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The Outhouse for a Clubhouse

Newsletter - #4 – December 2013



AN EVOCATIVE INSIGHT INTO MODEL RAILROADING
By; *Barrie L. Roberts* www.dewintonstation.com

- The Winter Valley Regional Railway – WVRR

*The story of the **Winter Valley Regional Railway** is the story of a few ordinary people determined to make something out of nothing. When the CNR applied for abandonment of about 120 miles of track; the farmers, ranchers and local industrial leaders in and around the town of Winter Valley were faced with the loss of a vital rail service. A service that was a real life line for much of the year due to the long winters, the lingering wet spring, the early fall - and dirt roads. And so the **WVRR** was created.... the rest is history.*

The following photo tour is lovingly produced for the benefit of those in the large-scale fraternity by Dave Winter of Peachland, B.C., in his words and from his own experience. BLR

***Dave-** Seen as a simple introduction I promise not to dwell on makes and models, trials and tribulations or linier and square feet. All those things are obvious here and where they are not, it doesn't matter. What I will do is walk us through a short album, have some fun and talk about the history and philosophy of my Winter Valley over the past 41 wonderful years.*



WINTER VALLEY – Main Street it's September 1975 a picture in time.

My layout isn't about actual trains at all, never has been really. It's always been about the relationship of people in small often isolated prairie towns and the railways that were their bread and butter. It's September 1975, hike or drive through the low rolling hills of eastern Alberta and that old cliché is on your mind and in your eyes. Prairie skyscrapers peeking over the horizon every 15 miles down that dirt road remind us of the days when engines needed water and coal to move and a 15 mile round trip with a wagon load of wheat was a long day's work for both you and your team of horses. My railroad is about those people and their children's children – that story is also about me.



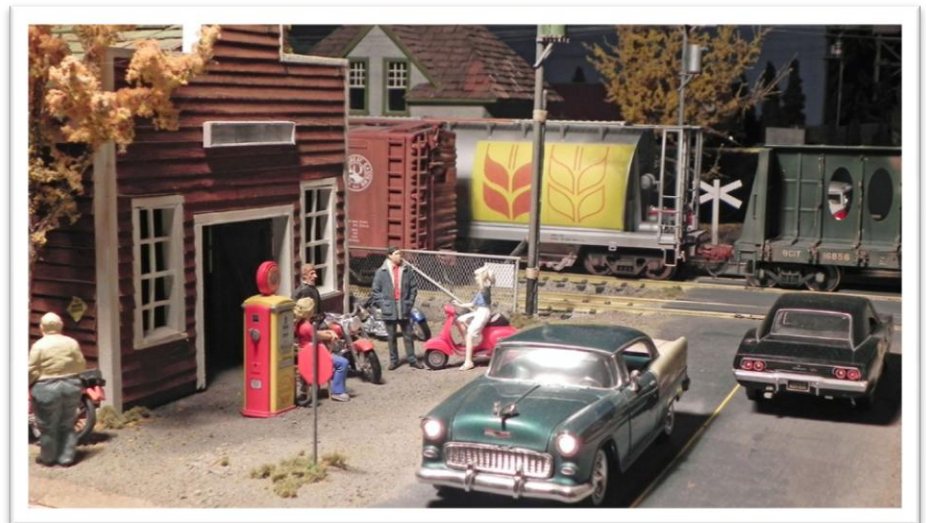
The package came with three CN 1500 hp diesel engines, an old caboose, a small well equipped workshop along with a few formerly retired railway men.

Regular daily operations began September 14th, 1972.

We should take a walk around Winter Valley while we're here.

Just the railway related parts of town of course because I know my audience and I have to stay handy, that's my office on the west side. The iconic CNOR 3rd class depot has been designated an historic building. I love that. It's truly a classic and in fine condition after some 70 years of service but then again, I cannot get air conditioning installed without the queens' personal blessing.

