

## Rail enthusiast Painter wanted to hop a train at 10

Written by Stephanie Groves

Friday, November 15, 2013 9:16 PM -

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**BY STEPHANIE GROVES**

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DELPHOS — Delphos resident Joe Painter grew up in Moulton, Ohio, during a time in history when the railroad tracks running through his hometown were called the New York Central branch line, which ran from Bellefontaine to Indianapolis and was part of a railroad operating in the northeastern and midwestern United States headquartered in New York City. Day by day, the sight and sound of the train drew on Painter's curiosity and when he was just 10 years old, he knew he wanted to hop on the train and take a ride. That's when Painter became a railfan.

Painter's hobby began soon after, when he received a Marx model train for Christmas.

"Model locomotives were bought assembled but you had to custom-paint them," he explained. "When I got started, it was \$2.50 for a plastic model and now locomotives cost \$15-\$50 and up to \$350 for one with sound."

While in high school, he was asked what he wanted to be and his answer was 'a railroad

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engineer', which Painter said was a unique answer. Instead, Painter volunteered for the service and went to Germany rather than waiting for the draft and ending up on the front lines in Vietnam.

"After I was discharged, I was told by a friend who worked for the railroad, that if I would have filled out the paperwork, I could have become an engineer," he explained.

Painter has been working diligently on his hobby for 30 years. For the past four years, he has been working on his current HO scaled layout, which is comprised of 370 feet of track, hand-made signals and operates via electronic keyboard. He said the size of his layout is considered a medium to large.

At this time, he is in the process of re-creating and implementing the Dutch & Grain station that stood in his hometown when he was a kid into his layout.

"I'm starting to work on the landscaping now," he said. "I use ceiling tile to build mountains."

Painter said he learned a lot from Barry Warnecke while in The Putnam Association HO Club.

"He showed me the ropes and taught me value," he said. "We had about a dozen members."

Currently, Painter belongs to The Putnam Association of Railfans and enjoys participating in operating sessions, where he learns a lot while attending.

Painter said that model railroading has something for everyone — from woodworking to electrical and scenic artwork to model building — people of all ages enjoy the hobby. He said he loves promoting interests in younger enthusiasts — especially mentoring beginners with wiring.

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“After I had surgery, it was excellent therapy,” he said.

Painter said the fun part of building a layout is soldering and explained that sometimes things can go wrong — like a negative and a positive connection soldered together, which can fry a decoder real quick.

November is National Model Railroad Month, which started in 1971 and has continued to grow ever since. Starting with the earliest model railways, called "carpet railways" in the 1840s — which were model live steam railway locomotives with no track — to the electric toy trains in the early 19th century and continuing with some of today's cutting edge technology.