



The Mount Vernon NMRA Clinic



MMR Dale Bearden & MMR Nick Muff on Dead Rail



Tool Time:



Phil Hernandez showed a spray can of CRC Electronic Cleaner, which he says is great for improving electrical contact between wheels and track. He also reminded us that various variety stores (Dollar Tree, Michaels, etc.) have Halloween-themed items on their shelves now, some of which can be used in our hobby, such as ground mats.



(continued on page 2)

September 16, 2024 Highlights



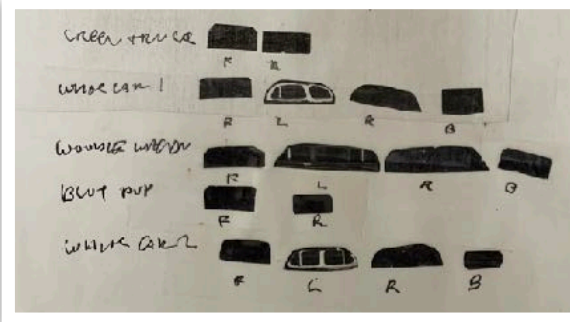
Attendance: About 20 folks showed up, eager to hear MMRs **Dale Bearden** and **Nick Muff** tell us all about how to use the Blunami system to power your trains without having electricity running through the rails. Dale uses the system on his On30 Monson Railroad, as well as experimenting with using it in HOn30 scale. Nick retrofitted an A/B set of Walthers Proto-1000 F7 units to run on the Blunami system.

October 21 Clinic: Some of you may remember the old Swamp Creek & Western club (HO scale) that resided in the Edmonds Amtrak depot for many, many years. Unfortunately, the club lost its lease a couple of years ago and was in search of a new location. Come to the October 21 clinic and see **Glenn Farley, MMR**, give a presentation with lots of photos of the history of the SC&W and its under-construction new layout in Everett at the new Everett Railroad Heritage Museum.

New and Improved Tool Time



David Sherwood seemed to be “hammering” home the point that a great tool for reaching hard to...well...reach places on your layout for cleaning is to create a unit like this one with an abrasive tip on a long pole.



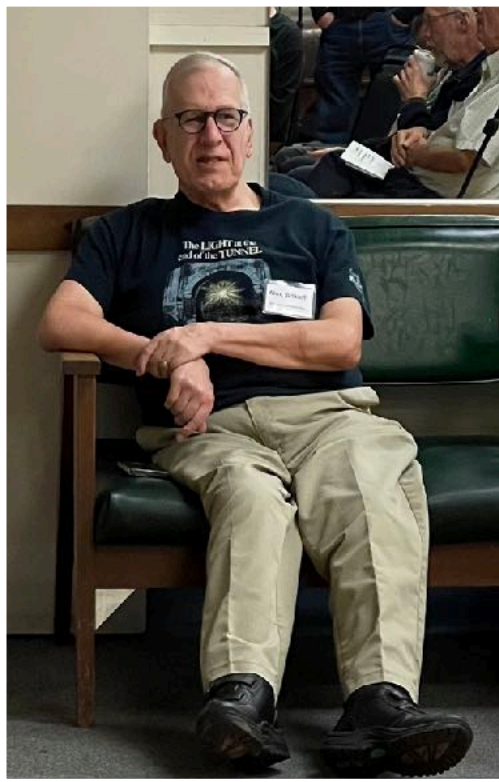
Nick Muff shared a template he created for modeling windshields, side windows as well as rear window in various vehicles. He places the template on clear plastic sheets like the kind used back in the days of overhead projectors that were once used in schools.

