



## **Non-Clinic Report**

**Fall, 2020**

**Clinic Cancelled:** It goes without saying that in-person clinics are “on hold” for the next few months. Once restrictions ease, we’ll see about resuming our monthly meetings and will be sure to let everyone know. I, for one, really miss the monthly get-togethers.

**From the Editor:** I hope you don’t mind, but I made a “command decision” to change the newsletter frequency to quarterly, vs monthly. Since there are no in-person meetings where I can photograph models and tools brought for display, I must rely on asking for stuff for the newsletter, and that can be problematic. I think a lot of you intend to send me something, but then forget and I must keep bugging you all, which I don’t want to do. This way, I will reduce my “bugging”! Of course, I am always happy to receive contributions (photos; text) anytime!

### **Clinic Chairperson Ted Becker:**

We hope all of you are staying safe and healthy. So far, I have heard no reports of any Mount Vernon clinic attendees contracting the virus. In person clinic meetings will not resume until it is deemed to be completely safe. My guess right now is Fall 2021.

In the meantime, there is lots of activity on the Internet. Al Carter has sent emails informing you to about such activities. If you can watch a video with sound on your computer, you can tune in to a Zoom clinic. Click on the link provided then click on view in browser. For a few more options install the Zoom application. Headset or speakers will let you hear what is going on. A camera and microphone will allow you to contribute. If you need more help just ask.

Response to my recent missive on potential Mount Vernon virtual clinics has been at best, underwhelming. Thank you very much to those who did step up, I will be in touch. With the lack of support there are no plans to present regularly scheduled virtual MV clinics.

Ted Becker, Clinic chairperson  
rail.bird@att.net

## Let's Talk About Virtual Clinics:

So, many of you might have seen the notices I have been forwarding out about Zoom clinics. These are simply notifications that have been published in the Grab Iron, the digital newsletter of the Fourth Division, PNR, NMRA. They announce upcoming virtual clinics and layout tours.

The Grab Iron is not a monthly publication, as it used to be, but rather an “as news breaks” format – when someone writes an article, it is posted on the 4D’s website, and subscribers are notified. You can subscribe. You do not have to be an NMRA member to subscribe. Check it out at [4dpnr.org](http://4dpnr.org) and sign up!

On to the virtual clinics. These are being hosted on the Zoom platform. Anyone with a computer, tablet, or smart phone can view these Zoom meetings. You do not have to download the Zoom app, nor “join” anything, to view a Zoom virtual clinic. Just click on the link provided to join the session.

You might see a query popup asking about enabling your camera, and maybe another one about enabling sound. The camera is not required (unless you are the moderator or clinician, of course). Sound, though – you will want that enabled, so you can hear the presentation.

The moderator and/or clinician has the option to “mute” attendees, and that is done to prevent interruptions during the presentation. Mic’s are taken off mute after the main presentation, so you can ask questions.

Of course, you can download the Zoom app, which allows you some more options, like posting a background to your on-camera face, etc.

The 4D has (had) monthly clinics all over Puget Sound – 9, I think. Right now, just the Eastside Clinic (Alex Brikhoff) and the Seattle North (Lisa Murray) are actively presenting monthly clinics and layout tours. The Skagit/Whidbey Clinic (Rich Blake) is about to start doing some clinics; for our own Mount Vernon Clinic Ted Becker is working to line up some material.

But where the clinic originates does not matter. You can view any and all of them, irrespective of location. There have been some neat layout tours in recent months, ranging from Issaquah to Port Angeles to Olympia and more. That is the neat thing about these Zoom layout tours – no driving! I know I am not much for driving long distances anymore and this is a great opportunity to view layouts that might otherwise be missed.

What if you cannot make the scheduled Zoom presentation? Don’t worry, you can view them on YouTube. On that site, go to 4d pnr youtube and you will get a list of past presentations, so you don’t have to miss any! Also, check out NMRA ORG on YouTube for national level clinics and tours – great stuff!

Virtual clinics are going to be with us for a while, and though I personally miss the camaraderie of our local meetings, Zoom clinics and tours are the next best thing. Try it – you just might like it!

**Working At Home Activities:** Those that answered my plea for newsletter material include **Mike O'Brien, Stephen Winter, Ted Becker, Karl Kleeman, Nick Muff, Jim Betz, Terry Andrew, Dave Sherwood,** and **Don Jones.** Thanks so much, guys! Read below to see what they have been up to.

**Don Jones** and a few members of the Whatcom Skagit Model RR Club have been meeting in groups of 3 or 4 (masked up) and working on the HO layout. Don has been working on a waterfall and creek near the summit area. Don says:

*I used clear silicone sealant to make the streams and plumes of water. I squeezed out a strip of about 1/8-inch-wide onto a glass plate and allowed it to cure for 24 hours. It is then removed with a razor blade to produce a floppy "stringy stream" of water about 3 to 4 inches long. Next, I used matte medium to glue the stream to the edge of the waterfall. When everything was dry, an off-white craft paint was lightly brushed on to highlight the stream waves and plumes. The same was done to the waterfall pool to highlight the waves and ripples.*



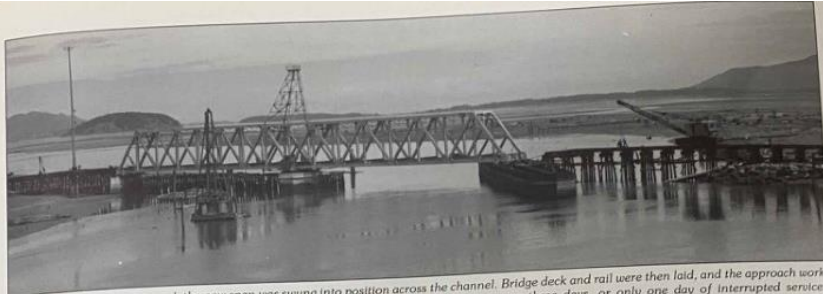


**Jim Betz** is busy building his HO version of the GN branch lines than ran west to Anacortes and east to Concrete, from Burlington. He writes:

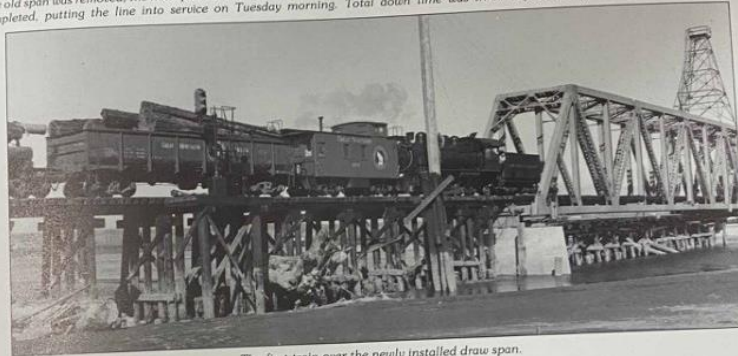
*Here is the latest pic I have of my layout (under construction). The large 'round' platform on the right is the top of the Vancouver helix - it will not have track on it but rather will be the location for my representation of Burlington Hill. I'm going to do the hill by using an enlarged version of a topo map and cutting out the actual contour layers of the hill as rings of pink foam that will be glued on top of the other to form a "hollow mountain".*



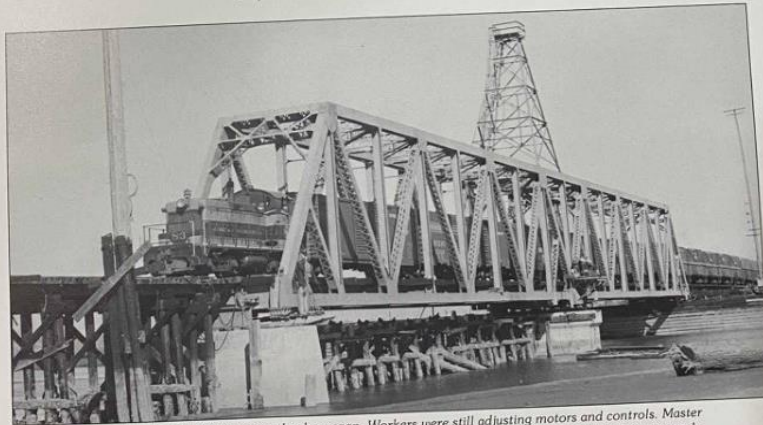
Here is an interesting factoid - the first train over the newly replaced Swinomish Slough bridge in '52/'53 used steam! Also, of note is that the earlier bridge (before '52) was a Parker truss (arched top chord). The bridge was replaced in just 3 days! They brought it in on two barges, lifted and placed it on an already prepared location on the 'far' landing for the existing swing bridge, removed the old bridge and put it on the same barges and took it away. Started on Saturday and completed on Tuesday so only ONE day of interrupted service. Pretty slick!



After the old span was removed, the new span was swung into position across the channel. Bridge deck and rail were then laid, and the approach work was completed, putting the line into service on Tuesday morning. Total down time was three days, or only one day of interrupted service.



The first train over the newly installed draw span.



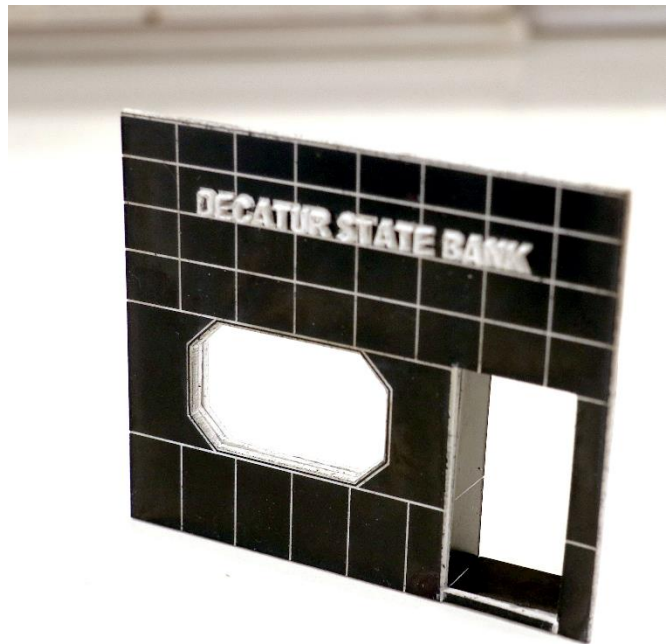
A regular local freight traverses the draw span. Workers were still adjusting motors and controls. Master controls were located above the span's pivot, and a remote control was also placed at the east approach.

*I only have one major part of the benchwork left to do – which is to build the lift out for the Baker River bridge in Concrete. In the picture it is that large 'wooden box' which is made from pink foam sandwiched with door skin. You can see the box sitting in the background across the door in its approximate final site. But it will first be cut away (front and sides) and then dropped down so that the Baker River bridge will be level with the layout on either side. The liftout will be rarely used since it is only used in the event of a need for emergency exit from the layout to the outside.*

*Today I'm starting to lay track in staging and will wire it as I go. I don't yet have a good idea of how much time the track and wiring will take but the plan is to lay it in staging, then on both helices, and finally the visible layout. All track and wiring will be tested as I go - "what I wire today I test today". I have already 'laid out' the track in the Burlington Yard so that part of the construction will go fairly quickly (when I start on it). Yes, I'm going to have a curved turnout ladder in the yard in order to increase yard track capacity. I am using all Peco track so they will be Peco #7 code 83 curved turnouts (only three).*

**Nick Muff** is busy as ever, churning out structures left and right with his laser cutter, and using his 3D printer to make some of the interesting details. He writes:

*I am doing the laser cutting for structures for Decatur, AR. This includes the Decatur State Bank. It has a black marble facade with white grouting. For years I considered the best way to do this. The lettering across the top (gone in the photo) was raised. I went to D&L Trophy and got some of the black surface/white core material the use for laser cutting signs. A new material for me. It acts and cuts like acrylic. I am very pleased with what I have been able to accomplish. I laser cut engraved the joint lines and cut the piece out. I also recessed the spots where the lettering would go to accurately position each letter. Finally, I was able to successfully cut out the tiny letters and glue them in place. Whew! The marble trim extends into the recessed doorway and I cut these pieces as well.*



*The end result is a reasonable reproduction of the original and I learned to work with a new material. It won't glue with MEK but (like acrylic) does glue with dichloromethane.*



*I am currently having "Fun with Structures" completing site specific buildings for the town of Gentry, Arkansas. I have completed the "Curran's Station" gas station. I am making good progress on, left to right: Frans Beauty Shop, Gentry Rexall Drug Store, Cardinal Food Store, Backers Variety Store, Allen's Shoe Shop, Gentry State Bank.*



*The bank is the greatest challenge with its multiple unusual sculptures and Corinthian Capitals. It is great that I can use Google maps to take a look at the Bank Building anytime I need. And that includes the roof! Isn't technology amazing!*



