



Non-Clinic Report

April, 2020

Clinic Cancelled: Well, no clinic for April, as you all know by now, and May is looking like a probable cancellation, too. Of course, we'll let you know as soon as a decision is made regarding a May clinic, and any plans beyond May. The scheduled REA Operations in Seattle topic will be rescheduled (see below).

From the Editor: This is the second "Non-Clinic Report", and probably won't be the last. I miss the interaction with other model railroaders at our monthly clinic, up at the Whatcom Skagit Model Railroad Club, working on Tom Buckingham's layout, or just having a visitor stop by to see my railroad. But it is for the best to take these precautions now, so we can eventually resume our model railroad group activities. In the meantime, I'm trying to keep us all connected as best we can via this newsletter.

Chairman's Challenge: Hello fellow COVID-19 exiles. Most of us are using this time of house arrest to work on model railroad stuff. If not, you should consider it. One of my thoughts when I became aware of potential isolation was: "Thank God I have a hobby."

Looks like we're headed for a long break in the clinic schedule. During past breaks I have issued a "Chairman's Challenge" to prod you folks into working on MRR stuff. This break is going to be a long one so there is more to the challenge. It is a multi-part challenge.

1. Work on your layout. Take some photos now. Take some photos later then share them with the group when clinics resume.
2. Finish an unfinished project. 'Before' photos would be nice. Bring the finished model to the next clinic.
3. Build a kit or scratch-build. Don't forget the theme for the coming season, no matter when it starts, is still flat cars and flat car loads.

Stay healthy, follow the guidelines and hopefully we will meet again sooner rather than later. – **Ted Becker**

Stay At Home Activities: To keep abreast of what some of us have been doing, I once again reached out to various clinic members to see what they had been doing in the past month, and received some great photos and words from: **Mike O'Brien, Tom Buckingham, Ted Becker, Karl Kleeman, Dale Bearden, Nick Muff, Jim Betz, John O'Connell** and **Don Jones**. Thanks so much, guys! Read below to see what they've been up to.

But first, I just had to share (with permission) this cartoon from the Skagit/Whidbey clinic's newsletter (cartoon courtesy of **Rich Thom** of Coupeville):



"Did you know there's a miniature woman tied to the train tracks who looks remarkably like me?"

Last Run: We lost a good friend on April 10, as **Roger Johnson** succumbed to a heart attack. Roger was one of the original founding members of the Mount Vernon clinic. Our sympathies go to his surviving spouse, Barb, and their family. We will forward any info on planned memorial services. Here is a link to the obituary in the Skagit Valley Herald: https://www.goskagit.com/obituaries/johnson-roger-william/article_0ba6ffe5-58ff-5124-8cdd-a858bdcf8707.html



Roger on board the Amtrak Cascade train



Roger's beautiful scratchbuilt trestle on his former layout in Sedro Woolley

Working At Home: While we are spending so much time at home, I imagine most of us have been spending a lot of time working on our layouts and/or various projects at the workbench. And this is a great time to view some railroad and model railroad related videos on You Tube, Trainmasters-TV, MR Video-Plus, or whatever platform you choose. The NMRA e-Bulletin has links to videos from a variety of sources, and I've learned lots of good tips and techniques by clicking on the links provided (another benefit of being an NMRA member).

I put out a call to several clinic "regulars" to see what they have been up to:

Nick Muff shows progress on his model of the Ozark Cement Company at Siloam Springs, Mo.



Editor's Note: Knowing the speed with which Nick works, I figure he'll have his layout completed by the end of this stay-at-home period....

Karl Kleeman reports he and **Dale Bearden** have been working on their Monson, Maine traveling 2-foot gauge On30 scale railroad. The railroad is built on aluminum framed modules, two 24 inch by 6 ft and two 30 inch by 8 ft. They have purchased a trailer to haul the modules to train shows. But the modules will also be set up permanently at Dale's house. They are also building additional fixed in place benches to extend the Monson and allow for increased operations. Both are both staying home and communicate using "face time".

Karl sent two photos of a model Dale has been building of the slate processing building at the quarry near Monson. Dale has been building the scale and authentic equipment to process the rough slate shown in the pictures.





Jim Betz sends along a photo of components for the benchwork for his abuilding layout – from Engineered Layout Systems. This product uses extruded aluminum plus accessories that you put together “Erector Set” style, according to Jim. His layout will be based on the Great Northern, post WWII, in Burlington, with the branches to Anacortes and Concrete.

