



The Mount Vernon NMRA Clinic



Bob Stafford Makes Trees From Rabbit Bush



No, folks are not turning their heads for a mug shot – they are looking at **Steve McCartt** explaining the construction techniques he used on his N scale mountain (details below).

October 16, 2023 Highlights

Seventeen people braved the rainy night to come and see firsthand what **Bob Stafford's** "rabbit bush trees" looked like (more on that below). If there was an award for "farthest distance traveled", **Paul Vaughn** would certainly get it as he drove all the way up to Mount Vernon from his home in Graham (east of Puyallup). Paul said he "just needed to get out of the house."

It has been a while since we have seen Burlington resident **Jim Betz**, who returned with his wife **Loretta**. And **Tom O'Hara** of Bellingham came as well – not sure, but that might have been the first time for Tom?

MINI CLINICS:

In years past, we've devoted a clinic night to "mini clinics", not featuring just one clinician, but having a variety of folks volunteer to do a mini clinic (10 minutes maximum) on whatever they can share with the group. Have an idea for a mini clinic? Talk to me, let me know what you can do, and I'll put together an agenda. Thinking this will probably be in February or later. This can be a live demonstration, or if you prefer, we can use the projector to show your clinic – just put it on a USB stick.

Coming Down the Track

November 11 Alger

WSMRC Open House

November 20 Mt Vernon

Clinic: Decaling Cliff Aker

November 23 Kent

Boeing Employees Model

RR Club Swap Meet

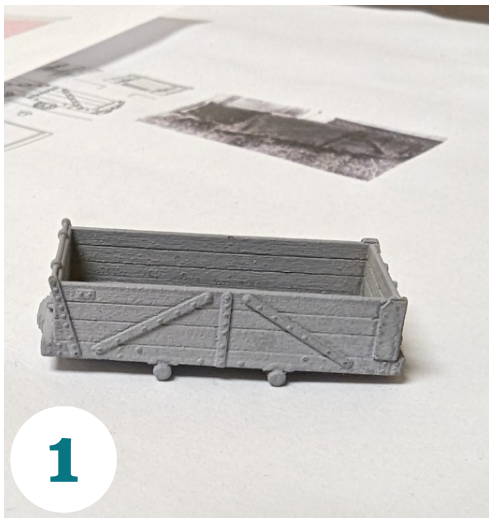
November 25 Alger

WSMRC Open House



Tool Time: Al Carter brought the only item to share in Tool Time this month: a "flour duster" used for baking. This has finer openings than even the mesh on a kitchen strainer, and Al plans to use it to dust "snow" on his a-building Alaska Railroad. It came from Amazon for \$6.36 and has a nifty spring-loaded handle so it can be used to scoop the material up effortlessly, close the top, flip it over, and make it snow. This would also work well for spreading "chinchilla dust" or similar powdered ground cover. Here is [the link](#)





Modeler's Showcase

1. Nick Muff brought his a nifty HOn3 anthracite mine hopper that he drew up plans for with his CAD program, then had Shapeways print it. Nick reports that although he has a resin 3D printer, his printer cannot get to the level of detail that commercial 3D printers like Shapeways can do. If you look closely, notice the fine rivets printed on the side. This little unit is only about two inches long. This is a project he is working on for Bob Stafford.

2. Nick also brought his "swamp cabin" (all scratchbuilt, of course, with flickering light and banjo music within), and three stains made by Vetro: "Ivy Green", "Aged Barn Wood", and "Swamp Rot". Nick used all three to stain and age his "bayou" cabin.

3. Both Nick and Al have a fondness for gas stations, and Al had found an old gas station in Seattle (Lake City area) that had been turned into a radiator shop some years back. Al had taken pictures from all sides of the building, and sent them to Nick, who embarked on a mission to draw plans of the structure. Unable to ascertain some measurements from the photos

(Nick is a stickler for details), Nick and his wife Sue drove down to Lake City to view the structure, which is now a Mediterranean restaurant. Nick and Sue enjoyed a nice meal and Nick also measured the structure. That is dedication! But the story does not end there... Nick completed the plans, then laser cut the components (walls, roof, windows, doors, etc. from 1/16 basswood, and laser cut the brick layer out of HO scale styrene brick from N Scale Architect (the sell materials in various scales, not just N scale). The prototype building is constructed of "7th row lock" style brick (every seventh row the brick is turned 90 degrees to the front, for structural strength), and the N Scale Architect material accurately represents that. Not that anyone can see that detail without an Optivisor, but still... So, Nick presented Al with "Kit #1 of 1" (without instructions!), and Al can complete the structure. Nick had printed up an extra shell out of the wood to use as an example. In the photo, you can see Al's photos of the structure, Nick's drawings, the "sample shell," and some of the laser cut components on the left.