I am the (COMO) Chief Operations & Maintenance Officer when it's spelled out on a business card and it's mostly about a guy who keeps things together. Sarah is off to a wedding in Lloyd. Who fills in? Mike has tickets to the Grey Cup. Will the furnace last a week? There is not enough power for the fall harvest. Can the mine at Colder delay a shipment - or two? Do I lease from CN? Should we buy that or build it? Will engineers find the bridge at Smoky River still sound? Will the coffee be fresh down at the bike shop? I love the old bike shop. It's just across the tracks from my office and I know Angus and everyone there. The place was a blacksmith shop in the steam and horses days, then a failed machine shop, and now, in keeping with the times, a motorcycle fix-it.



Cover photo ->>

Next to the station is the original enclosed water tank, now maintained by the Winter Valley Historical Society and farther along, the former section house that's still in fine shape but in private hands. I told you about the bike shop. The Winter Valley freight shed, lower right, is still in use and getting busier now that the oil industry is ramping up in the area. Much of what they use is brought in by rail, it's those roads again.



There's a busy team track at the far right, only last fall the co-operative put in a small facility that enables local farmers to load and unload seed and grain directly to and from covered hoppers. They do it all themselves and that takes a real load off the fellows in the elevator, particularly at this time of year and running right through January. The town maintains a really nice park over by the water tank. The weekend beer league ball games are popular and High School football has become the sport of choice for the real athletes and the park is full of spectators on Friday nights. The tennis court is always busy but the swings are in need of repair.

Looking east, past the station on the left, you'll see a reefer being loaded at the team track. Once a year there is a cull of the local buffalo herd, the meat is butchered here and sent out to Manitoba where it can be sold to the public. You can count on some of it staying around but not with the approval of the area cattlemen, as if two dozen buffalo will somehow destroy the livelihood of ranchers with 1000 head of cattle - Oh well, that's local politics.



The big co-operative grain elevator is on the right. It's still the largest wooden structure for miles around and it's managing to hold onto life even with the terminal in Pearson in full operation – and growing.

Closer on the right is the back lot behind the bike shop, it has a story all its own. A junk yard really, full of things that are too good to toss out but not needed enough to ever use. Except for the old woody of course, that will never be used and should be thrown out - It won't be. Angus said he found a family of owls in there a few years back and they couldn't be disturbed, no one else ever saw them but the old car stayed. Then there were the cats, a family of cats took over and everybody saw them, so Angus fed them and kept them warm and they soon populated. He also feeds a few drifters of the human kind when they stop by. A picnic table has been set up – with ashtrays even – and a plastic tablecloth, on a sun soaked autumn day I've been known to enjoy it myself.

Grande Prairie is our maintenance and overhaul center, it's there because CN left it there even though our real population center is Winter Valley. It's not an issue we find hard to deal with, we store our maintenance equipment there and look after all of the servicing of the GP9s sending them out only for the most serious work. That is a blessing passed on to us through the hiring of retired maintenance workers who still live in the valley, as time goes by they will be in short supply and more of our heavy work will be farmed out.... but for now! The new SD40-2's are serviced here as well day to day, but nearly all the real work is done in Edmonton. There is also a small station /freight shed that gets used by oil workers and a single large UGG grain elevator that is still switched by CN so we all get to see some of the latest in motive power on the Winter Valley track lines from time to time.



I remember seeing the first GP28-2W when it came around on cold weather trials, what a beautiful piece of machinery that was. My guys wanted me to find some money right away so they could custom build real comfort cabs on those old geeeps - for safety reasons of course! The tracks run right through town cutting Home Street, Pearson's main drag, right in half so you see, we don't have a wrong side of town at all. The odd church goers' might disagree though. Our only pub is on the south side and there's a trailer park

