

The 4th Division of the Pacific Northwest Region of the
National Model Railroad Association Presents

The Skagit Valley & Whidbey NMRA Clinic

Wednesday, December 9th

The SV&W Model Railroading Clinic will meet at the Summer Hill location [165 SW 6th Ave] in Oak Harbor Wednesday, December 9th at 7:00pm for a clinic presented by Dick Haines.

Planning for the Future of Your Railroad After You've Gone (or you change hobbies or just want to downsize)

All of us that are in the model railroad hobby will, at some point, for many reasons, need to face the big question as to what to do with all that “stuff” you just couldn’t live without. As Dick says, that stuff includes :

Drills, paints, scale parts, DCC components, air brush, screw drivers, extra track, scale wood, plastic parts, switches, passenger cars, revenue cars, decals, paint brushes, wire, fuses, steam engines, buildings, diesel engines, coupler parts, nails, solvents, scale cars, rail ties, dozens of tiny containers of detail parts, colored paints, track spikes, scale trucks and buses, scale people, photographs, R.R. books, building plans, slides, magazines, scale trees, weathering chalks, oils and greases, Q tips, wheel sets, couplers, nail sets, miniature TV camera, unbuilt kits, styrene shapes, builders level, paint thinners, foliage, block signals, scale animals, switch machines, flashlights, etc., etc., etc. and etc. (and, if you have ever been to his layout, he has a lot of the etc. . . .)

Dick Haines will present a clinic on many subjects including: Ways to dispose of your model railroad stuff, appraising value, auctions, eBay, ways to document what you have (e.g., for insurance purposes), reasons to do it sooner than later, etc.



Dick Haines photo

This is a topic that needs to be addressed, but is usually swept under the rug - thank you, Dick for helping to bring light to this subject!

Once again, we will be meeting at San Remo Mediterranean Grill in Oak Harbor [421 NE Midway Blvd] for a pre-clinic dinner starting at 5:15 if you are interested. They have very good pizza, pasta and Spumoni!

On the calendar:

December 21 - January 1: 20th Annual WA State History Museum Model Train Festival, Tacoma see <http://www.washingtonhistory.org/visit/wshm/eventsprograms/festivals/trainfest/>

January 16-18, 2016: Plan on volunteering to help at the 4th Division's main fundraiser of the year: At the Pacific Science Center, **The 42nd Annual Model Railroad Show**, Contact: Jeff Moorman, 206-367-2377, kb7rr@arrrl.net

Feb. 27 - 28, Monroe: United NorthWest Model Railroad Club is hosting the **24th Annual Model Train Show and Marketplace** to benefit Snohomish County 4-H Foundation. The 2016 Show will be in the same buildings as the 2015 show in the Evergreen State Fairgrounds in Monroe, WA.

Our "sister" clinic, the Mount Vernon Model Railroad Clinic, meets every fourth Tuesday at the Mount Vernon Senior Center at 1401 Cleveland Street. **December 22 - This will be the last fourth Thursday as the clinic will move the SECOND Thursday beginning in January.** Contact Al Carter (360-399-1226 / tabooma@msn.com) for further information.

"We have a Yahoo Groups page for our use and sharing of information. It is the Skagit Valley and Whidbey Model Railroading group or "sv_and_w". The links below will take you directly to the group. In order to post you must have a Yahoo account which is simple to set up.

This is a private group that is not open to the public, it is designed for club use only.

The Link: http://groups.yahoo.com/group/sv_and_w (note those underscores)

If you have general railroading questions or would like to share railroading discussion with immediate locals or are even looking to sell some railroad stuff then this is the place to post information."

Swap Table

Feel free to bring items to sell, trade or give away to any clinic meeting. Items need to be in the side room by 6:45 and, if for sale or trade, clearly marked as to the price and owner.

And, from James Harvey: I have an N Scale Woodland Scenics ST1482 Scenic Ridge Kit for sale, new still in box for \$250. Please let me know if anyone would be interested. Item located in Burlington. Contact: james.c.harvey@comcast.net

I still need more layout pictures from you guys!!
Dick, Rich and I can only fill the pages so many times :-)

So, please let us know how that plastering is going, how that newest building fits on the layout, what you did to make that new 12" tall fir tree, etc.