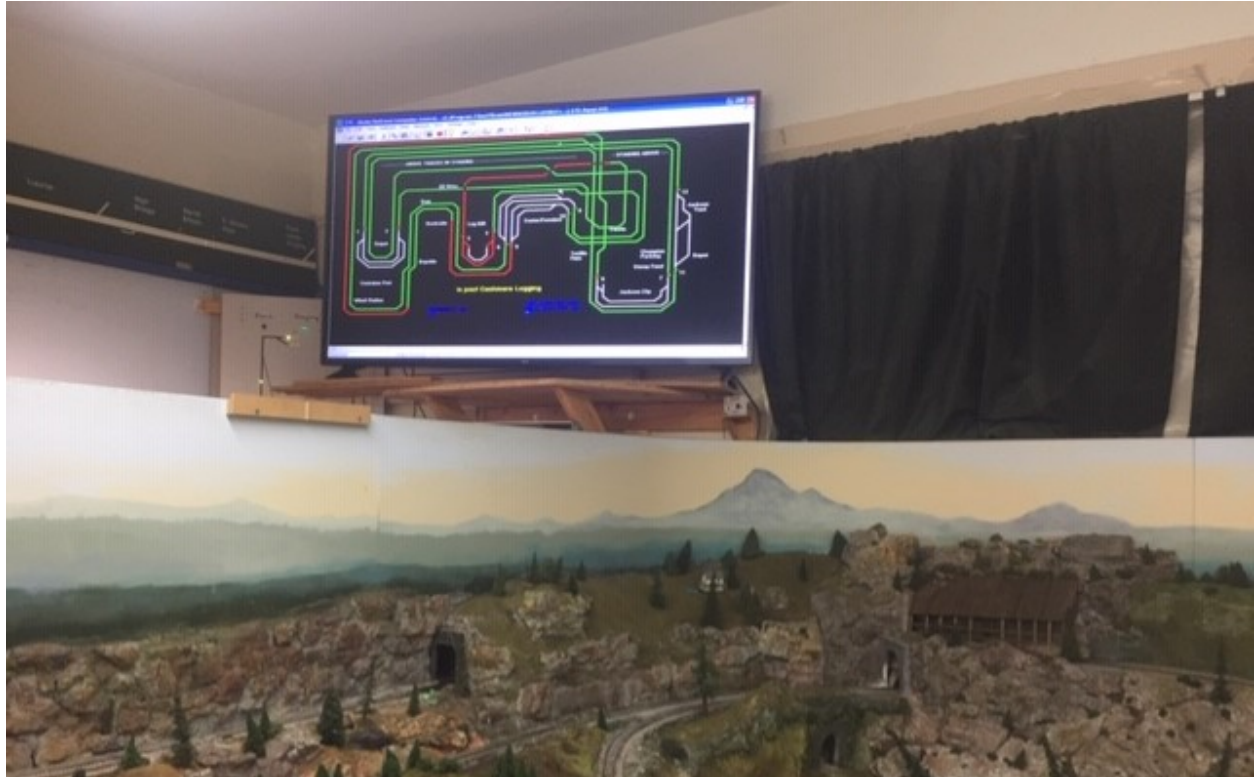


And no, that’s not Jim’s kitchen to the right in the photo, nor is this layout being built in his living room. This is in his basement, with a “crew lounge/kitchen” available to his future operating crew.

I’m looking forward to getting an up close look at this innovative benchwork, once this isolation period is behind us.

Speaking of Jim Betz don’t forget to check out the discussion group he started on Groups.io: Pacific Northwest Railroad Modelers. This group part of the relatively new Groups.io family (for those of you that remember, this is similar to the old Yahoo Groups thing). **This is a totally free site** devoted to model railroaders in the Pacific Northwest, where we can come together and share thoughts and progress on our layouts and ask questions and so forth. You do not have to be registered to just read the posts, but if you want to make or reply to a post, you must be a registered member, which is easy: a username and password. Go to Groups.io and search for PNWRRModelers and then join. I’ve noticed folks joining from all over – British Columbia, Idaho, and all over Washington. This is a great way to stay connected during this isolation period.

Don Jones sent in a photo of the newly acquired large TV to use as a monitor for the Track Occupancy Diagram (revised by **Terry Andrew**) at the Whatcom Skagit Model Railroad Club. RFID can be used to identify the engine of a train as it traverses the layout. This, of course, is a work-in-progress. The TV monitor is suspended above and behind the HO layout at the club..



