1957

One Flight Down to Fantasy

William Smith
Iowa State College

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Here comes the 7:30—Brian Anderson, Karen Schwartz and John Ulmer get a first hand view of a speeding passenger train.

Model railroading calls for close supervision. Dr. Schwartz is chief engineer—Brian Anderson is second in command.

BEGINNING EARLY this month and continuing until the end of the Christmas season, the department stores will be crowded with children flocking to Toyland to see what Santa has in store for them. There will be dolls and doll houses, space-suits, stuffed toys and in one particularly congested area, accurately scaled model trains.

Here will be a wonderland of reality. Sleek streamliners will glide smoothly around the track, and the near obsolete steam engines will puff along belching real smoke from their stacks. But the children’s complete enjoyment of this display will be marred by a wire screen separating them from these mechanical masterpieces.

Quite a different situation exists at the home of Dr. Frederick Schwartz, associate professor of modern languages. Here in a basement room is a railroad circling the four walls, and when Dr. Schwartz is operating it, you are literally in the middle. To enter the room, you must remove a portable section of track that crosses the doorway and connects with two permanent sections. You might say it is a matter of going in and closing the track behind you.

But this is not the only wonder of Dr. Schwartz’s railroad. It is a railroad with a German atmosphere. (Continued page 10)
Down to Fantasy

Tiny street lights flicker, reflecting the quiet loneliness of a railroad station after dark.

Heavy traffic along the "sauerkraut route" complicates fruit storage.

Look out, Karen!

by William Smith
Technical Journalism Senior
The engines and cars are models of prototypes used by the German National Railway. The landscape through which the trains travel is modeled after the landscape with which Dr. Schwartz was familiar during his childhood in Germany.

The children get into the act, too, for when they see the lights go on in the room it is a signal for them to run over and "help" Dr. Schwartz. Of course he's not Dr. Schwartz to them. They call him "Fither," an unacademic but wholly affectionate version of father given to him by his oldest daughter and adopted by everyone in the neighborhood.

Landscape to Scale

With the children's "help," Dr. Schwartz built his railroad on concrete ledges along the south and east walls of the room. The landscape includes a tunnel built into one corner, a railroad station and factory combined, an overpass, railroad bridges crossing a realistic looking stream and a kaffeegarten (coffee garden). All of these Dr. Schwartz built to scale without plans, using a practiced sense of proportion that is developed only by doing.

Along the other two walls of the room, space limitations have dictated the route of the railroad. On the west side the double track runs over Dr. Schwartz's workbench. And on the north wall is perhaps the most compromising of situations. Here the "Sauerkraut Route," as Dr. Swartz refers to it with a grin, runs through a cupboard containing Mrs. Schwartz's canned goods.

Some may consider model railroading a childish pastime. But Dr. Schwartz has a ready answer for them. Some people, he says, paint for the fun of it and others do modeling. An artist works in two dimensions height and width, and a sculptor works in three dimensions—height, width and depth. With a chuckle he adds that he does all of that and uses the fourth dimension, time, as well by having his trains run at scale speeds and on scaled time schedules.

Enchanted Village

Time put to scale is brought out also in the naming of a village for the layout. The village, still in the planning stage, will be named Germelshausen. According to the German story by the same name, this enchanted village comes to life for only one day every hundred years. You can be sure, however, that even at scale time, the children will see to it that Dr. Schwartz's Germelshausen will come to life more often.

For the neighborhood children have their own philosophy about time, and it can be stated in one word—now! They know, too, that "Fither" always manages to have time to run the wonderful railroad for them. And when they say, "Just once more time around Fither, please!" you can be sure that Toyland and St. Nicholas exist for them throughout the year.

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