

In the spirit of sharing, Master Model Railroader, Chuck Ricketts is creating a series of emails to describe how Jim Elder and he are constructing a sectional layout in the garage. This layout, while a pure fantasy model railroad, is operations oriented. The first email described Chuck's model railroad background with a brief look at some of his previous layouts and why, in his mid-eighties, he is starting a new layout. The second article told the history on Baja Siena (or at least Chuck's version of the history). In the third article, Chuck began to describe the construction of the Baja Siena Railroad and Navigation Company. Articles 4 and 5 covered benchwork, sub roadbed, and some roadbed. Article 6 and 7 completed the roadbed, the track work, wiring, turnout control and DCC. This article will cover basic landscaping preparations... SCENERY!

## Fantasy Island layout article 8

Before I begin however, I need to explain something about this layout design concept. This is my umpteenth layout. I don't want to build what I have done before, therefore, this layout will not be in the style of realism, but will have realistic action in its operation. Think, "Theatre of the Absurd", plays like "Waiting for Godot", "The Adding Machine" or the movie "Clockwork Orange". The cliffs and rock work, while having shapes reminiscent of real rock, will have no authentic geologic structure. Some elements will be realistic - trains, structures and figures for example will be normal O scale.

### ***FOAM CUTTING SAFETY***

One caution for using foam and especially white foam but to some extent the pink foam too, is that it may give off toxic fume when cut with a hot knife. We were working in my garage with cross-ventilation and the air flowing freely. We still used caution to not breathe the fumes. If you have to work in a confined space such as the basement, I suggest that you have fans blowing to ventilate the area and in addition, wear a respirator (not a mask) with the correct canisters (probably the chemical

or organic vapor cartridge) for safety. If you smell anything, you are not protected. Be sure to ventilate the room and house when you are done.



*Respirators with canisters correct for the toxins you encounter.*

## ***GETTING TO WORK – WHITE FOAM***

For much of the other foam structure, we used white foam. Why white foam? The price for white foam is very reasonable, it's free! Visit your local county recycle center and you can take all the foam you need. If necessary just tell them you're a sculptor. The rectangular blocks of foam used for packing are the most useful.