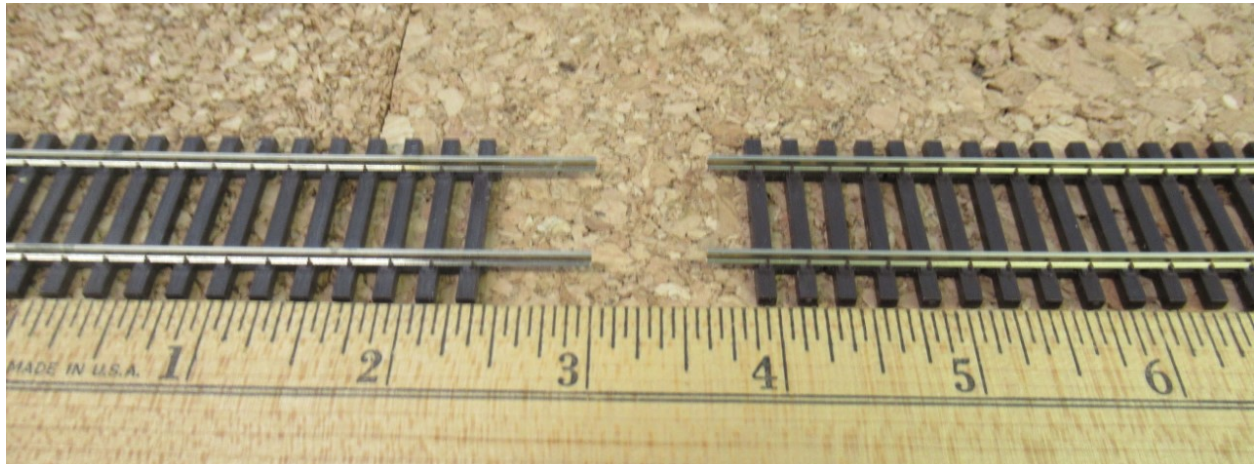
Below is a photo Don sent of a scratchbuilt (by Terry Andrew) icing platform on the club's HO layout. Don added the LED lighting.



Ted Becker sends along before and after photos of his Upper Flats and Lower Flats area. The track is all in place and glued down, with (full) Coke cans serving to hold the glued track in place. The gap between layers was filled in with mat board; a retaining wall will attach to that.



Ted reports he almost closed the gap – missed by $\frac{5}{8}$ ths of an inch. Second photo of Port Junction shows the stub off to the left that feeds the port area; coke cans were below right; and the gap shown above is out of the photo to the right, and is now closed.



John O'Connell doesn't get to the clinic much since he has another Monday commitment, but he did send along a nice update on one of his projects.

“One man's mole hill is another's K-2..”.

I've had a love affair with the GN Oriental Limited, the luxury predecessor of the Empire Builder. And there, on one of the swap blogs in Mid-November, were five Roundhouse wood sided cars with clerestories. Augmented with a couple of early heavy weights, I could imagine a consist hauled by an H-4 or an S-1 with Z-1s powering through the Cascade district circa 1929. Although the cars had no lighting or interiors, that wouldn't be hard to fix.... I knew **Roger Johnson**, **Mark Malmkar** and **Don Jones**, the veritable brain trust of powering, lighting and interiors. And we were heading into the cold dark months of winter. I could knock off one car a week. Well, it's late April and the challenge continues with the first car, a combine (baggage, lounge, smoker). This was intended to be the consist's prototype for materials, techniques, and aesthetics(?).

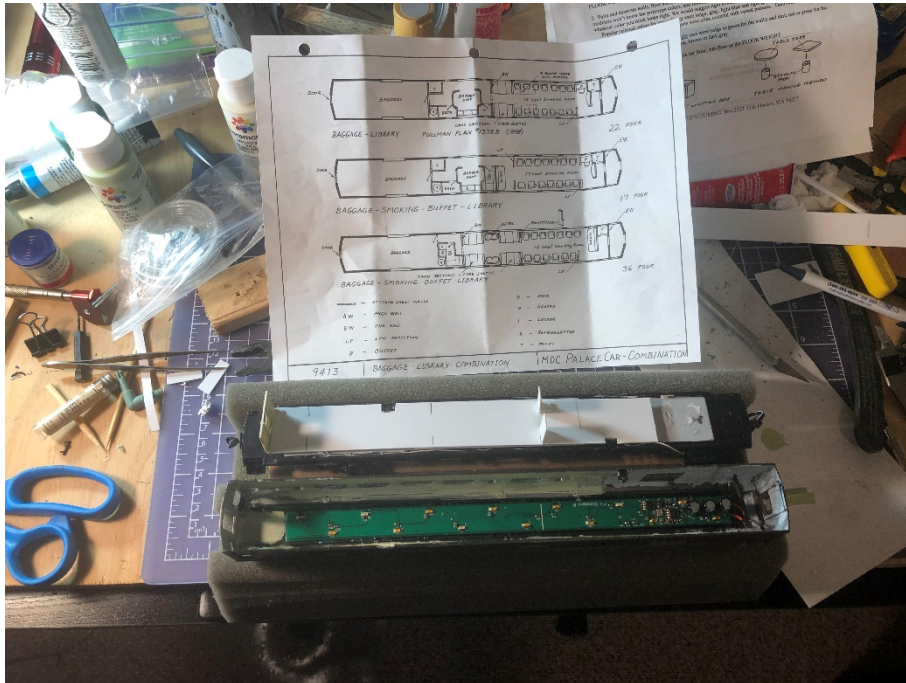
For those still awake, I'll share some of my “learnings and takeaways.” In the consulting trade these are euphemisms for screw ups, do overs and Ahh Haas.

