

Moving Stephen Cavanaugh's Western Pacific HO Layout Sections To the Western Pacific Railroad Museum

By Kerry Cochran

The Western Pacific Railroad HO Layout

Stephen Cavanaugh, a well-known modeler and Feather River Rail Society member, created his Western Pacific Railroad HO model layout in his three car garage at his home in Tracy, Ca.

His layout has appeared in the *Model Railroader* January 1994 issue and in the *Model Railroad Hobbyist* magazine in January 2011.

Stephen passed away on January 7, 2018.

Stephen Cavanaugh



Stephen Cavanaugh of Tracy, California, died Jan. 7 after a battle with cancer. He was 66.

Cavanaugh was born April 22, 1950. He began his career at Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory on April 14, 1980 as an electrician supporting the fire and life safety systems in the inspection, test and repair group for the Alarms Division. He retired April 15, 2011 after 31 years of dedicated service. Cavanaugh was a hard worker, was never in a hurry and was very precise and methodical. He cared about doing a good job and was loyal to doing just that up until the day of his retirement.

Cavanaugh had a passion for trains that developed in his early childhood years and spent a great deal of his life as a model railroad hobbyist traveling to various roadshows and exhibits. In fact, he was such an enthusiast that he almost perfectly replicated the western pacific railroads piece by piece. You can see the level of detail in action that was featured in the [Model Railroad Hobbyist magazine](#). This was one of his great achievements: "Steve's masterpiece", as one of his brothers put it.

Several modelers, including Robert Hoffman, Scott Inman, David Stanley, Doug Peterson, Patrick Davis and David Vipond started a project to save and move a small portion of Stephen Cavanaugh's Western Pacific Railroad model layout to the museum. When they ran into problems, Eugene Vicknair and I had several telephone conversations on how to go about saving this model layout.

Once it was clear if we did not move it by a certain date the layout sections would be forever be lost to the dumpster. With Eugene's help, I contacted the family and made arrangements to meet them so that I could get some measurements and see just what we were up against. Once that was done, I contacted Paul Finnegan and asked for his help (knowing he is in the Bay Area and is retired like me) we set a date and met with the family at Stephen home and prepared the remaining sections of the layout for transportation. (This in itself took 6 hours plus 2 hours travel time each way.)

Then on Sunday September 9th, with the help of Eugene, Eugene's friend Chris Kaprielian, Paul and myself, we loaded the layout sections onto a trailer. Paul and I then transported them to the museum. (We started at 7:30 AM and Paul and I arrived at the museum at 4:30 PM, another long day)

This is just some of the story line on how we moved sections of this HO layout.

The layout in all its grandeur, read about it in the January 2011 issue of *Model Railroad Hobbyist* magazine: <http://Model-railroad-hobbyist.com> and search for Stephen Cavanaugh.

The first time I saw the layout since it was taken apart. Saturday Sept 1st, 2018





I needed to take some measurements and see how big this section was. My original measurements were over 6 feet wide at the largest end, 3 feet at the smallest end and over 16 feet in length. It also was floor to ceiling tall.

It had to be condensed in order to move it in a reasonable manner.

I now understand why the first attempt to move this was an issue for the group. The layout was very large and tall, it would take more than one or two people to move and it had to be cut down from the ceiling and lowered in order to clear the garage door to get it out of the current location.

After taking the measurements and assessing the current condition of the sections, I was able to make arrangements with the family to return the following Wednesday, and with the help of Paul Finnegan, started to get the layout ready to be moved.

Wednesday Sept 5th, 2018



Working on the largest end of the layout, we were able to remove the portions that could not be saved and/or were damaged beyond repair and actually lead to nowhere (other parts removed).

We were able to get the largest end cut down to about 6 ½ feet, and added several supports to keep the top layer from falling.

Next we moved to the smaller end and added some supports so that we could cut one section away from the other section. (Cut the Spanish Creek Bridge away from the Keddie Wye.)





Now we have the two sections cut away from each other and ready to continue to add support members to help hold the rest of the layout together.

Sunday Sept. 9th, 2018 the first (smaller) section cut down and being moved.





Smaller section sitting in the Driveway waiting it's turn to be loaded on the trailer.



Next was the larger section's turn. Blocking with temporary supports and ready to move.



Moving the larger section onto the trailer.



Here's the moving crew, smiling now that it on the trailer.



All wrapped up and ready to move.



Final resting spot for now. Now the real work starts to restore the sections.

I need to say thank you to Stephanie and John Busam, Stephen's daughter and son-in-law for all the help in making this take place.

I need to say Thank you to the original crew who tried at the first attempt:

Robert Hoffman,
Scott Inman,
David Stanley,
Doug Peterson,
Patrick Davis, and
David Vipond.

Plus the FRRS Crew of:

Eugene Vicknair,
Paul Finnegan,
Eugene's friend, Chris Kaprielian

Please look for the next article on these HO layout sections as we restore them to a display at the Western Pacific Railroad Museum.