*White Foam Samples*

## *Cutting White Foam*

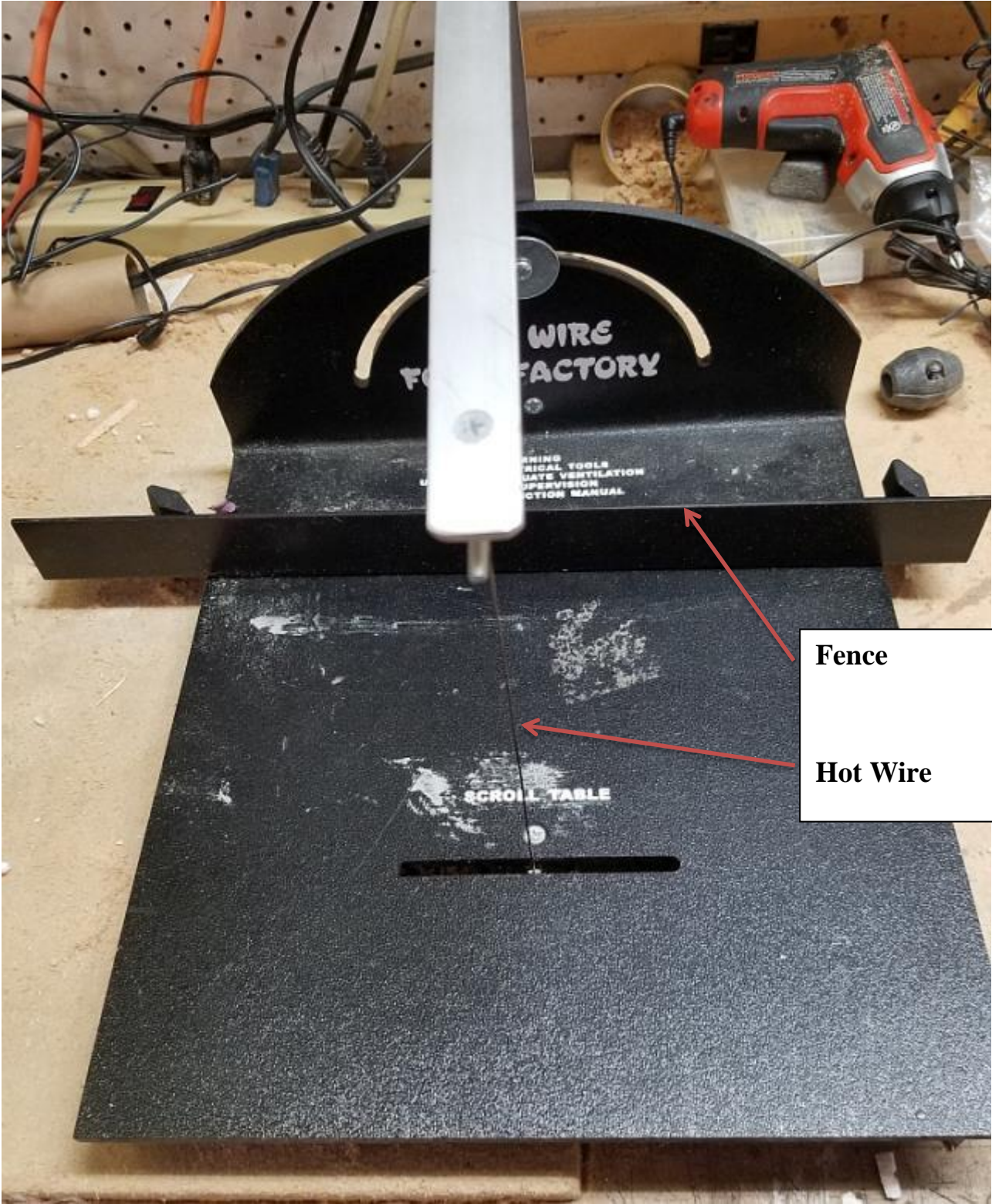
I had purchased several hotwire foam cutters when building the SS&S. I purchased another inexpensive set that was very portable for under \$30 for this work.



*Hot Wire Foam Cutters*

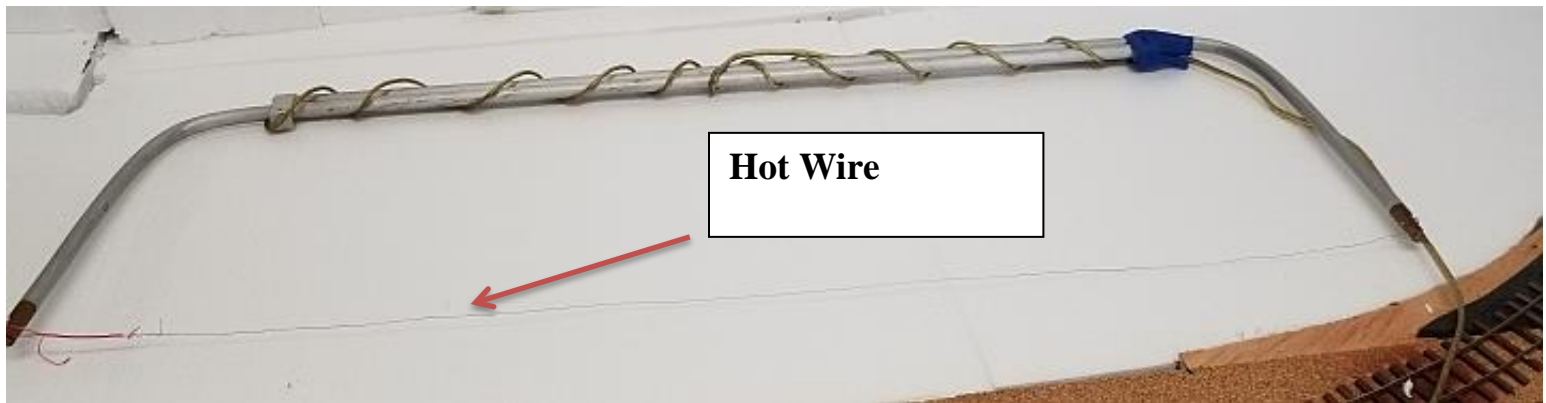


I made good use of my Hot Wire Foam Factory rip guide tool from my work on the SS&S.