Powering- The original plan was to use Streamline Backshop Flat Wheel Wipers on both six-wheel trucks to ensure consistent power pick up. Clearance problems with the trucks and the under frame resulted in abandoning the SBS's product in favor of the Litchfield Station Current Collector on a single axle of the six-wheel trucks. Good so far, now its mid-March because the lighting proved to be a parallel challenge.

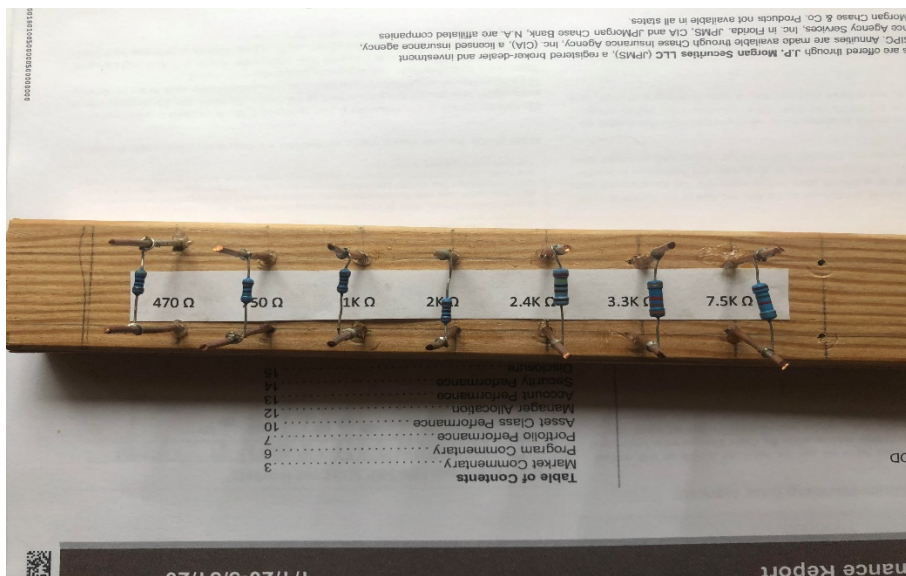
Lighting- Starting out with the Passenger Lighting Kit from Model Train Sounds (that should have been my first clue). It had integrated current pickups and a flexible arrangement of lighting components: 36-inch wheels with axle contacts, wire, connectors bridge rectifier, resistor, capacitor and three LEDs. Assembly required. Don Jones took a crack at it with only vaguely clear instructions. While his efforts proved the thing worked, the three LEDs seemed too few to adequately light the interior of a full-length passenger car and the design for the axle wiper seem inconsistent. They were not going to ever look right through the clerestories. Along comes Voltscooter's Quality Lighting Kit for Passenger Cars. On a pre-assembled eleven-inch circuit board is a rectifier, resistors, three capacitors and 16 1mm soft white LEDs. The intensity can be controlled with an integrated potentiometer. Combined with Litchfield's Current Collector tied together with a Miniaturonics 2 pin connector I started to think I would have my prototype finished before the "stay at home" lifted.

Interior- Mark Malmkar's Palace Car Company provided unique interior features for each car in the consist as well as car layout diagrams. Researching the Oriental Limited's interior decor including finding the acrylic version of "Oriental Green" was quite interesting. With the interior of the car body painted and new glazing, I was ready to paint the seats, booths and the galley. One small problem. I lost one of the mounting lugs that holds the body to the floor, so with Athearn not answering their phone, I had to fabricate a small but sufficiently robust lug to replace the lost lug. And it has to have adequate clearance to not obstruct the floor weights but not be too visible from outside the car. I have to know that I can secure the two before gluing in the seats and partitions. But you know you're in trouble when it takes five days to find the only tube of styrene cement in Whatcom County.

Enough of this. Here is the scene of the crime:



When the frustration got too much, I did get around to another little project that I actually completed: a Roger Johnson Resistance Ladder. Excellent for determining the best resistance without guessing what those stripes mean.

