

Fred Carlson, MMR #197



Fred is 47 and lives with his wife Susan, daughters Stephanie and Jennifer, three dogs and three cats. He also has a son named Fred in the USAF. Fred works for the Association of American Railroads as a senior research engineer specializing in air brake research. He previously served eight years with the Illinois Central Gulf Railroad as

an air brake inspector, locomotive foreman and car foreman. His biggest problem is fighting off many of his model railroading friends who have volunteered to carry his luggage on test trips. Fred feels very fortunate to be able to make a living in an industry that he loves.

Fred's been a model railroader and railfan as long as he can remember. His father used to take him down to the Soo Line depot in Lake Villa, Ill., to watch steam- and diesel-powered Soo passenger trains. He was about five then, and he's been hooked ever since. His dad was also a model railroader, and he gave Fred an American Flyer HO set for Christmas. Fred quickly modified the Pennsy 0-6-0 into a freelanced 2-6-0, and was off and running.

Fred's railroad is the Galena & Nob Hill, an upper Midwest shortline running from an IC connection near Chicago north through Middle Earth to the shores of Lake Stupendous. The railroad also connects with the Soo Line and with CN and CP via a ferry operation that doubles nicely as one of the fiddle yards. The G&NH is set in 1953 and uses medium-size steam engines; 4-6-0s for passenger service, 2-6-2s and 2-8-0s for freight and light 2-6-6-2s for coal and ore trains. Fred began the railroad when he was attending the University of Illinois in 1974. The railroad was built in sections, so that moves required by his railroad career would not require constant demolition and rebuilding. The oldest portion of his layout is about 18 years old, while the newest is about two years old. The present G&NH has evolved, much like a prototype railroad, so he thinks it has the prototype flavor of a real railroad.

The G&NH is operated with timetable and train orders, and a regular group operates the railroad once per month. The railroad operates with about 175 freight cars, 15 passenger cars, 20 steam engines and two gas-electrics. All car movements, including head-end passenger traffic, are controlled with 4-sided way-bills and car cards. Electrical control is conventional with three mainline memory walk-around throttles and three yard throttles. The G&NH is 100 percent scenicked, and is now in a stage of refinement. Older buildings and cars are gradually being replaced with scratchbuilt models and craftsman kits.

Fred holds AP certificates in Motive Power, Cars, Structures, Scenery, Civil, Electrical, and Association Volunteer. He's very much into operation and a regular at operating sessions on Jim Kubajaks' Fall River Line and on Northwest Chicago suburban layouts of Steve Karas, Steve King, Mike Berry and Ray Thomas.

Fred's other avocation is as a railroad and steamship artist. He studied art for three years at the Art Institute of Chicago before a fracas in Vietnam required that he spend four years in the USAF. Fred decided on mechanical engineering and a railroad career because he didn't want to have to die or cut off an ear to make money in art. He sells enough paintings to keep him in railroad engineering and barterers some paintings for the brass engines on his layout. 