Tool Time: Continued



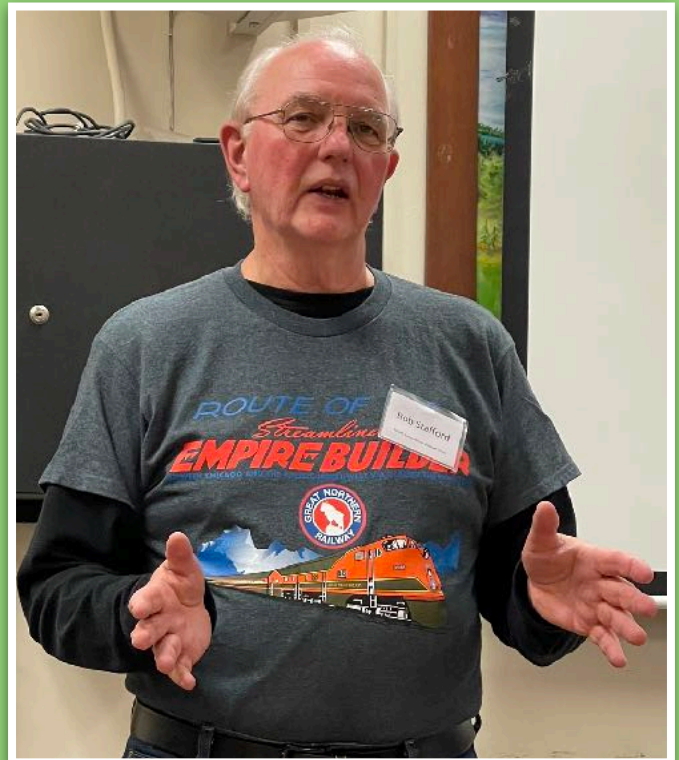
Nick Muff showed a small, retractable steel bristle brush, which is good for scratching paint to suggest peeling paint (on a structure), as well as cleaning wheel treads and myriad other uses. This usually comes as a set of 4 brushes, also including brushes with brass and fiberglass bristles.

NMRA 4TH DIVISION VYING FOR NATIONAL NMRA CONFERENCE



Alex Brikoff of Bothell, who is the recently “retired” secretary of the 4th Division, came by to inform the clinicians that the 4th division is bidding on the chance of hosting the National NMRA Convention most likely in the Tacoma area in the near future. Newly elected Vice-President of the Pacific Northwest Region (PNR) **Bob Stafford**, who also films and posts all of the Mount Vernon Clinics, said, “We had our PNR board meeting on Saturday, the proposal has been made to National and it’s just wait and see right now.” He went on to say, “It looks like it’s pretty well going to happen.” **Alex** said

the the convention, which has in the past has been a week-long affair, is probably going to be shortened to a shorter four day set up. “It’s going to be an ‘all-hands-on-deck.’ We’re going to need lots and lots of help to pull off this national thing down there,” **Bob** implored.

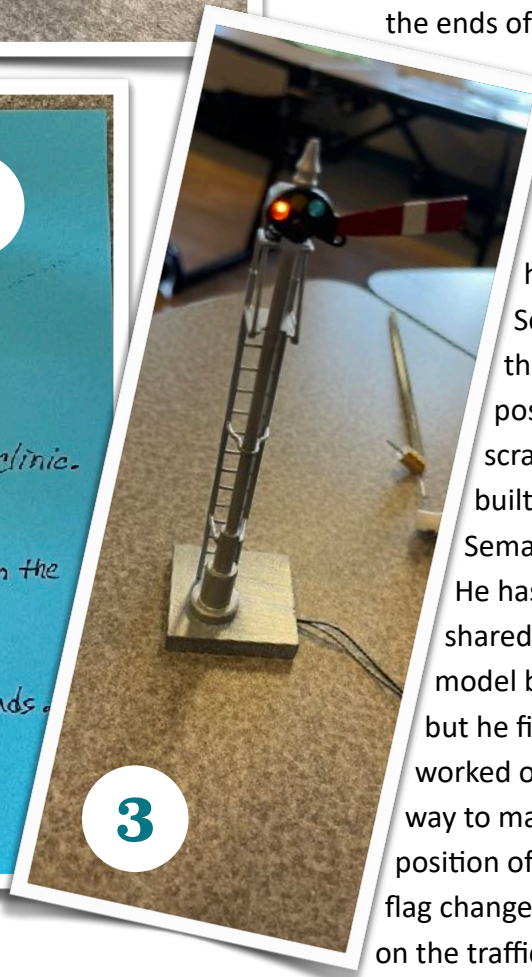
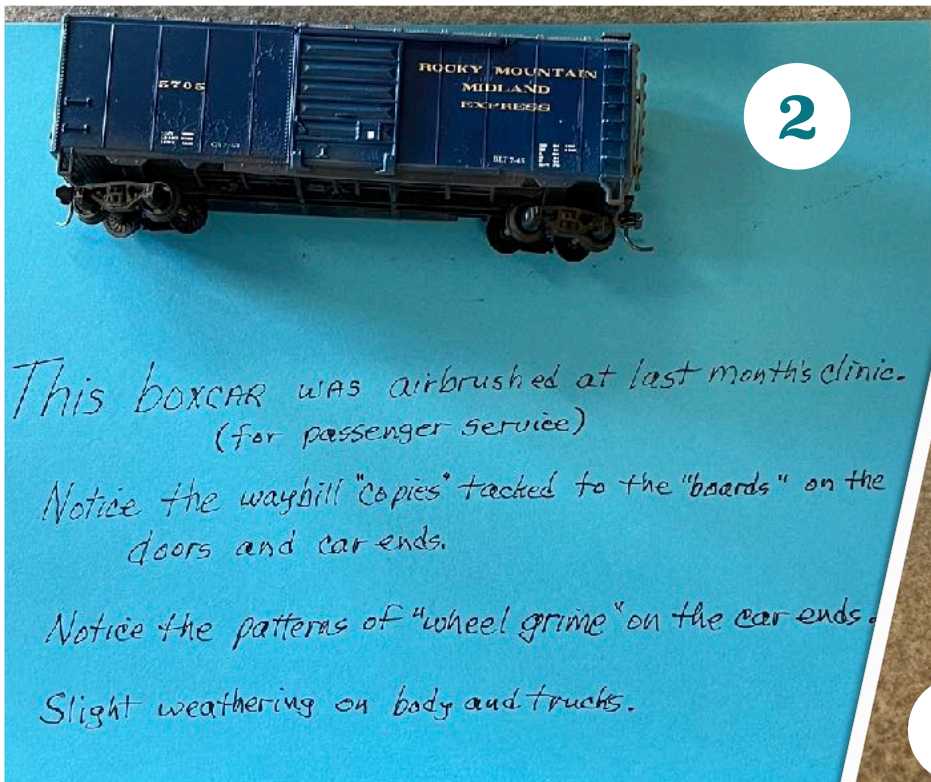