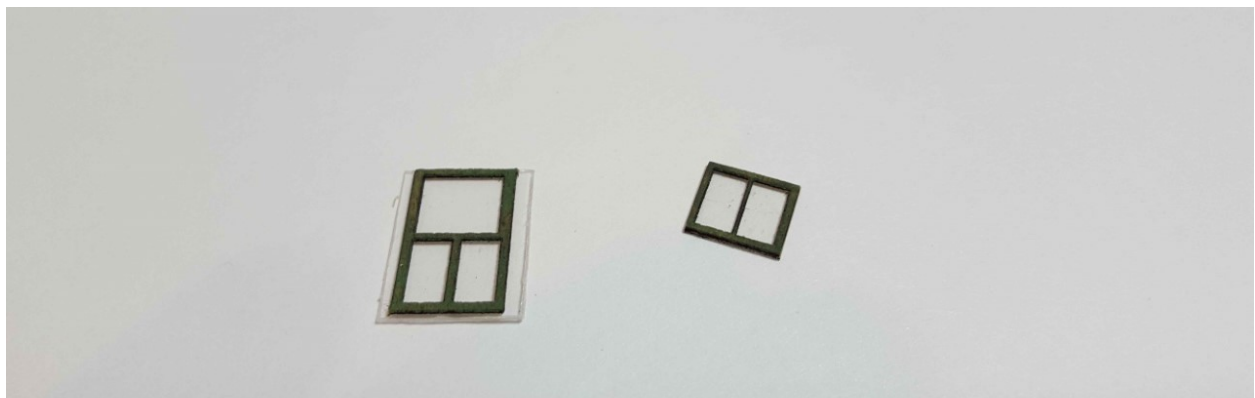


Tom Buckingham reports he has actually found some time to go down and work on his layout in the basement. His main focus has been on trying to finish up the wiring so we can see some trains run. But... he relates an all-too-familiar tale that we modelers have all experienced ourselves... He couldn't find his roll of black feeder wire. He bought two each of red and black wire rolls, and both black rolls went missing. So, more are on order (as soon as the new rolls arrive, the old ones will show up – wanna bet?).

In the meantime, he has taken on the task of helping install windows on the huge sawmill complex (BTS kit) that Ted Becker has been building. Ted had already built all of the frames and about 1/3 of the sashes and Tom has been finishing up the remaining sashes. Note: most of these windows/frames needed some sanding to fit into the wall openings



This building is but one of several that make up the sawmill scene. Close up of two of the windows:



Tom has found that he can work on these windows on a portable work bench while spending time in front of the TV with wife Kathy.

Mike O'Brien may have moved to Idaho, but he keeps in touch with Tom and some of us that work on Tom's layout. Mike sent along several photos of his a-building layout, and this wonderful "history" of the OB&F Railroad:

The O'Brien & Family Railroad (OB&F) will be a fictional railroad located in the Applegate Valley of So. Oregon, where my ancestors settled in the mid 1800's. That's where our family history is rooted (after they left Ireland of course). The timeframe I'll display will be during the transition era (late 1940's). It will have pieces of our family history though, that appeared prior to that.

In the mid and late 1800's my great, great grandfather did quite a bit of gold mining in the Applegate Valley. At one point, he had over 300 Chinese workers in his employ. I'm told he was quite the drinker and quite the gambler (which don't mix well of course). Gold findings were fair and I guess he won and lost several small fortunes on the poker table. Unfortunately, he died on a losing streak! 😞 He did manage to buy over 500 acres of land though and my great grandfather (John) took over and started ranching (cattle & hogs). He also ran a freight line from Grants Pass to Crescent City, through the redwoods, for many years, with a hold-over spot just north of the California border. After 20 years or so, it became known as the town of O'Brien ... and still thrives today!

The original homestead and the O'Brien ranch will be depicted on the layout, although many of the buildings were lost in 1923 due to fire. I do have one photo (pre-fire). Between that and memories that my dad shared, we have recreated a plot map and all of the out-buildings to be placed on the layout. Dad scratch built all the structures in his late 80's. They're not 'craftsman quality' but that's not the point. The stories that were shared / told during that process were stories I probably never would have heard otherwise. (My favorite; "Mike, be sure to put an old oak tree right by the bridge going over the irrigation ditch". Ok dad ... but how do you remember there was an old oak tree in that specific spot? "Well, old Brownie (his horse) didn't like bridges and decided at the last minute to detour on his own, jump the ditch, went under that tree which had a low hanging limb oh yah, don't forget the low limb Mike ... and proceeded to knock me off on my butt!")

Got it dad. Should make a great scene!

In his 20's, Dad worked for a few years at a logging camp, so that and an ore mine will be on the layout. My other grandfather donated the land and help build the McKee Covered Bridge in 1917. At the time, it provided a much faster and easier route for ore coming out of copper mines up in the hills. It's still standing today and maintained by the So. Oregon Historical society. The only town on the layout will be Jacksonville, founded and developed during the gold rush. It's still quite the historical community with tons of old brick buildings still standing. Great historical visit for anyone down in the Grants Pass / Medford area.