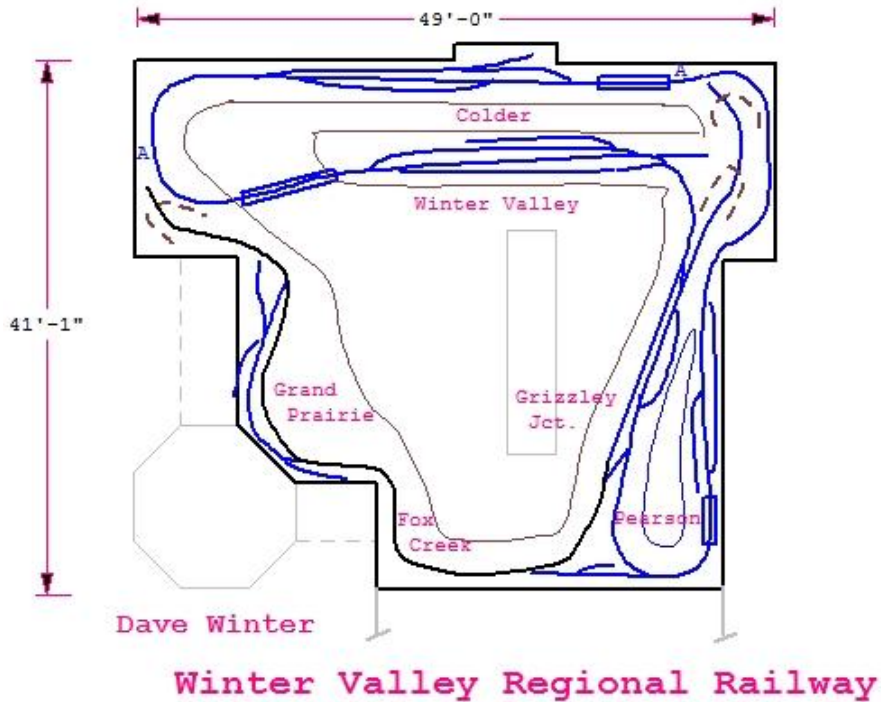
as well. I have an old trailer there, it's easy to keep clean and it doesn't leak. I moved in there when I took this job and I was thinking it wouldn't last so I put off buying a place. That was nearly five years ago. McLeod and I, that's my dog, are comfortable and when Loree' comes to town, my girlfriend, we move downtown to a hotel. That's a picture of her below shopping at the IGA store, she says I don't eat well so she stocks the pantry with fresh fruit and vegetables as soon as she gets off the bus, then we eat out for the whole weekend - on Tuesdays I give most of it away.

Pearson Tower, just cut off on the left of the photo, was once a main control point at the Junction of Pearson and Hudson's Mill plus being an important rail line into Fox. Now it serves as an away from home office for me if there are issues in town and any engine crew lay over.

Most of the railway related work here is in support of the



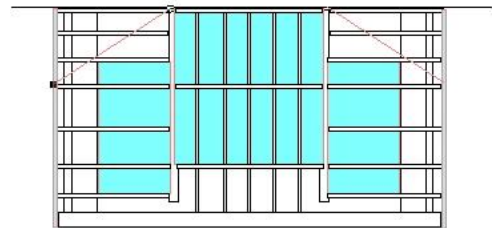
big grain terminal at Hudson, that was built five years ago and it signaled the demise of at least a dozen wooden relics of another time. Hudson Terminals are negotiating the purchase of their own switch engine so business must be good. And that's where I live.



To view a YouTube video of the Dave Winter layout go to;
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HikRv7WHTcE>



*The **“Outhouse Clubhouse”** renovation project is moving along albeit weekends only, for a few hours in total per week with the usual group of accomplices doing the hardest portion of the work for the balance of the elusive club group. I must commend those that have shown for the work parties and/or have provided materials for the progress to date. In particular to my G-train buddy **Dan Ellis** that has worked on the project tirelessly from the beginning and just provided a truck-load of insulation from his employment that was an unexpected bonus.*



Overview of the 2x6 framing plan for the glass roof extension to support the anticipated snow loads.