Send contributions to afasch@whidbey.com and thanks!

Planned Clinics for 2015/2016 as of September 2015

September 9, 2015 ————— The DuPont Dynamite Narrow Gauge Railway
————— Russ Segner

October 14, 2015 ————— Mini Clinics — various presenters

November 11, 2015 ————— Bob Stafford — Bellingham Trainmaster

December 9, 2015 Planning for the Future of Your Railroad After You've Gone Dick Haines

January 13, 2016 Mystery Make 'n Take & Ice Cream!
 Susan Gonzales

February 10, 2016 Contest/SHOW and tell – FLAT CAR LOADS
 Jack Tingstad in charge!

March 9, 2016 Fences as Scenery
 Al Frasch

April 13, 2016 Tom Hawkins Open House

May 11, 2016 "The Lost Art of Railroad Hand Signals"
 Ray Wheeler

Note: if you wish this newsletter to have anything to publish each month, it is up to you to send material to include — text and/or pictures — otherwise you may get an overdose of silly cartoons

off the mark.com by Mark Parisi



Only two months to go!

Flatcar Load Contest!

From Jack Tingstad, the contest coordinator extraordinaire!



Well, here it is, another season of model railroading operations and model building. As you no doubt recall, this season we are have a "contest" to help you do some imagining and building of unique flat car loads.

Judging will be in the following categories:

Scratch built flat and scratch built load

Commercial flat and scratch built load

Super detailed commercial flat with super detailed commercial load

Humorous scratch built load.

Within these categories you could have long loads, MOW permanent loads, excursion cars with loads, circus calliope or other Big Top stuff, or whatever your imagination comes up with that would fit into one of the categories. There will be prize money for "winners" in each of the four categories.



The loads could have some small commercial parts like NBW castings, chain, angle iron, or wood bracing etc., but no huge components like Chooch load parts (sorry Mike, we love your products, but not this time!).

So this is just a brief reminder to start thinking about your entry. To get started with ideas here are a few possibilities: Slabs of marble, ship propellers, junk railroad cars or engines, buses, lumber/logs, alien space ship, dinosaur in cage, pre-fab track sections, military vehicles, pipes, cable reels, and on and on. You could Google flat car loads or go to mrhmag.com and search "flat car loads." There are

dozens of articles in past issues to give you ideas. Even one on building a truss rod flat car. So now is the time to ponder this most important activity of the next few months. We know we're not like school kids and put it off until the night

before "it's due." So get to it. The judging will most likely be in February.



Layout Progress

From Rich Thom, a fantastic picture of his progress on the Coldwater Creek.

"For my scenery I made two choices a little out of the ordinary. First I used a hardshell technique called paper shell scenery. Second, I am using "rubber rocks"--rock forms molded in rubber from actual rock outcrops, using a process similar to that used to manufacture halloween masks. The "rock" is not a mold like those familiar to everyone, but is an actual "positive" of the rock form, ready to glue to the scenery base. I am using the ones made by Cripplebush Valley Models (www.cripplebush.net). The claimed advantages are: light weight; curvable to conform to land contours; and sturdiness--i.e. the fine details molded in the rubber rocks are not fragile as in the case of hydrocal or other plaster castings. It's far too soon to claim success yet--but the first couple of areas where I have used these rocks have turned out satisfactorily. The photo shows a tunnel and retaining wall area where you can see the rubber rocks both above the tunnel portal, and in a cutting just to the right of the wood retaining wall. I glue them in place with hot glue--easy and instant-grab. The "rocks" come preprinted in a rather dark, battleship gray but were a little too dark for my taste, so I painted them with acrylic gesso followed by a lighter grey rock color, then washes of india ink for shadow and white highlights with dry-brushed acrylics. Someday a clinic may be warranted--assuming it all works out as hoped!"