There will be an old abandoned sawmill ... as it lost out to a larger one in the mid-90s. And of course, the Applegate River will flow through a section of the layout.

There never was a railroad (still isn't) in the Applegate Valley, so some creative license is taken, and a lot of the businesses will be named after current family members (kids & grandkids).

The goal of the layout is to allow me to build something with a lot of scenery (which I enjoy the most) but also to capture some old family history and stories that can be passed on to today's family.

This is an N Scale layout / DCC with sound. Room size is 13' x 13' plus a 2' x 5' extension area for a small storage yard. Some equipment will be dubbed O B & F and will tie into a track run by the Southern Pacific. It has 2 reverse loops on it ... but is not designed to just let trains run around ... rather a working layout, with small switching spots here and there. It will have a lot of logs moving around the room. 2-3 operators will be able work the layout at one time.

To date, the benchwork is done, most track is laid and wired. Just ironing out the glitches now (and there's a handful, because as everyone knows, I'm not an electrician!!) For the photos attached, a couple of ideas that I incorporated:

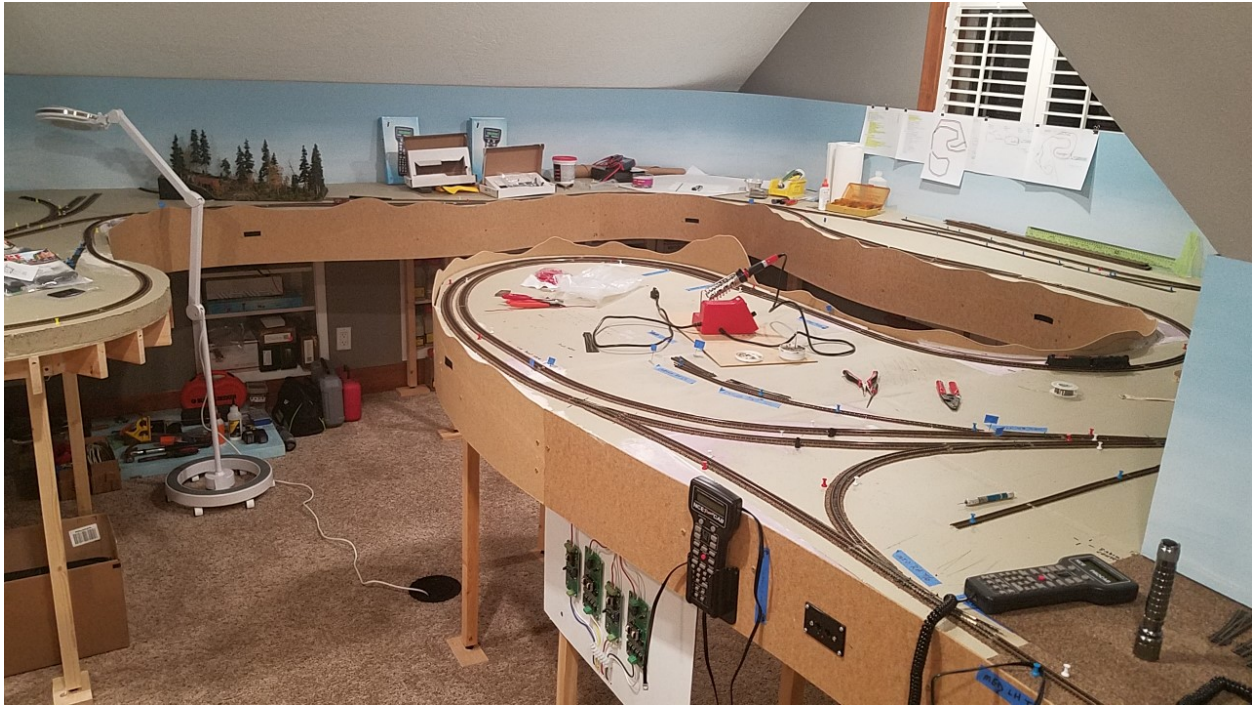
- 1) The layout room was carpeted, so I put 4 screws in a block of wood. These face down between the carpet fibers and keep the wood blocks from "squishing" the carpet. Some day when it's pulled up, the goal is to have the carpet look like nothing was there.*
- 2) The legs all have levelers in them ... and those sit on the wood blocks. This allowed me to find (and keep) a level top.*
- 3) Part of the benchwork was able to be saved and made it over from Mount Vernon*
- 4) One thing I've learned, is that turnouts / tortoise switches inevitably end up right over a cross brace. What I did on some the new benchwork (especially the yard area) was to put in 'floating' cross braces. They still support the 1/4" plywood and foam top ... but can slide a few inches one way or the other if they are competing for the same space as a tortoise machine.*
- 5) The backdrop is 1/8" Masonite, primed and will be painted rather than using a photo backdrop. That way, I can build the terrain exactly as I want it ... the hire my buddy Al to come over and paint the hills & trees in the background. 😊*
- 6) From left to right, we'll end up with a nice curved wooden trestle for the loop area, then the logging & mining operations, old engine house (1 x 2 diorama I built 3 years ago for the clinic), the abandoned sawmill that I built for the NMRA contest last year, then the river, the ranch, the McKee Bridge, Jacksonville, new sawmill and the storage yard.*