Modeler's Showcase (Continued)

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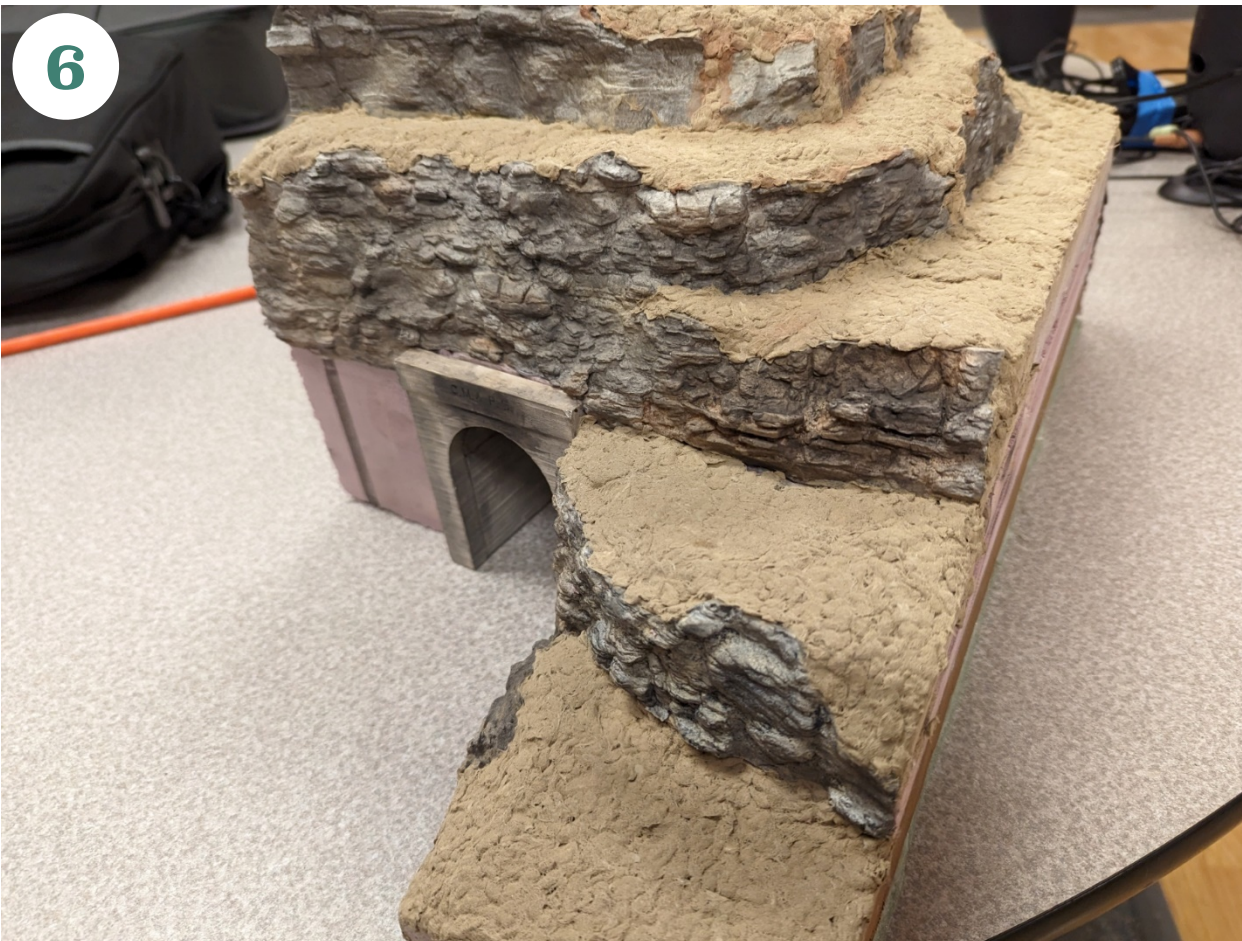
4. From the “Go Build A Mountain” department, **Steve McCart** displayed his N scale mountain, built out of foam insulation board, foam “Great Stuff” caulking, and finished with some rock castings, trees, grasses, people, and even a truck with a fellow hefting a bale of hay (remember, this is N scale) The photo on the right shows the partially completed “cake” with the expanded foam evident.