Motivational e-mail- sent October 28th

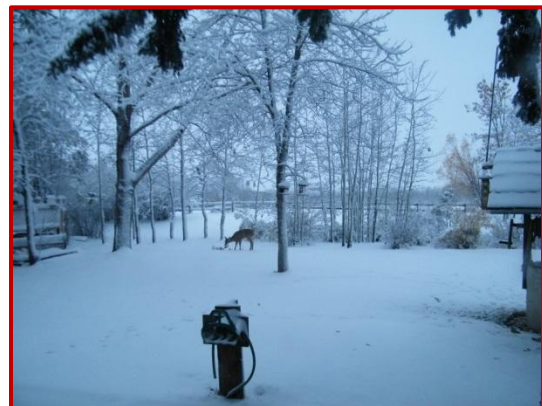
Hi guys, Check out the size of Jytte's rake compared to the pile of mulched leaves - that was Saturday, the picture with the deer is Sunday (the next day). That is the new rake I just got her, she wears them down to nothing left - and at 77 she puts **"everyone" to shame!** That pile goes back at least 20', we got it done just in time. Her cat always stands guard over her. October 26th – 27th, 2013 weekend.



Sorry – not negotiable!

This Danish lady is likely one of the hardest working persons at the **DSGR**. She not only cares for two acres of garden and landscape, to include the large garden railways, but maintains the home front with vigour. If you ever get in her way all I can say is **"Be very afraid!"**

Again Saturday morning +21 degrees then Sunday afternoon –15 degrees, working on **the Outhouse for a Clubhouse**, check out the glass roof of my design, made from four patio door sliders (2@4' + 2@3' X 7'). Must now get some 2x6 joist supports and extra framing under the glass or it could all come crashing down, if we get another heavy wet snow load like today. It feels like a super



sized sunroom when standing at the end with all the glass and no other buildings in view - just trees and open spaces. That's my friend Dan Ellis and Martin Dawe from the British group at left (next page) working on the floor they did it all themselves practically, also my design (worked well) three others and myself put time in too this weekend, mostly at the roof end. I started off with my tractor to scrape down the gravel to level the ground. The building is now 30' long, we added another 11 feet to the length. You can see the pallets we used for the wall

framing (that worked perfectly) which we will double up now after insulation from the outside. All the windows came from my neighbor and I scored all the TGI's for the floor project free plus a bunch of plywood as well.

Whining and sniveling works best, begging is humiliating and not my style, but I have been known to cry on demand if need be. I becoming a pro at it trust me!



Plans to paint the walls and ceiling sky blue with clouds, for taking photos of the layout when completed.

Benefits of club memberships.

Repeat info- It is my desire to distribute these newsletters as an added benefit of belonging to your own clubs, therefore I am sending to your club coordinators to fan out to the members. Hopefully you will find the messages informative and enlightening. If you do not receive by that means please send me a personal e-mail request to be added to my mail out list. – Thank you. info@dewintonstation.com

I invite anyone to submit articles about model railroading to help make this new endeavor into journalism interesting and informative. Not wishing to take anything away from individual club news broadcasts but rather to **feature** private and club layouts to **showcase what you have been doing, to others in the province of Alberta and outreaching to out of province clubs that would benefit from our experiences, as inspirational or motivational encouragement.**

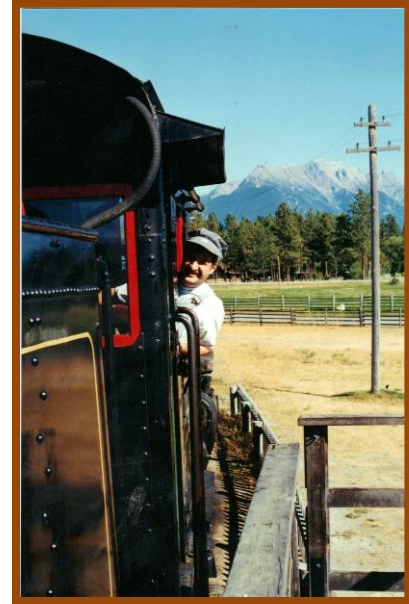
This just in; Our coordinator for the **RMGR club** Stanley just gave me a hot tip on another movie production that has a railway piece within, being filmed around Calgary or in Southern Alberta. I have followed up with a call to express my interests to be involved in the production. Only time will tell where this could lead, now that is just another excellent reason to retain memberships with train clubs.