For a one-man show ... it will be many years to complete, like a lot of layouts. But I'm having fun, working at my own pace.

Mike's newly built benchwork in his train room:



Mike hasn't wasted any time building this new layout, considering he just moved to Idaho last fall...



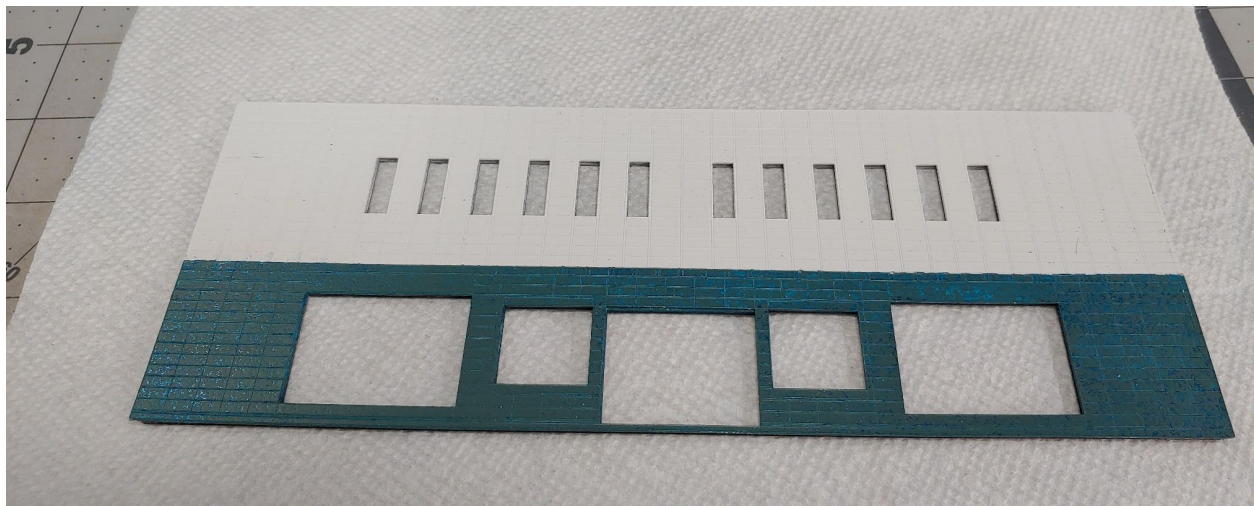
Mike installed leg levelers that sit atop wood blocks, which have screws in them (facing down) which nestle in the carpet fibers and don't "squish" the carpet. This method ensures the layout will be level and the carpet will remain like new. (Don't spill any plaster or paint, Mike! – Ed.)



Al Carter (that's me, your editor) has been working on a retail building for the "better part of town" on the layout. It started out with a Smalltown kit, but really the only thing remaining from the kit are the two side walls (shortened to 3" wide) and the front window/door assemblies. The "glass block" area above the windows/doors is a printout of a textures file from Clever Models. It was printed on self-adhesive paper and applied to a styrene backing. In front of the building is the canopy to go over the doors. Still to come: interior detailing, lighting, and signage. Not shown in the photo is the rolled roofing paper, which is another printed texture from Clever Models.



Also in progress is another retail city building. This is the front wall, custom cut by Nick Muff on his laser cutter. Styrene overlay (tile pattern) applied to 1/16 plywood base.



Al also has been busy with more vehicles...



Left to right: 1941 Olds by Cutter's Miniatures (solid resin model); 1951 Pontiac (Sylvan kit); 1948 Plymouth (Sylvan kit); 1955 Chevy flatbed (Wiking) with Model T (Jordan) cargo; and a 1954 International (Classic Metal Works) with a flatbed made from a Tootsietoy diecast trailer.

Of note is the windows in the two Sylvan kits are made by using Gallery Glass #16001 "Crystal Clear". This is similar to Canopy Glue, where you draw bead of glue across the opening, but I find this works much better than Canopy Glue. Made by Plaid, and purchased at Michaels or Hobby Lobby (forgot which).