5. From the “You Don’t See This Very Often” department, **Doug Seward** showed us three O gauge Lionel freight cars that he weathered. If it were not for the obvious Lionel couplers and trucks, these cars would fit in very nicely on an O scale (1:48) layout. Doug reports that all the weathering was done with acrylic paints, thinned to a “wash” consistency.

6. Another mountain, this time from **Al Carter**, an in-progress removable mountain/tunnel for a portion of his Alaska Railroad that sits against a wall. Constructed of pink foam insulation board, with a tunnel complete with tunnel liner, the rocks are rubber rocks offered by Cripplebush Valley Models ([Cripplebush Valley Models, Home of RUBBER ROCKS](#)).

Al colored the “rocks” by first coating the gray rubber rocks (easily cut into pieces with scissors) with artist’s gesso to give them a consistent base, then adding color with Pan Pastels and Bragdon Enterprises powders in various colors. The basic ground cover is a product called “Fusion Fiber”, which is a very lightweight, easily mixed and applied material. This helps keep the weight down. Next will come some soil and winter bushes/weeds/bushes, followed by a generous snowfall, and then some winter trees. Stay tuned and watch this progress.

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Main Event

The evening's featured clinician was **Bob Stafford** describing how he makes trees from "rabbit bush", which is a plant (weed?) that he obtains over near Pasco, WA

Bob went to a lot of effort to make a video showing how to take a basic piece of rabbit bush and turn it into a tree. You can follow along with Bob here: [Making Trees From Rabbitbush](#)

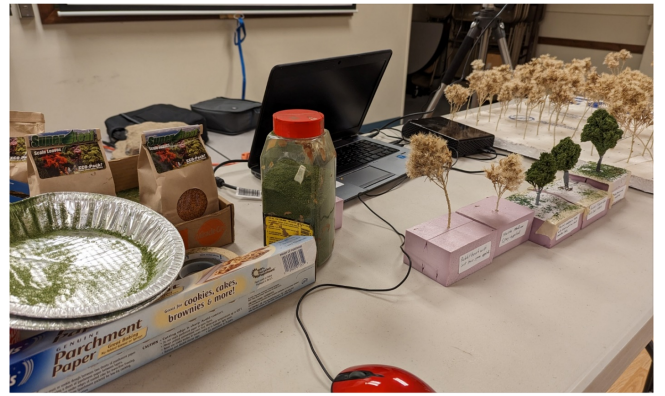
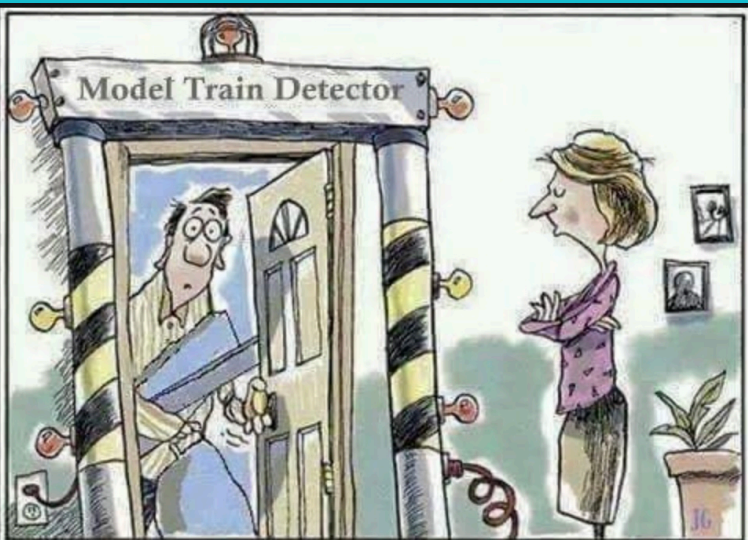
Bob uses the rabbit bush as a basic armature for the tree, then bulks up the trunk with either brown florist's tape (the kind with beeswax added) or Golden Modeling Paste.