Direct from *the ONION*, a news source even more “fair and balanced” than Vulpes News, the tragic news of what happens when railroaders are tired:

Conductor Fatigue Blamed In Massive Model Train Crash



BLOOMINGTON, IN—After surveying the dozen railcars and cargo of Lincoln Logs strewn haphazardly across the grass mat, investigators concluded Friday that a massive model train derailment was the result of conductor fatigue. “From what we’ve been able to determine, the individual at the controls had been at it for more than nine hours without a break, and tragically, he attempted to take a sharp turn at speeds of up to three miles per hour,” said lead investigator Kellen Montgomery, adding that even with the conductor’s decades of experience, his cumulative exhaustion after several long days in a row of driving trains had put immense strain on his hand-eye coordination. “By the time he noticed his mistake and tried to brake by grabbing the caboose, it was already too late. We’re lucky this didn’t happen as the train passed by the saloon or general store in the town square, or else we would be dealing with an even worse disaster right now.” Montgomery confirmed that the crash was the rail line’s worst disaster since the same conductor plowed through a barrier and took out an entire marching band in 2011, an incident in which alcohol was suspected to have played a role.

Skagit Valley and Whidbey Clinic November Meeting
BNSF Bellingham Sub Operations
Article and Photos by Rich Thom

The SV&W NMRA Clinic's meeting on November 11th was attended by 22 regulars and two guests. Guests were **Dave Johnson**, an Oak Harbor resident and long-time friend of regular **Alan Murray**, and the evening's clinician **Bob Stafford**. In opening remarks, Clinic Chair **Rich Blake** observed that it was Veteran's Day and asked: how many attendees had served? Many hands went up, to applause and thanks from everyone.

Susan Gonzales reported that the October 24th special shop tour and train ride at the Northwest Railway Museum had been enjoyed by 12 clinic members, family and friends (see *Skagit Valley & Whidbey Ridin' with the Chiggen at Snoqualmie* by Rich Blake posted in the GI on October 27th). Susan was thanked for making the tour possible, and added that it might be repeated next year. Rich mentioned that a work day is a possibility, too: there's always plenty of work for volunteers at the NWRM. Finally, longtime clinic participant and modeler **Curt Johnson** let it slip out that November 11th, meeting night, was his birthday. Accordingly Susan presented Curt a cake, but it was only an inedible, 1:1 scale model of one--a hat, which of course Curt had to don. Moral for SV&W clinic members: don't reveal your birthday.

Jack Tingstad reminded everyone of this season's model contest in which **flatcars with loads** will be judged, at the February meeting, as described in last month's Grab Iron report. To spur everyone on to enter (and start building before January), Jack brought a work-in-progress car to display (Figure 1). While on a tour of Scotland, Jack found in a Loch Ness gift shop a pencil with the lake's famous denizen on the top, trimmed Nessie off and made it (her?) the "load" for his car. He added water using Plaid brand *Gallery Glass*, ripples with Woodland Scenics *Water Effects*, and dry-brushed white for highlights. There are four contest categories and we suspect that Jack is building this car for the Novelty category—but one man's novelty can be another's faithful prototype.