**Stephen Winter** is part of the Pacific Northwest On30 Modular Group (<http://pnwon30.org>) in addition to being a member of the WSMRC, where he runs HO trains along with his son, Robbie. Stephen has been busy modifying some On30 passenger cars, and sends some photos and a description of what he did:

*I finally had some time to finish a few things on this one, and I think I am ready to call it done. I am pretty happy overall, probably do the lighting a bit different on the next one as they are not diffuse enough along the top row of windows for my liking, but they'll do for now. Truck and wheels painted, and everything got a light coat of dirt.... (no lights in the pictures since the module is not powered at the moment) stock Bachmann pic added for what it was before I started...*



*Yes, this is our own railroad... Roberts Creek & Western. It is an On30 Bashed Coach/Combine. (I boarded up half the windows)*

*The decals were made by Bill Brillinger at Precision Design ([pdc.ca](http://pdc.ca)). I asked him to model the logo off a BC Forestry logo I saw a few years ago.*

*For the windows, I used 1x8 O-scale lumber and cut the planks to fit in the window frame. Three planks fit vertically with a little trimming. The window had a ledge around them, so it was mostly press fit. There is one cross piece in the back to level things out as the ledge was a different depth at the bottom than the top. A little glue added to keep everything from falling out....*



**Ted Becker** says: *This space at the end of the peninsula has been bugging me. It is not really big enough or shaped right to do much with it. For reference a spur comes down into the space at the upper end.*



*One of my interests is waterfront and seaport scenes and this looked like a good spot if the plywood could be lowered. The old plywood came up quite easily. Joists will have to be trimmed back and supports added to support the lowered plywood.*



*After some surgery on the benchwork and some housecleaning here is the result. The old plywood is laid in place to illustrate the scope of the expansion. The water will extend up to the mainline. Somewhat like the GN line along Puget Sound. The corner is no longer beveled and 3" of aisle space was sacrificed. It started as a 48" aisle, so the loss is hardly noticeable.*



*The new, lowered "sea level" is about 3 1/2" below the mainline rail. Plan details are indefinite but there will likely be a RR car ferry in the corner. Exactly what body of water this is and how it connects to the main seaport across the aisle has not been explained and maybe never will.*

*The area inside the loop will be about 4" higher than the mainline, the level of the yard in the background. It will be the site of a turntable, roundhouse, coaling tower, fuel oil and water tanks, sand tower and other RR service facilities.*



**Karl Kleeman and Dale Bearden** continue to work on their traveling layout depicting the Monson 2 ft gauge railroad from the State of Maine. Karl writes: *We decided to add another 4 ft module so we could include a unique feature. This is cattle crossing that went under the track. We have not added much detail to this scene yet; we had hoped to first present this layout at the Lynden show but that was cancelled. Who knows what will happen to upcoming train shows?*

*We are incorporating the Monson modules into a larger home layout, all 2 ft Maine railroads. There were several of them and we are pulling scenes from a couple other 2 ft. gauge roads. We have completed a drawing of 42 inches by 11 ft section which includes a long wharf and businesses along the river and a sawmill. This will be fixed benchwork and will not be included in the traveling layout. But both this and Monson will be integrated into our home layout operations.*



*Karl laying plaster cloth. All of our Monson modules are built on aluminum frames and we use foam to create the contours. We then cover the foam with plaster cloth to provide a good surface for adding soil and other scenic materials. The end result is a very light module for ease of moving.*





*The partially completed cattle crossing. The sides of the walls of the crossing were held in place by logs. We used some very fine sand with a slight green color mixed 50/50 with dirt that we collected, crushed, sifted and "cooked" to kill off any microbes for the base ground cover.*



*A broader view of the crossing. This module will also include farm buildings and lots of trees and grasses. It will be an autumn scene as you can see by the trees.*



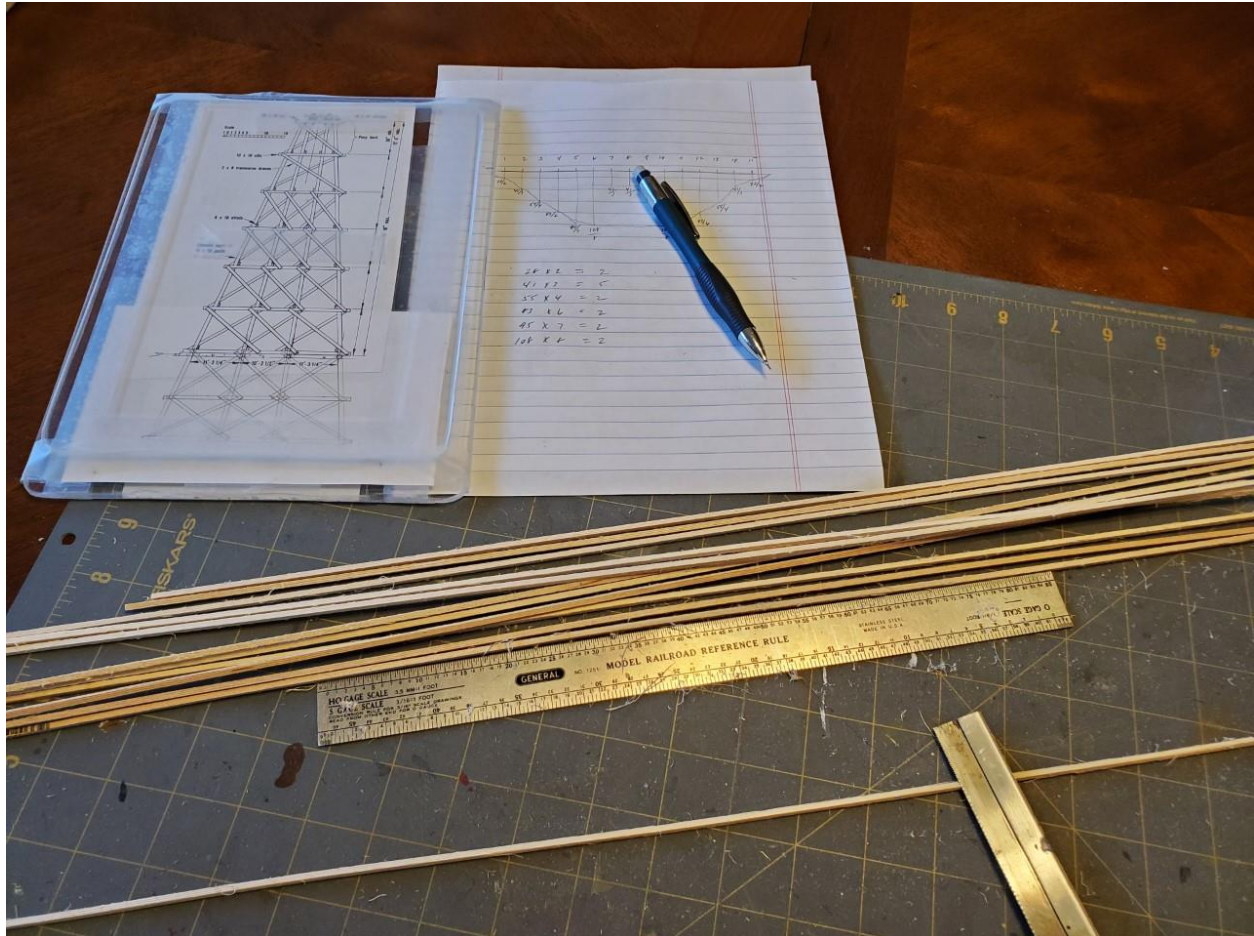
**Terry Andrew** writes: *My first card stock structure from Team Track Models using mat board, poster board and downloaded texture paper. It turned out good although there are some things I would do differently next time.*



