already designated as the "train room," the 10 by 14 foot space seemed like a logical place to start. The first items to fix on the new layout were the usual suspects: a longer main line in combination with a larger main line minimum radius. In order to accomplish that, something had to change. I had read several Model Railroader articles about multi-

This Year's Remaining Events

October 16, 2005
1:30pm, Gary Morava Center
General Meeting

Clinic – Hide that Helix
Contest– Cabooses

November 13, 2005
Trip to Train Fest
– Details to be announced
No Contest

December 18, 2005
1:30pm, Gary Morava Center
General Meeting

Clinic – 5 minute clinics – Open Mike
Night
Contest– Train-related photography

January 15, 2006
1:30pm, Gary Morava Center
General Meeting

Clinic – Researching the Prototype
Contest– Passenger Cars

February 19, 2006
1:30pm, Gary Morava Center
Clinic – Details to be announced
Contest– Structures

level layout construction and helix designs. Both seemed certain to accommodate the longer main line - but what to do about the main line radius? After further thought it became obvious; the bedroom closets had to go. That liberated crucial space allowing the design to go forward. All I needed to do was convince my wife that this was a good idea. When she succumbed to the voice of reason, I began the grand plan.

Today the pike is a reality. It is a dual level, wall mounted shelf design, that sports a single track main line that is about 300 feet or 5 scale miles long. With moderate 24 inch minimum radius main line curves, 1.5 percent maximum grades and a 4 layer, 36 inch radius double track corner helix connecting the levels, it fits nicely into the new 10 by 17 foot space with reasonable access aisles.

Building every layout is a journey, not a destination. 99% of the track is complete and fully operational: only lacking are 2 industrial areas and an engine facility which will poke into the center of the room. The backdrops are installed; the entire helix, the return loops above and below the helix as well as 10 adjacent feet of main line all have completed scenery. Only 70 more feet of scenery to go! The layout runs on DCC, has block occupancy detection circuitry installed and ready for signaling. Let's take a quick main line tour.

The number 1695 Fairbanks Morse "Baby Trainmaster" idles at the front of the two engine consist ready to pull the daily 25 car taconite ore run. With it, we can tour the main line beginning from the layout's lowest point. At a 36 inch elevation from the floor, the target board shows green below the cliffs hiding the helix. 1695 powers north, following the main around a loop outside and below the layout's helix. Shortly past the signal board,

it enters a bore into the tree covered bluffs and slips under the helix to begin a long and continual 1.5 percent climb ultimately to the return loop on top of the helix. As it exits the low level bore, 1695 joins the parallel southbound main line and continues the climb north. Rumbling over a double crossover switch that accommodates train reversing at one end of the layout, it approaches the 10 foot long, six track stub storage yard and 25 car yard feed, accessible from the south bound main line side. Two train room walls later 1695 crosses the Wisconsin River on a 2900 scale foot, triple track, plate girder bridge. (This bridge diorama is hinged and drops down to allow entry into the room from the door way.) At a 40 inch elevation, 1695 heads parallel to the other long wall of the room, passing the soon-to-be-developed industrial area and ore loading facility, before entering the lower tunnel bore into the helix, (just above the point where it started). 1695 has now completed one circuit around the room. Three and a half helix loops later, 1695 emerges from the helix at an elevation of 54 inches. It passes a Wisconsin farm house, the Ruter Grain Cooperative, the local lumber company and a small fuel oil distribution business, as well as parallels the upper layer main line passing track, a taconite unloading facility and storage yard.

This ore train will not unload but continue north for other parts today. As 1695 continues the climb, it crosses the 2700 scale foot long, double track, truss bridge that serves as the duck-under to enter the train room. Now at 57 inches above the floor, and over what is the Wisconsin River on the lower level, 1695 heads into a loop above the helix. At 58 inches elevation, it is at the apex of the layout and has finished its second complete circuit around the room. The main line loops around over the top of the helix, crosses a great gorge deck

bridge, doubles back on itself, and heads south bound, paralleling the north bound main 1695 has just traversed. As the brakes are set for the long grind down, 1695 passes the location for a round house and engine facility (still on the to-do list). After two more loops around the room, the consist is back where it started.

Since becoming active in the Fox Valley Division, I now know that I should have spent more time thinking about complementary industries or ones that serve one another on the layout. I wish I'd added more such industries and tried to fit a staging yard somewhere in the layout. (Although, I recently got an idea

from a friend about dropping two loops down under the existing helix to create a third, lower shelf for staging.) Visiting other FVD member layouts has taught me such improvements would lend to better operations. Any next layout would also use code 83 rail. Hummm.....I wonder if there is another wall that can be eliminated??

Since this tour is only a verbal glimpse - give me a call and come over for a real view and a hand-on-the throttle experience. Green boards ahead.

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Call for Layouts!

Layouts needed for 2006 NMRA MWR convention

One of the important parts of any convention is the layout tours. They provide inspiration for others' layouts, and give you the perfect opportunity to share your layout. Add your layout to the tour!

Fox Valley Division Board of Directors

Superintrndent Rich Sweet Rsweet@pactiv.com	847-550-1399
Assistant Superintendent Harry Sorenson hrcconsult@juno.com	847-259-2906
Chief Clerk Lief Hansen lhansen@d211.org	847-437-7124
Paymaster Tim Kleimeyer kleimeyert@comcast.net	847-426-4732
Public Relations Trainmaster Jim Osborn jlosborn@comcast.net	847-397-4338
Membership and Publications Trainmaster Rick Saviano Saviano@att.net	847-429-0804
Achievements and Contests Trainmaster Donn Branstrator donnandanneb@aol.com	847-381-6183
Clinics & Programs Trainmaster David Leider sooauthor@aol.com	847-253-7484
Ways and Means Trainmaster Walter Radtke wagx2@email.com	847-255-2977

This Year's Remaining Events (continued)

March 4-5, 2006
9:00am-5:00pm, Harper College High Wheeler
 No Contest

April 23, 2006
1:00pm, Gary Morava Center Annual Business Meeting
 Contest- to be announced
 Contest- Maintenance-of-way cars

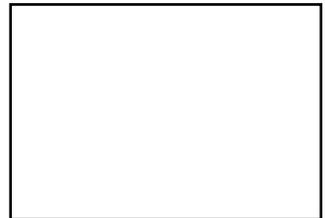
April 28-30, 2006
Midwest Region Convention Woodfield Hyatt
 Details- to be announced

May 21, 2006
Field Trip – Operating session at Ted Schepf's "Fox Valley O Scale"
 No Contest

Location for General Meetings

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

The meeting schedule is listed in this Semaphore, and will be posted on our web site, www.mwr-nmra.org/fvd. If there are changes to the schedule, or if additional information needs to be disseminated to the membership, you will find it there.



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