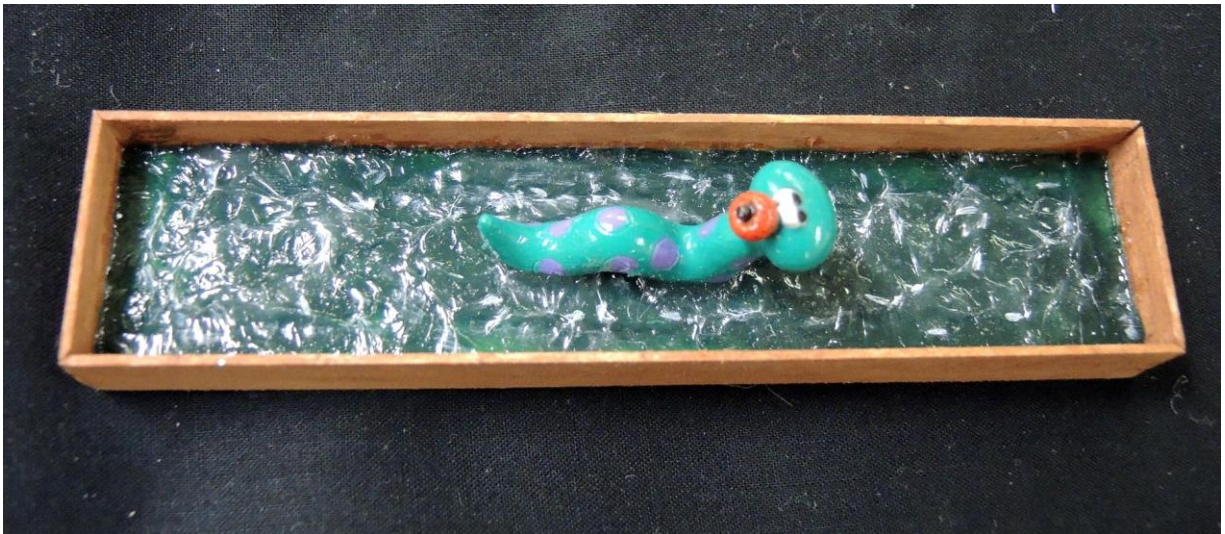


Fig 1 – Jack Tingstad's Flatcar with "Load"

Jack reminded everyone of his annual **two-day open house** on the weekend after Thanksgiving, this year Saturday and Sunday **November 28-29**, from 10 am to 4 pm each day. It's Jack's 15th year for opening his layout in Coupeville to the general public, attracting hundreds of visitors. Some (including this writer) were first "hooked" by visiting Jack's railroad and joined not only the hobby but the NMRA as well. Food bank donations are encouraged. Jack's address is 508 NW Broadway, Coupeville (98239).

The evening's clinic presentation, by **Bob Stafford**, was ***The BNSF Railway's Bellingham Sub Operations***. Bob (currently the Communications Chair for the 4th Division) spent a 40-year career in the railroad industry, beginning on the Erie Lackawanna. He headed west in 1978, eventually working in seven western states and British Columbia. From 1997 through 2010, when he retired, Bob worked for the BNSF Railway; in 2008-2009 he was Trainmaster of the Bellingham Subdivision—the subject of his talk tonight.