*Hot Wire Foam Factory rip tool*

Jerry Julian had given Jim Elder a bow cutter a couple years ago. We hooked it up to my 12 volt power supply and used it to cut large chunks of foam into pieces that were usable.



*Homemade Hot Wire bow cutter.*

## ***GETTING TO WORK - PINK FOAM***

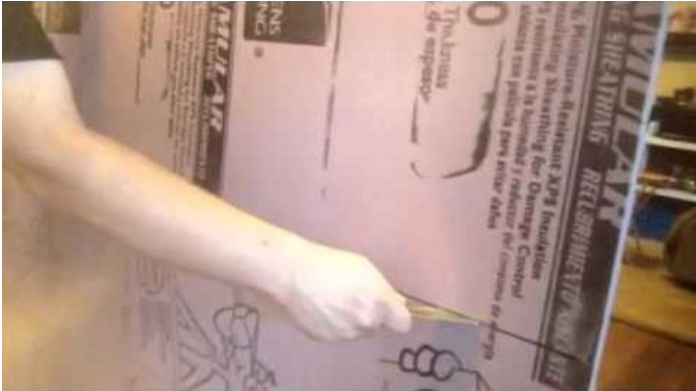
After getting free white foam we purchased one sheet of 4' x 8' x 1" pink extruded foam to be used as a base where we need strength but not as much as plywood would provide. (Remember, we are going for ease of construction, speed and economy).



*Pink Foam*

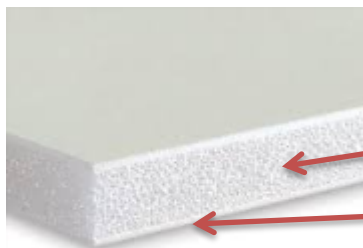
## *Cutting Pink Foam*

Pink Foam can be cut with a hot knife or wire (follow respiratory safety as above), or it can be cut with a hand saw, or even a large knife. Some sheets come with grooves already cut in the foam so you can snap it off close to the size you need.



## *GETTING TO WORK – FOAM CORE BOARD*

We used 3/16 inch foam core as a basis for the vertical view blocks with pieces of white foam glued on either side to make a three-dimensional wall. I purchased black and white sheets of foam core at my local dollar store. They sell the sheets for a dollar apiece, much cheaper than Michael's or an art supply store.



**Top paper layer**

**Foam center**

**Bottom paper layer**

*Black and White Foam Core Boards*



## *Cutting Foam Core*

Foam Core board is best cut by using a hobby knife to cut through the paper on one side and the foam in the center, but not through the bottom layer of paper. Instead, fold along the cut and then cut the bottom layer of paper on the fold line with your knife.



## *GLUING AND PAINTING FOAM*

I ordered Foam Fusion adhesive online and used it to glue the foam to foam, foam blocks to foam core, and foam to wood. Because this glue does not require the presence of air in order to set, it works better than many other adhesives like typical white glue.



*Foam Fusion*



*Typical White Glue*



I also purchased Foam Coat online but was not as happy with the Foam Coat (below right). It turned out to be somewhat expensive and did not provide the hard shell that I expected. Foam Coat did not seal the foam as well as Killz2 (paint) to prevent and bleed through of color either.



*Killz2*



*Foam Coat*

## ***PUTTING IT TOGETHER***

A section of the pink foam was used as some foundation for the pottery factory area.



*Pottery factory area sub base.*



A section of the pink foam was used as some foundation for the village area. It was then covered with other pieces of white foam.



*The village area sub base and white foam overlay.*

I made the view block wall in removable sections so that I could paint it and use washes with it lying down.



*White rectangular pieces of foam attached to foam core board used for view blocks.*

I used several tools to sculpt the white foam blocks including the hot wire tools, a razor knife, wire brush, fingers, and fingernails.



*A sample of the sculpted view block wall.*

There are approximately 12 sections of the vertical view blocks with foam on both sides so it will take a while to get them all sculpted.

## **WHAT'S NEXT?**

In Fantasy Island - Article 9, Chuck and Jim will describe progress with landforms and possibly some painting and washes used to color them, some of the other materials being used, as well as how to use them.