Modeler's Showcase



1. **Dale Bearden** showed off his scratch built O Scale "potato shed" structure. He got the idea from an article written by Greg Wright, an MMR down by Olympia, published in the Narrow Gauge Gazette about building Foam Core Structures.

2. MMR **Mark Malmkar** brought the car he used as a demonstrator at last month's weathering clinic. Mark finished up the weathering at home, including wheel spatter on the ends of the car.



3. **Ron Nelson** brought his O Scale three position scratch built O Scale Semaphore. He has shared this model before, but he finally worked out a way to make the position of the flag change based on the traffic ahead on the rails.

Modeler's Showcase Continued



The Mount Vernon clinics for April through September are now public on the 4dPNR YouTube channel.

April: Don Jones Lighting Passenger Cars

May: Bob Stafford Burlington Northern Coal Trains

June: Trip to Tacoma Cancelled.

July: Nick Muff 3D Printing

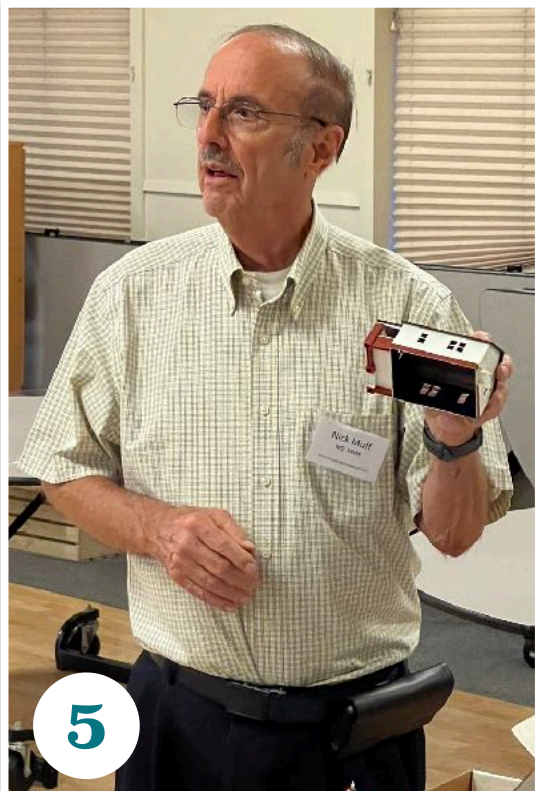
August: Mark Malmkar Air Brushing For Beginners

September: Beardon & Muff Blunami Dead Rail

Thanks to **Bob Stafford** as always for his video work, as well as keeping the attendance roster and providing name tags!