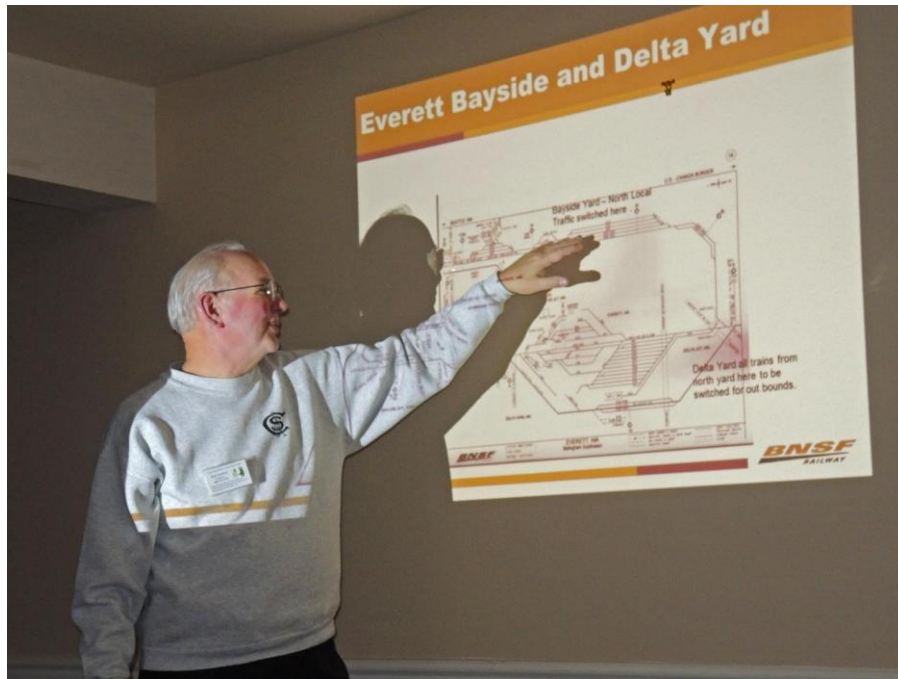


Fig 2 – Bob Stafford Describes Everett's Yards

Bob described the physical plant—Everett Bayside and Delta Yard (Fig 2) and the yards in Burlington, Bellingham, and Sumas—and the trains he was responsible for. These included the so-called Haulers: Thornwood Turn (Bayside-Burlington); Train 627 (Custer/Bellingham-Delta); and 644 (Bayside-Sumas). As expected, getting the Haulers over the road was never dull. Bob told several anecdotes, including one about a bad day in January 2009 when the tracks at Stanwood were flooded, and the last train through Stanwood, 644 the Sumas Hauler, was hit by a mud slide. The dike there had been sandbagged but urgently needed more, but calls to the local emergency center weren't answered (crews had their hands full everywhere). In time a City Councilman turned up at the dike, who called the mayor to request some help. Twenty minutes later a truck of sandbags and two school vans arrived, carrying members of the high school football team. They succeeded in building the dike higher, just in time as the water was beginning to lap over the top. The same day, Bob worked alongside crews to dig 644 out of the concrete-like muck. Good Trainmasters rolled up their sleeves and helped get the job done!

Train 644 was (and still is) a fine train to photograph, passing through classic Whatcom County farmland, with the northern Cascades in the background, and at some locations Mount Baker can be captured in the frame as well. Bob had some great slides of 644.

Next up were the locals out of Burlington and Bellingham. A number of our clinic members are rabid about "operations" and local jobs are favorites. Bob's descriptions of the Bellingham Sub's many locals were intriguing for sure, especially for those who are fortunate to crew regularly on **Al Frasch's** "Pilchuck Division of the BNSF" in Freeland, an n-scale marvel modeling the BNSF's Seattle to Vancouver line (with a little owner's leeway in naming the division).

Bob discussed details of the locals, beginning with the morning and afternoon jobs running out of Burlington on the Anacortes branch: the "Annies." They switch the big Shell and Tesoro refineries as well as the Sierra Pacific mill. Bob described another example of how such a seemingly simple branch could be challenging. In winter, the refineries add isobutane as an additive to fuel. As a result, the Anacortes branch often got slammed with cars of the stuff over a week's time, often without any warning they were coming, until there were about 80-100 cars more than the refinery could unload that week. Finding sidings to store all the excess cars was Bob's challenge, while accommodating the normal heavy traffic on the branch. (Today, 100-car trains of Bakken crude ply this branch.)

The jobs out of Bellingham are equally interesting: two to Cherry Point (a morning Cherry Local and a “Night Cherry”), and a “New West” (New Westminster) local. The locals backed up the Cherry Point branch, and at night presented a genuine safety problem, shoving uphill in the dark. Fusees had to be lit on the caboose, since due to the branch’s 10 mph speed limit the axle-driven generator didn’t spin fast enough to produce the needed wattage. Bob improvised: he cajoled headquarters to task shop crews to upgrade a caboose with a loco headlight, driven by a new gas generator; later, even air horns were installed. It was the brightest--and loudest--caboose on the entire Bellingham Sub. Bob found cabooses all over the northwest to make his crews safer and more comfortable: he described himself as a “caboose magnet!”

Bob told other interesting stories. The Night Cherry also does switching at Swift and Blaine for US Customs, such as spotting cars to a warehouse dock for inspection, and picking up cars released by US Customs. This usually entailed pulling just a couple of cars out of an 80- to 100-car train and then completely unloading, inspecting and reloading them. We hope our border folks catch what they’re looking for—and the effort is all worth it, with our largest trading partner. And did you know that the Sumas job, 644, hauls Canadian garbage, which ends up at the Columbia River disposal site? Our good PNR friends “up north” hopefully appreciate our willingness to bury their trash!

Bob concluded his talk by summarizing the mainline trains which operated over his Sub, including the coal trains, now so controversial due to proposed expansion of the traffic and new port facilities (in the U.S.). “They’ve been running since 1998!” Bob exclaimed. When one (Chinese) ship was due at the Robert’s Bank, BC, dock, about 10 coal trains were needed to ground-store the coal for transloading to the ship. At that time, 1 or 2 ships a month at most loaded at Roberts Bank. Now—the sub runs three coal trains a day. We’ll see what the future portends for this much-debated coal traffic.

It was that sort of insider information that made Bob’s talk so interesting. The SV&W clinic wishes to thank Bob for driving all the way from Marysville to give his excellent presentation to the group.

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