Guest writer-

It is my pleasure to introduce you to my friend and prolific writer **Larry Bucan**. Larry worked as a train engineer for the **Canadian Pacific Railway** and writes an amazing blog at <http://railwayearth.com/> his personal albeit tragic story at http://railwayearth.com/?page_id=5.

His amazing story is nothing short of a miracle and testament to his courage to face life's ongoing challenges, if you take into account his current personal life struggles as a quadriplegic. My admiration for this man cannot be measured in words alone and I have asked Larry to share some of his own experiences and humorous short stories of the railroad life. The emphasis being on **"short stories"** as you will see within his blog he can go into explicit detail and we just don't have that kind of

space to offer him here. Larry is an avid collector of railway watches and timepieces as well as railway artifacts. He has accepted my invitation to write some stories for us but is currently recovering from complications and a stay in the



**Larry Bucan at controls
CPR engine # 1077**



Larry Bucan at Fort Steel with CPR # 1077

I wish him a speedy recovery and looking forward to his anticipated pending contributions. This is an extraordinary man indeed that has the brain of a computer and now runs his computer by his brain and voice commands.

Please review Larry's blog in the interim.

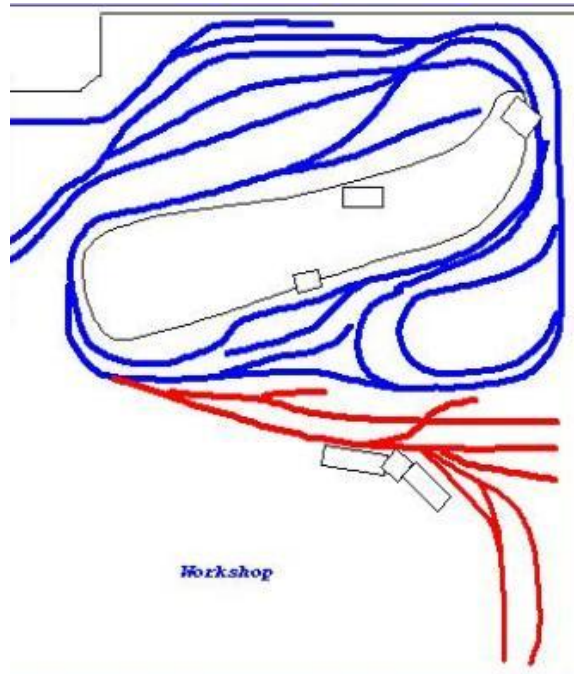
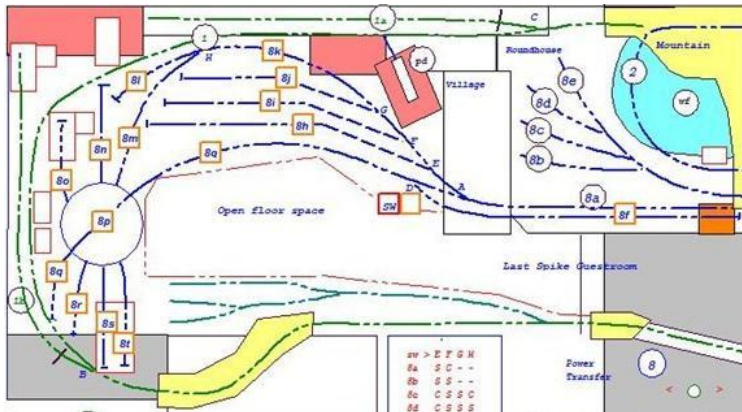
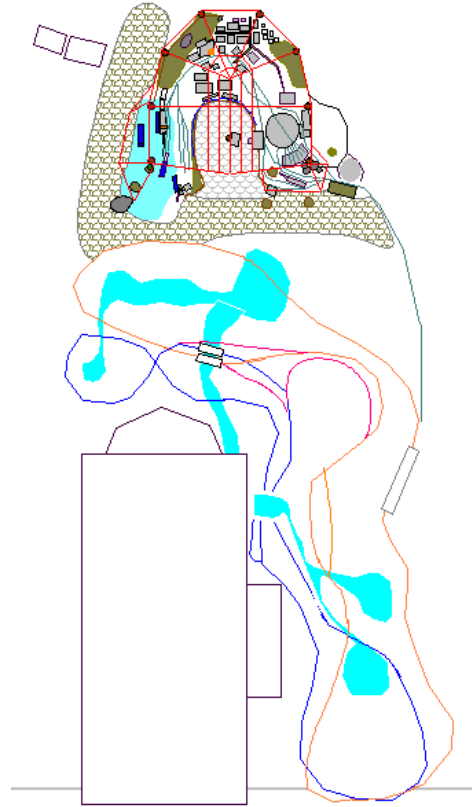