4. **Roy Andrukut** displayed an N scale city block, which included many lighted structures and vehicles (he used a variety of small LEDs including inexpensive battery operated Christmas lights). Roy used copper strips as his wiring bus. To decorate the insides of the building he peopled them with cheap N scale figures. He professed to have used some of the ideas for his city block from the Whatcom Skagit Model Railroad Club's N Scale layout. Above Roy explains how he set up the wiring for the buildings.

Modeler's Showcase Continued



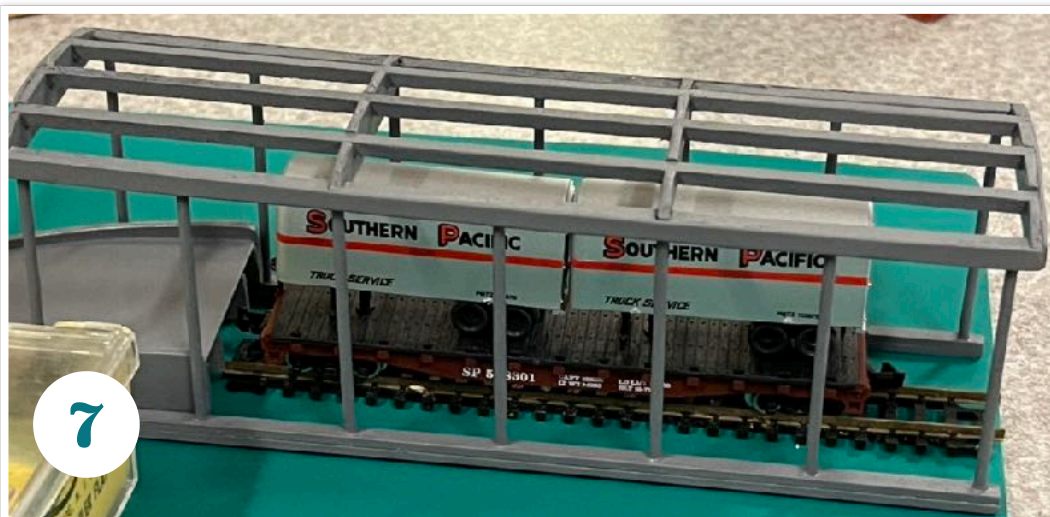
5. **Nick Muff** brought three scratchbuilt (HO scale) houses that are models of actual structures in Decatur, Arkansas. Nick says some styrene allows some light to pass through its walls, so he lines the inside with black styrene and/or black masking tape.



6. **Geoff Stippes** is back from his extended stay in California and brought a kitbashed S scale, narrow gauge (42" gauge) model of a cable car than ran on Madison Street in Seattle



7. **Phil Hernandez** showed us more progress on his scratchbuilt N scale piggyback transfer shed.



8. Below is a shot of the weathering detail from dust and grime being flung up on the ends of the cars on **Mark Malmkar's** model.



Main Event Reardon & Muff on Dead Rail

Dale Beardon and Nick Muff tagged teamed on this month's main event on dead rail. Dale opened the presentation with an overview of what exactly is Dead Rail, how to create and operate a dead rail locomotive and some various types of dead rail that are available. Nick then gave a blow by blow account of his experience in creating a dead rail locomotive for running on his layout.

Dale first explained how he first became interested in dead rail, saying, "I am a very lazy model railroader. I do not like to wire track, clean track, I have pulled my hair out trying to make reverse loops work (Now we know what happened to Dale's locks)." He went on to say, "So I started looking into Dead Rail."