Once the trunk looks good to him, Bob paints the trunk with various shades of gray acrylic craft paints, followed by a wash of a darker color to give some variation.

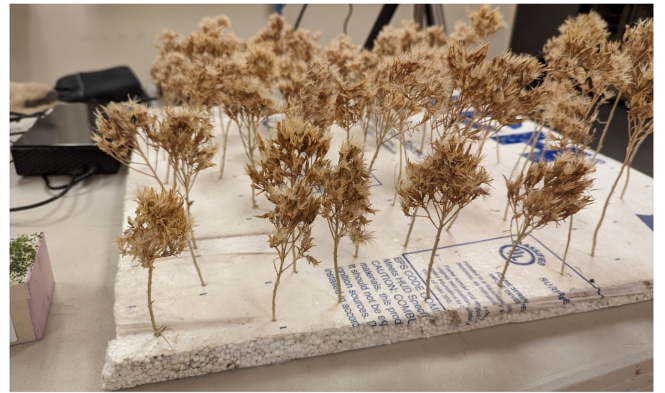
Bob then gives the branch structure a good dousing of hair spray, sprinkles on various shades of ground foam, more hair spray, then adds scale leaves. For leaves, Bob recommends those from Scenic Express which he says are far superior to those offered by Woodland Scenics.

Bob finishes the tree by giving it a good dousing of diluted matte medium. Bob finds that he does not like spraying the matte medium, but rather he uses a pipette to apply the medium. He says this last step is necessary to keep the tree intact, as hair spray will lose its holding power within a year or two. Those are the basics. But to get the full version, watch Bob's video (link above).

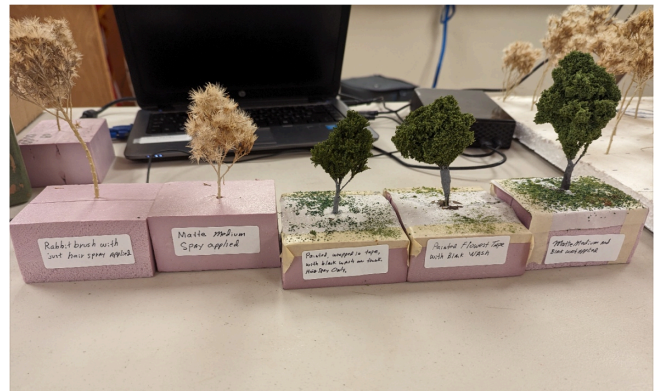
The Laugh Track



The supplies needed for making rabbit bush trees



A bunch of "virgin" rabbit bush, waiting to be turned into scale trees.



Some trees in various stages of completion.



Bob explains the process to Steve Londino



Jim Betz works on creating a take home tree, while Doug Seward observes.



Loretta Betz puts the finishing touches her rabbit bush tree while John Bayer looks on.



Mark Malmkar says, "look what I made – a tree from rabbit bush!"

RABBIT BUSH HANDS ON

To top off his demonstration for the evening, Bob brought some extra rabbit bush and supplies and invited the attendees to try their hand at tree making.

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. No meetings during the summer months (June, July, August). Membership in the NMRA is **NOT** required to attend our clinic. 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.

4TH DIVISION ZOOM LAYOUT TOURS

Courtesy of Cliff Aaker

You can expect a regular layout tour the second Saturday of each month at 10:00 AM. The Zoom link will be posted on the [Grab Iron](#).

One of the best clinic options is the meetings put on by the [NMRA 4th Division](#). Some of these are also Zoom Meetings.

The 4th division also provide a youtube archive of past Layout tours and clinic videos you can access at www.youtube.com/c/4dpnrMovies

You can also visit the NMRA youtube channel <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCHw-7-1FWB5zQgTM0ZVY-Yw>

Note: Membership in the NMRA is not required to view Zoom meetings or on line clinics.