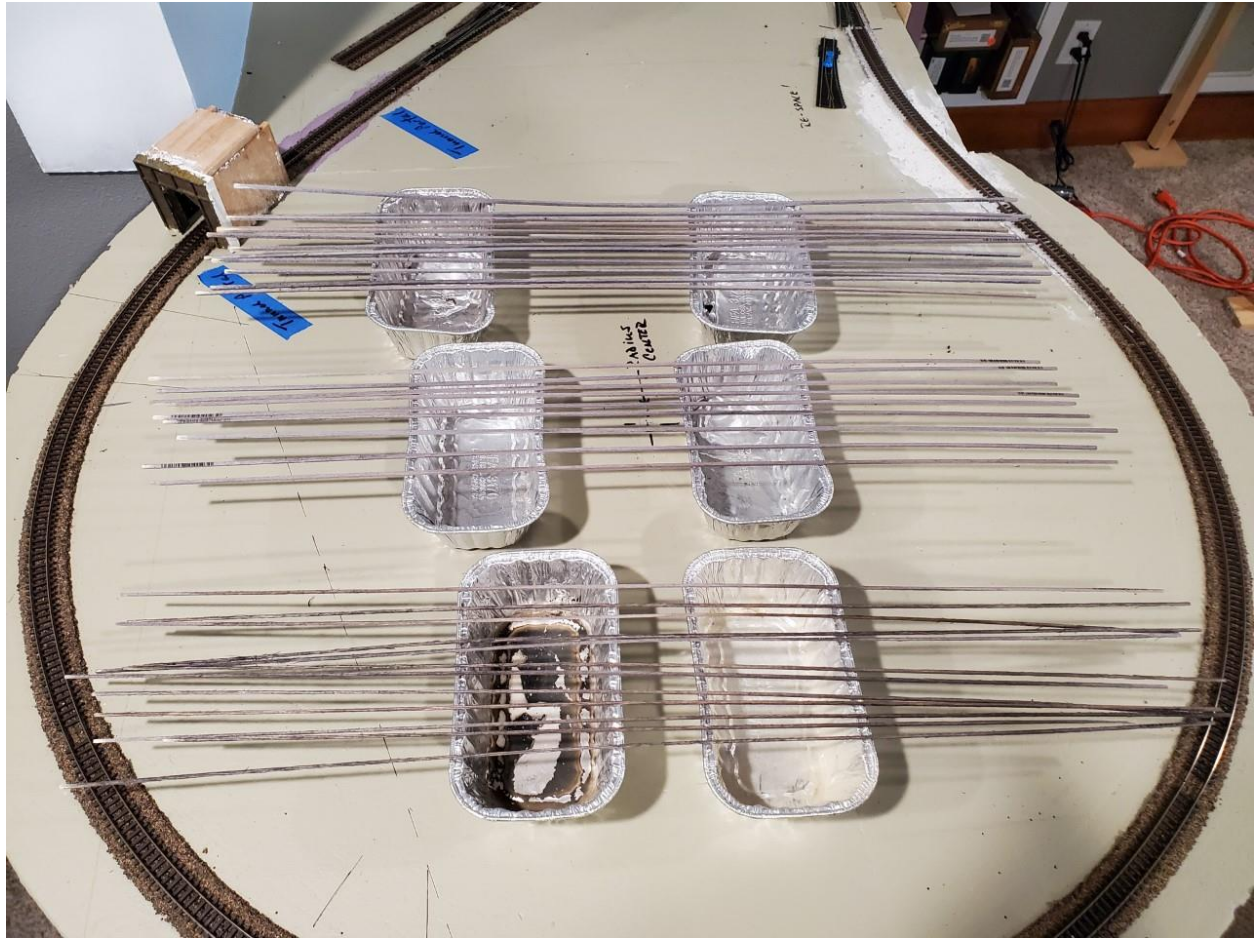
Editor's Note: Besides Teamtrackmodels.com, also look at Krafttrains.com and Clevermodels.net for more options regarding paper structures; some of them are free.



**Mike O'Brien**, now firmly established as a resident off Hayden, Idaho, is working on his new N scale layout and sends some progress photos of a trestle he is scratchbuilding:

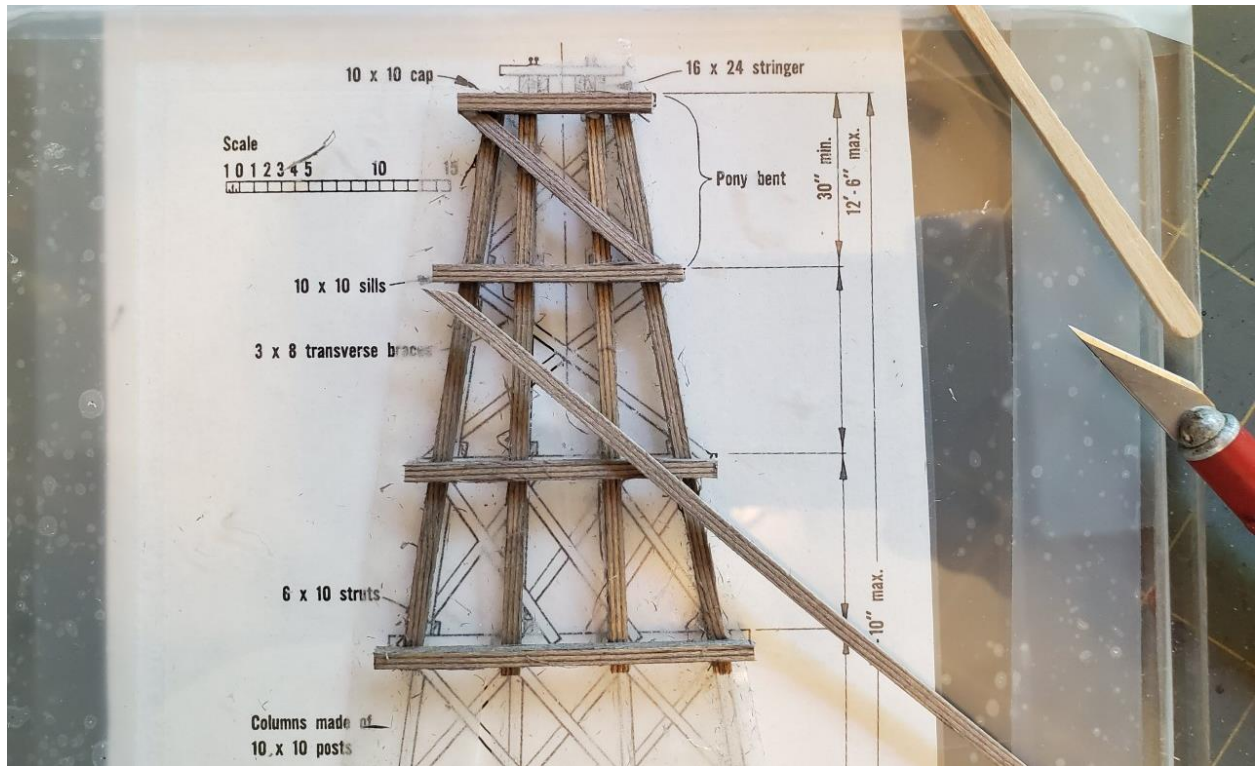


*I found a diagram (almost to scale) for my N Scale curved trestle in the Kalmbach book: Model Railroad Bridges & Trestles. I had to photocopy the image at 90% to make it accurate. Knowing the length of the bridge and the approximate depth/height I wanted to make it ... I just did the math and sketched out the number of bents needed and their respective height.*

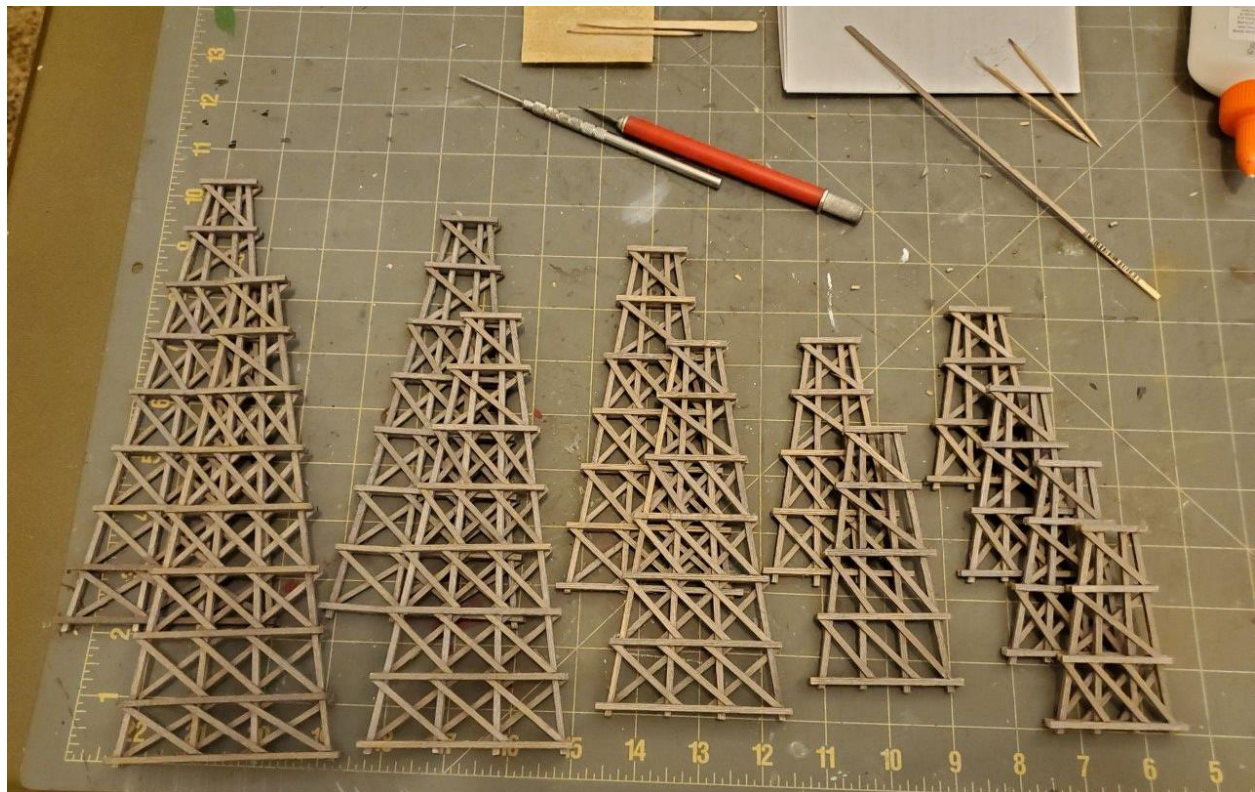


*The scale lumber was from Midwest Products and I used a gray, wood-aging stain by Rustall called "Weather All." I put 2-sided tape over the template and cut pre-stained bass strip wood to fit. White glue was sparingly used to glue each piece together.*