A photo of Gallery Glass appears below, alongside a photo of Canopy Glue made by Evergreen Styrene. I hadn't known Evergreen made this product – I always bought the Pacer 560 brand, but the Evergreen brand is thinner, and I like it better. But I like the Gallery Glass for window application best.

Tool Time: This is the part of the clinic where we encourage you to bring along a tool (or more than one) to share with the group. It can be a trusty old standby that you use all the time, or something new that you have discovered. There are a lot of sources for tools, some non-traditional and some obscure. Show us what you've got. For now, during our isolation time, here is a "virtual" tool time:

Gallery Glass and Canopy Glue, as mentioned above:



Books and Stuff: With all this stay at home time, here's a couple of suggestions for some good reading with a railroad theme:

Karl Kleeman's new book he co-authored: **The Early Railroads of Whatcom County.** Co-authored with William Rink, this book is an absolute treasure! Very well written and excellent photographs. Highly recommended for anyone interested in the history of Whatcom County railroading. Available at Fairhaven Books in Bellingham.

Janet Dawson's book *Death Rides the Zephyr* about a "Zephyrette" solving a murder mystery on the California Zephyr circa 1952. Available on Amazon, as well as the two sequels in that series. Great reading if you like passenger trains of yester-year!

Mark Malmkar's book *Murder on the Golden State* is a murder mystery on one of the Southern Pacific's premier passenger trains. Mark Malmkar lives in Oak Harbor and is a regular at local clinics. Great book! Available on Amazon.

Next Up: Well, obviously we are in a holding pattern. The scheduled May clinic, REA Operations in Seattle by **Thomas Keyes**, has been postponed but Mr. Keyes has let us know he still wants to come up and present his clinic, so we'll look forward to that whenever it is.

Coming Down the Track:

April 21-24	Eugene, OR	PNR Convention - CANCELLED
May 16	Everett, WA	4D Spring Meet - POSTPONED
May 18	Mount Vernon	Clinic: ???
May 18	Mount Vernon	Clinic: Diorama Build Finale – FIZZLED OUT *
May 22-24	Burnaby, B.C.	7 th Div Railway Modelers of British Columbia Meet – Virtual Meet – see announcement below
July 12-18	St. Louis, MO	NMRA National Convention - CANCELLED

*** Fizzled out: Not enough participation...**

This Just In: The Railway Modelers of British Columbia are going forth with their plans for a spring meet – a “Virtual” meet on May 20, via Zoom. Best part is it is free! Follow this link to get details: <https://mailchi.mp/806bf3599fe5/announcing-the-virtual-railway-modellers-meet-of-british-columbia>

Further Down the Track: For the next “season”, starting in September 2020, we are planning on promoting a “flat car build” – not necessarily a contest. Details still to be worked out. Initial thoughts on this project:

- Making a plastic flat car deck look realistic
- Exploring different types of flat cars and flat car loads
- Examining methods for securing loads

Are you willing to present a clinic (need not be a full hour clinic) related to flat cars? Know someone who might be willing? Let us know your thoughts and desires, please!

Layout Photos: Send a photo or two of your layout (send to Al Carter at tabooma@msn.com).

Note: this doesn't have to be a completed scene – people are very interested in progress photos: benchwork, partial scenery, track being installed, etc.

Sponsorship: The Mount Vernon NMRA clinic is one of several clinics sponsored by the Fourth Division, Pacific Northwest Region, National Model Railroad Association. We meet on the 3rd Monday at 7:00 pm at the Mount Vernon Senior Center, 1401 Cleveland Street. Membership in the NMRA is **NOT** required to attend our clinic, but it is encouraged. For more info on joining the NMRA, see: www.nmra.org/membership. Or see **Al Carter** for a membership application. Remember, if you are unsure, there is a one-time 9 month Rail Pass trial membership for only \$19.95.

Contact Info: Clinic Chairperson is **Ted Becker** (rail.bird@att.net). Name badge maker/keeper and roster manager is **Tom Buckingham** (tom@401kplanninggroup.com). Refreshment provider is **Dave Falconer** (dsfalconer@aol.com). Newsletter writer/editor/publisher/photographer and general all around behind-the-scenes guy is **Al Carter** (tabooma@msn.com).

Help Out: To volunteer for a clinic, or to suggest a clinic topic, contact **Ted Becker** at rail.bird@at.net

Questions/Comments/Contributions to this newsletter should be sent to **Al Carter** at tabooma@msn.com. If you want to be removed from the mailing list, contact **Tom Buckingham** at tom@401kplanninggroup.com.

That is all for this month...