Your participation here at DeWinton Station.

If you find that you would like to take an active part in the ongoing projects here at **DeWinton Station** please call or e-mail me personally for more information. My layouts are available on request to run your trains by appointment. Once I get to know you perhaps my trains as well, a certain amount of maintenance of way will be required before the running of trains outdoors, track debris clearing and light polishing of the rails is the least to be expected.

The drawing seen here at right shows the track plans for the three conjoined exterior layouts including the Skaguay town enclosure building.

The **D-Stn interior layout** drawing is roughly represented by joining two pictures together as seen here below. Constant yearly upgrades have made keeping up the main drawing a challenge. However I think you get the picture – **or two!**

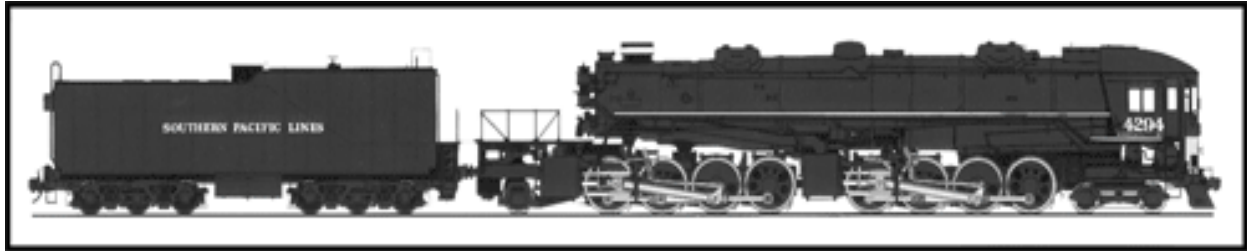


ADVERTISEMENTS:

This section will be available to display items and events for circulation to registered readers there is nothing to display this month.

Winter activities are set to be underway – consider joining in with myself on evenings and weekends and help with some of the Skaguay town building projects or basement layout scenery improvements.

- Here is one conversion project you may find intriguing, it will be a joint venture effort between the inspiring Ron Senek in Colorado USA, Ray Webster in Kamloops BC and myself here in DeWinton AB.



SOUTHERN PACIFIC-CAB FORWARD



Ron Seneks - Cab Forward conversion

It is the subject of an article I previously wrote about converting a stock Aristocraft 2-8-8-2 Mallet with an eight wheeled coal tender into a Cab Forward 4-8-8-2 with a 12 wheeled oil burner tender.

To view the original article titled **“Sharing ideas with other hobbyists Pt 20**, just click on the hyperlinked blue arrow.



I would like to take this opportunity to wish you all a safe and joyous Christmas season, please consider starting a youngster in the hobby of model railroading or craft making projects and mentor his/her progress along. It will be an investment in their future that will pay back annual returns in years of personal enjoyment.

Barrie L. Roberts

Check out the closing picture of Lil William

For urgent contact with Barrie Roberts
Call 403-680-7061
Or e-mail info@dewintonstation.com

Closing photos –



*Herbert
Stroh's
spectacular
O-gauge
CPR layout
will be
featured
within the
**January
2014 issue**
be sure to
see this O-
gauge
marvel.*





This is one of the very personal reasons I am writing this newsletter and the topic of my Christmas message. Too bad for me he lives in Texas and not here.