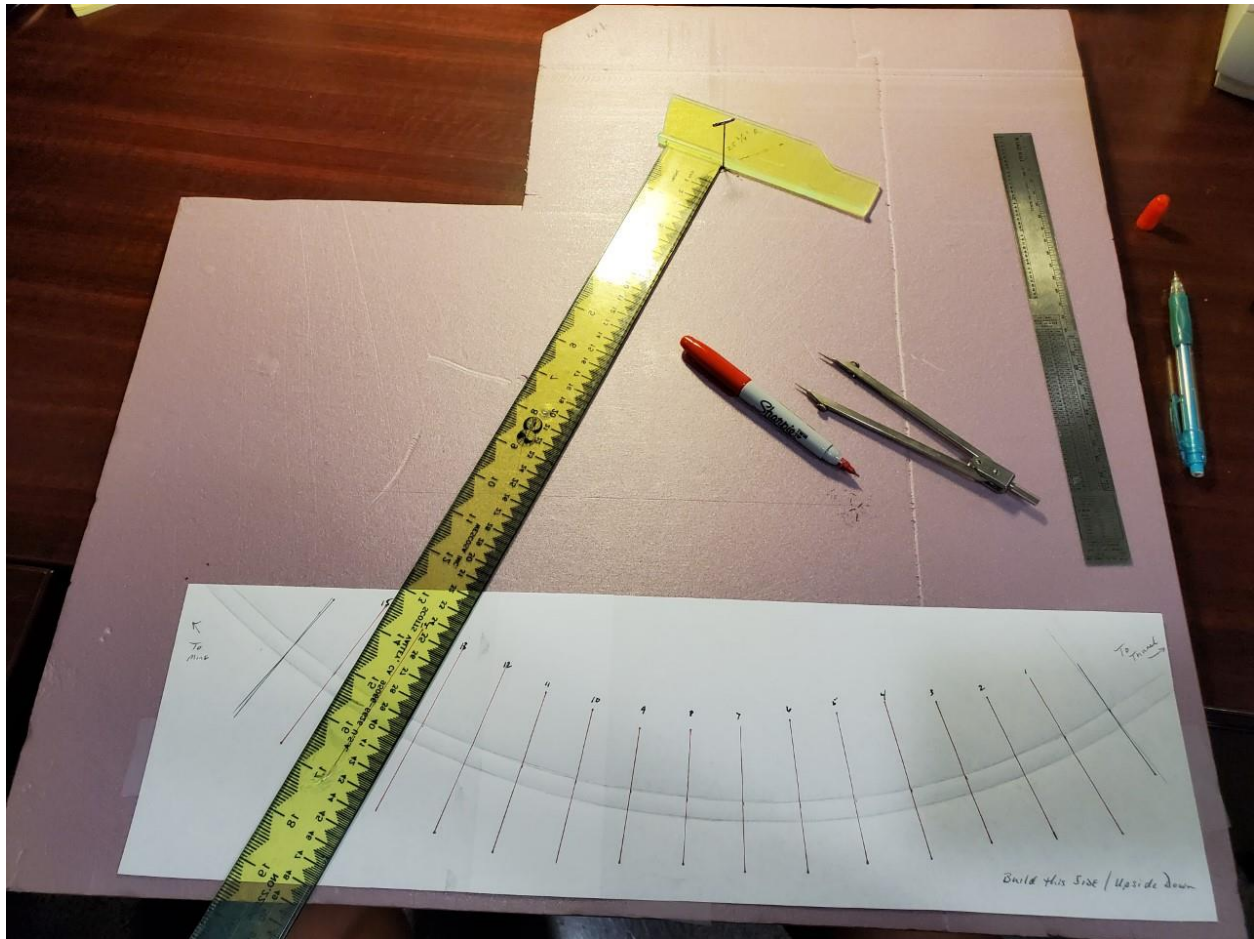


*A better shot while the bent was still over the template (above); 12 of 15 completed bents (below)*

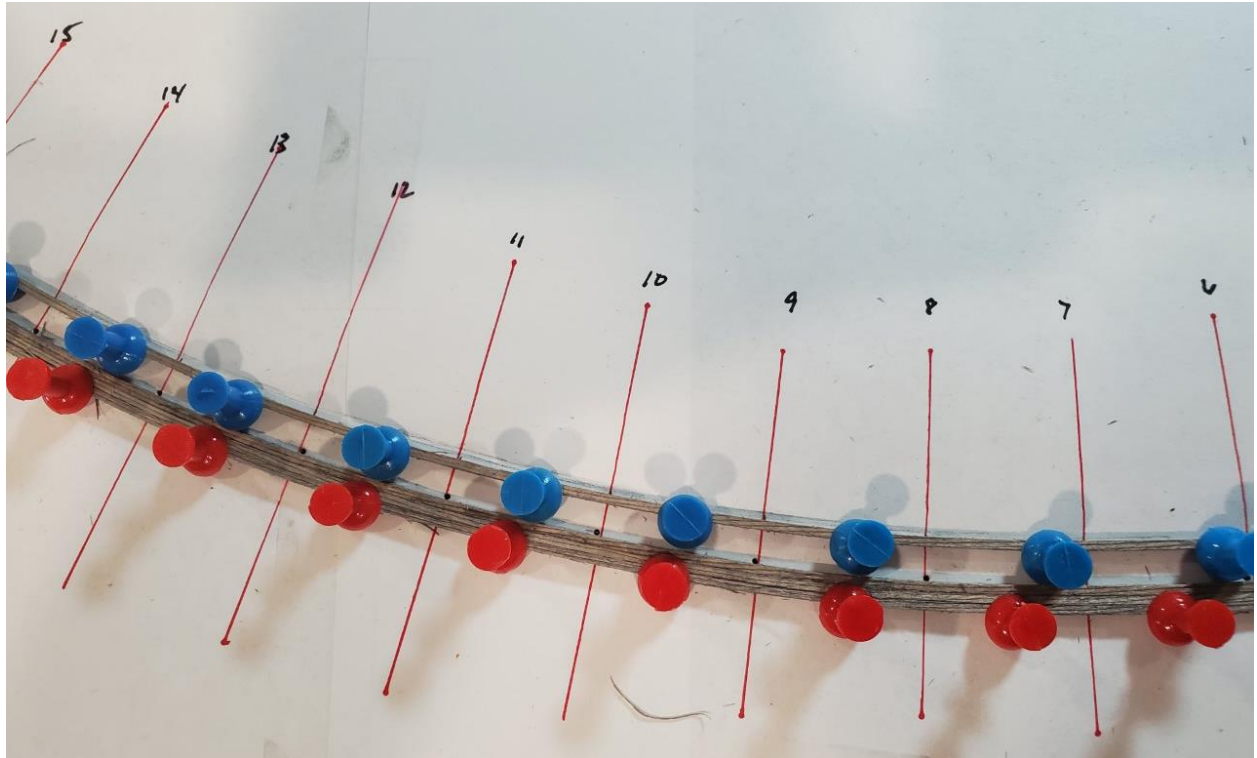




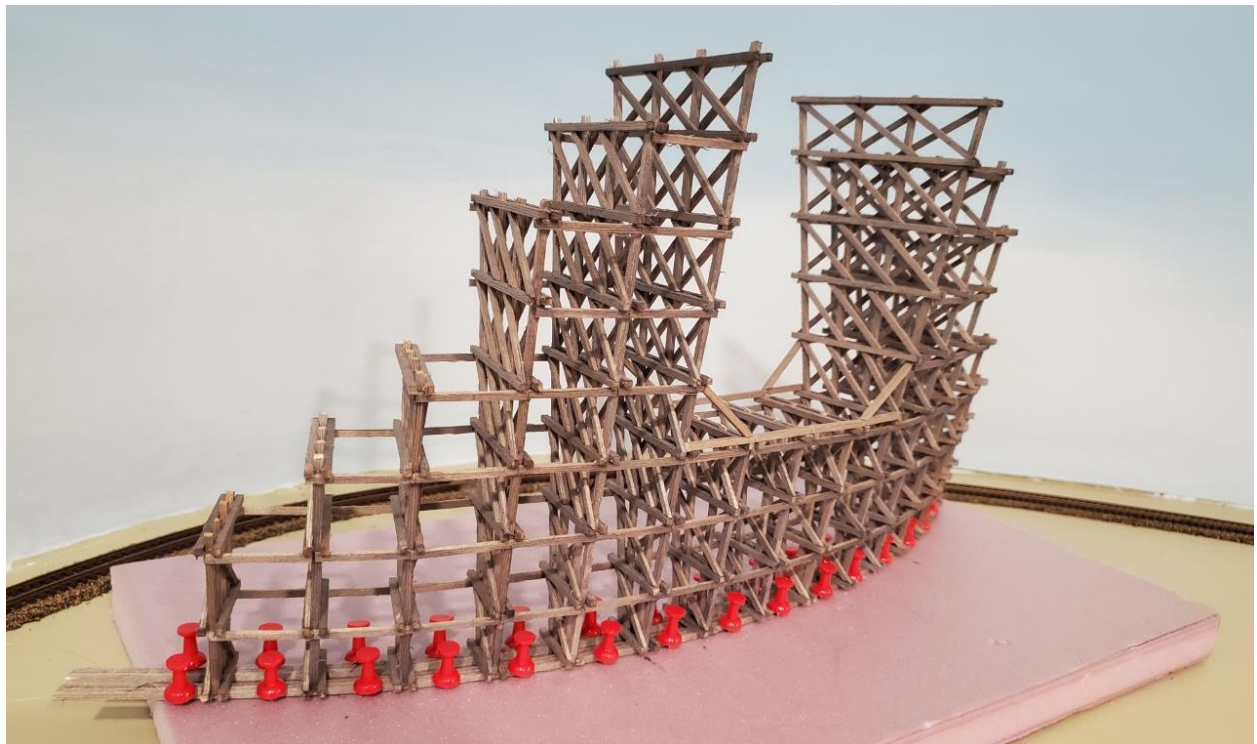
*Now the hard part ... getting these in line & angled correctly. Having to build it upside down, I traced the track radius on paper, located the radius point and worked from there.*



*My "drafting table" and a reminder that I was working upside down and backwards, so when this was flipped, it would be in the correct position*



*Laminating the stringers (not prototypical, but I couldn't figure out another way to do it).*



*With the stringers done and dry, I started to glue the bents in place, making sure they were centered, vertical and aligned with my radius point (16" out)*





*Unpinned it to make sure everything was going to work and see how it looked. So far so good.*

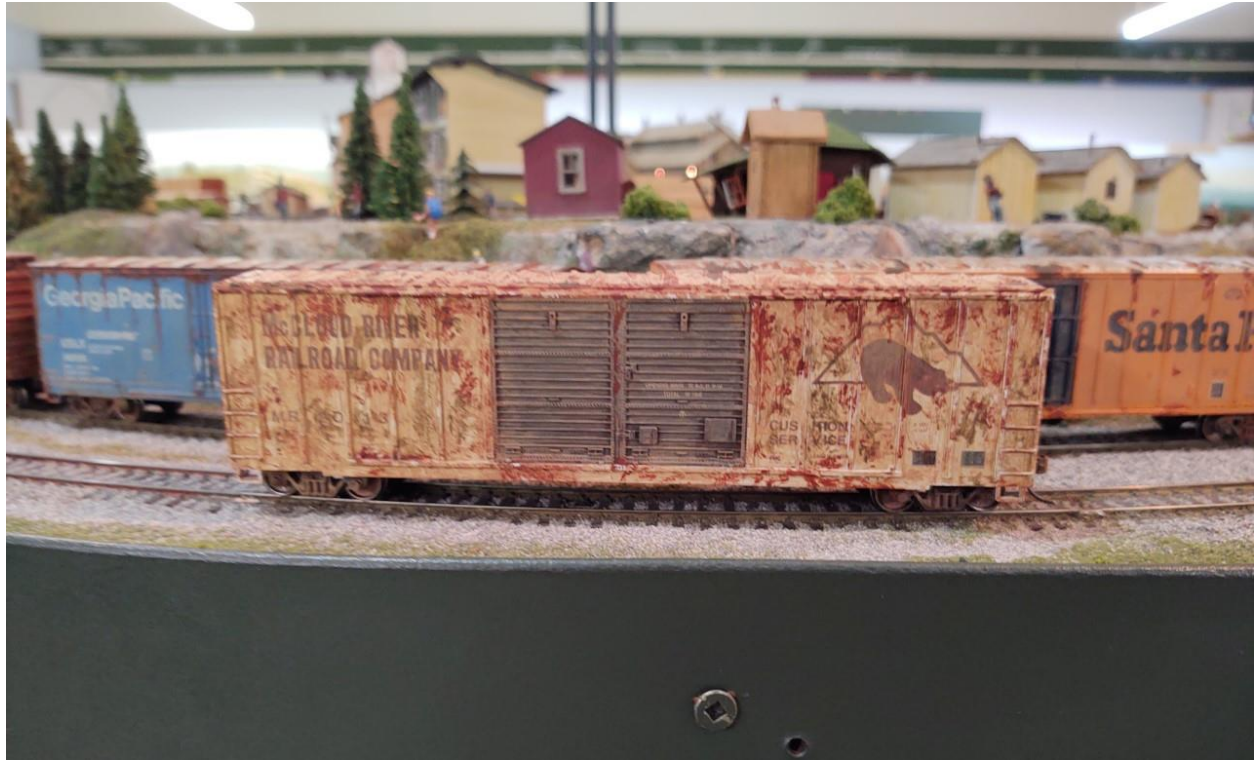
*Next up ... Track is being painted and weathered. I'm using Micro Engineering bridge track kits. It comes with the separate inside rail guards too. Getting those glued down correctly will be a challenge. But that is what we signed up for ... right??*



**Dave Sherwood** has been busy weathering up a lot of his rolling stock. He reports he is using acrylic paints and washes to achieve the nice weathering on his rolling stock. He submitted 24 (!) photos; below are just a few of them. All photos are taken on the HO scale layout at the Whatcom Skagit Model Railroad Club in Alger, WA.











**Dave** has also been adding moss on the north facing roofs of some structures at the WSMRC, using various shades of fine Woodland Scenics ground foam.



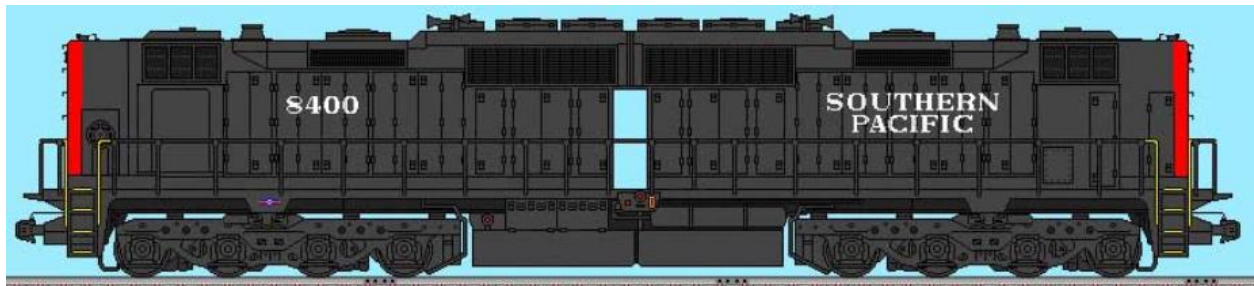








What is this odd creature?



It is a DD35 B unit, or “cableless booster”, and Dave Sherwood is looking for one in HO scale – let him know via email at [d.e.shwrd@gmail.com](mailto:d.e.shwrd@gmail.com) if you have one for sale or know of one.

**Al Carter:** *For the past couple of months I’ve concentrated on trying to finish a “city block” that sets toward the back of my layout (30 plus inches from the front) – the idea being to work from back to front, so as not to inflict damage on foreground scenery. The block is 42” long by 4” deep. The idea was to build it as a removable piece so I could bring it down to the clinic to show it, but after finally getting it installed, and what with the Covid thing, that just ain’t happenin’!*



*So I’ve forced myself to work on this and nothing but this. Lots of challenges! The buildings are a mixture of kit-built; some that were so heavily modified, they are practically scratchbuilt. Special thanks to Nick Muff who created the three large signs with his CAD program, then printed the art work on overhead transparency sheets, which I then laminated onto Miller Engineering Electro-Luminescent material (1<sup>st</sup> National Bank, Rosembaum’s and Harmony). One of the buildings, the Rosembaum’s store, is actually a modified “kit” that Nick provided. He had created and laser cut a theater structure for his layout, which I was admiring, and he volunteered to cut one for me. I shortened the walls so it isn’t as wide as the original.*





*I also added interiors or printed interiors to all structures, and added canopys to several of them. Also included are 5 Miller Engineering animated signs. Buildings are illuminated with LEDs, and yes, I saw the light leaks and have corrected them (!).*



*Oh, and the streetlights are Woodland Scenics "Just Plug" lights. If you've never experienced the joy of trying to work with magnet wire (the W/S lights), you don't know what you are missing! Not exactly an easy job under the layout (is any wiring easy under the layout?). Which is one reason I built the entire block on my work bench, where I could complete all wiring without contorting my body into a pretzel...*









*The name “Harmony” was chosen to go with the “Harmony Furniture and Appliances” Miller Engineering animated sign (not turned on in this view). The interior “furniture” was a mixture of plastic castings from various manufacturers (including Revell – remember the HO scale moving van?). The “appliances” side of the store contains scratchbuilt (if you could call it that) details, made from balsawood and plaster castings.*

*For the printed interior of the bank, I used an image from “John’s Interiors and Business Signs”. This vendor sells images of various businesses and complimentary signs. He has a wide variety of images available. This is where I found the images for the pizza restaurant and Woolworth’s, also. You can visit his web page at [johnsmodelrrdepot.com](http://johnsmodelrrdepot.com). It’s a bit wonky, but worth a look if you are wanting printed building interiors. Or you can just do like Nick and others do, and search the internet for an image, save it, re-size it, and print it.*

*The interior images of the drug store, record store and Rosenbaum’s were interior photos sold by City Classics*

*The interior images are all backlit with LEDs approximately ½ to 1 inch back of the image.*



*The "Rosenbaum's Department Store" name matches the same name on a City Classics commercial storefront sign (not illuminated, and not visible in this photo). Nano LEDs illuminate the mannequins.*





*Finally, here is a small barbershop that sits in the middle of the block. It is a Bar Mills kit (I think) that was built 15 or 20 years ago by John Quallsund for my last layout, , when I lived in Kirkland,. I had to open it up to replace the light bulb with an LED.*



*Now that this block is done and installed, I can move on to other projects!*

**Tool Time:** Here's a nifty uncoupling tool that I read about in the NMRA magazine column "Tool Junkie" (Jack Hamilton, MMR, who lives over in Poulsbo). They are called "Interdental Pics" and they come in different sizes. I tried several, then settled on #3 from Bamboo Picksters, available on Amazon. These seem to work much better (for me, anyway) than the typical bamboo skewer application. They come with a clear plastic shield for the brush end, which can be put on the handle, to make it a bit longer and easier to hold. Here is what to search for on Amazon:

**Bamboo Piksters Interdental Brushes | Sizes 00-6 | 8 Pack (8 Pack, Size 3 (Yellow))**

Credit to Jack for this suggestion. Side note: reading Jack's monthly column has cost me a few dollars! Seriously, he has put me on to some really neat tools. Just another reason to be an NMRA member with magazine subscription. Sorry, no photo, but check them out on Amazon and try them out for yourself.

**Until Next Issue:** Keep working on your models and layouts, and remember to take some in-progress photos, so you'll have lots to send me in about 3 months when I "bug you" again!

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

**Help Out:** To volunteer for a virtual clinic, or to suggest a virtual clinic topic, contact **Ted Becker** at [rail.bird@att.net](mailto:rail.bird@att.net)

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

**Sponsorship:** The Mount Vernon NMRA clinic is one of several clinics sponsored by the Fourth Division, Pacific Northwest Region, National Model Railroad Association. We normally meet on the 3<sup>rd</sup> Monday at 7:00 pm at the Mount Vernon Senior Center, 1401 Cleveland Street, but obviously that is "on pause" until the Covid-19 issue is over.

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](http://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.