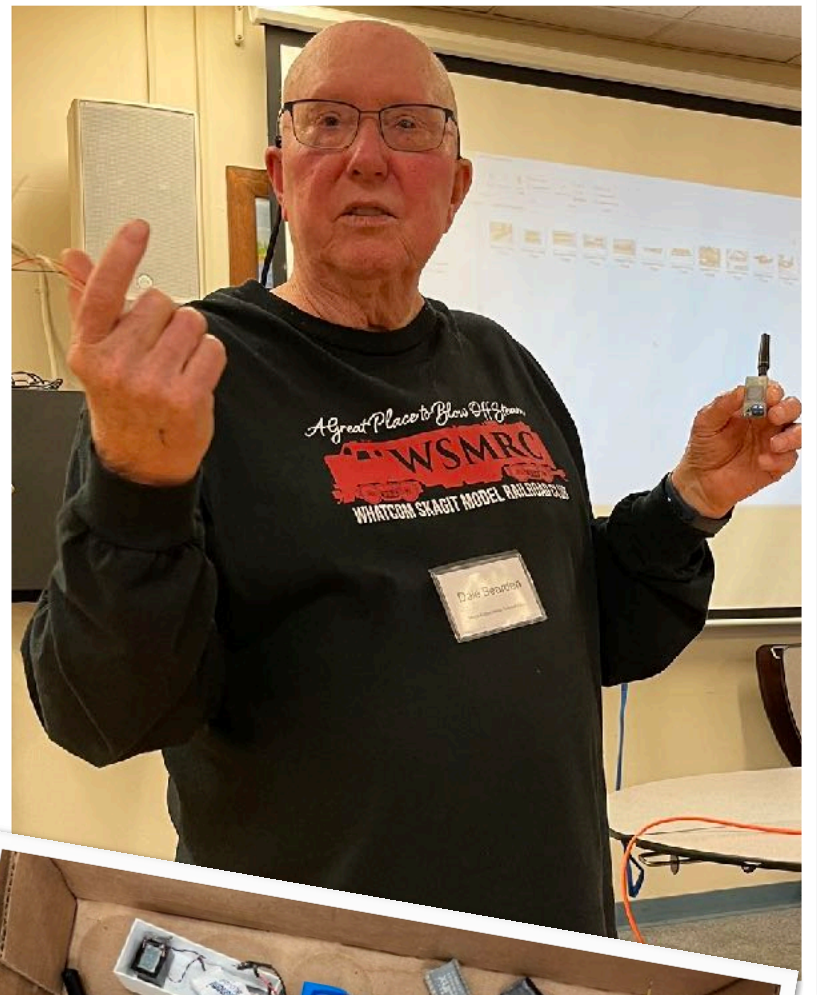
Dead Rail, Dale explained, is a locomotive that is powered by a battery, but unlike those toy versions that run around the Christmas Tree, these locomotives are controlled by an app on a smartphone. "I can take one of my locomotives up to the Whatcom Skagit Model Railroad Club and using my phone I can run it all day on their layout without interfering with anything they are doing," he claimed, "because I have my own throttle and my own power."

Dale says that since he primarily models On30 he has lots of room for the components, but lest those with smaller trains and layouts get discouraged he also has put together an HOn30 locomotive that runs on N scale track. For that locomotive Dale scratch built a little box car that houses the battery since there is not enough room in the locomotive.

The system that Dale uses is called Blunami (see next page). The package includes everything but the battery and the speaker, but it does have sound. There are other systems like the Dead Rail Society system created in San Diego by Duncan Mcree and associates which Dale used for a long time before switching to Blunami.

According to Dale, batteries cost about 30 to 40 dollars as does the chargers needed to power the batteries. The Blunami system at DeadRailInstalls.com runs around \$160.00

"The things I have found about dead rail that I really like," Dale pointed out. "Is that I can put a turntable wherever I want it, I can put a reverse loop, I can put a Y and I don't have to worry about wiring it." He went on to say, "The biggest thing I like is that I don't have to clean track."



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Main Event Reardon & Muff on Dead Rail

Continued from page 6

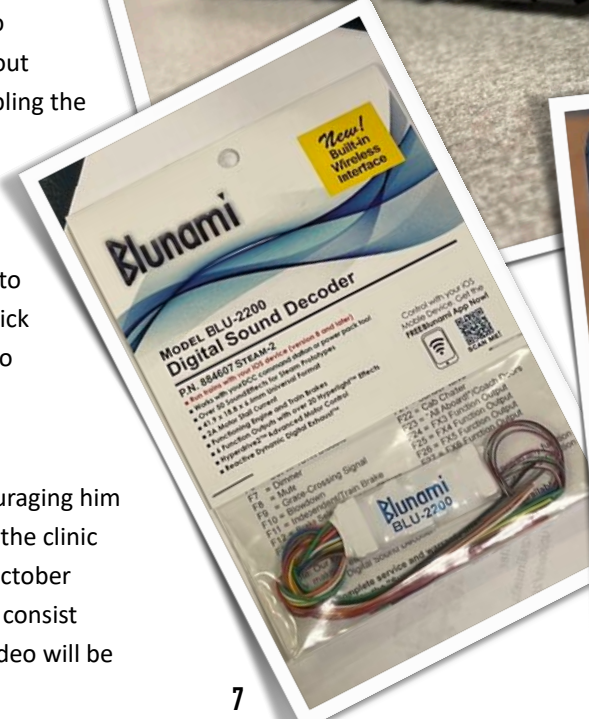
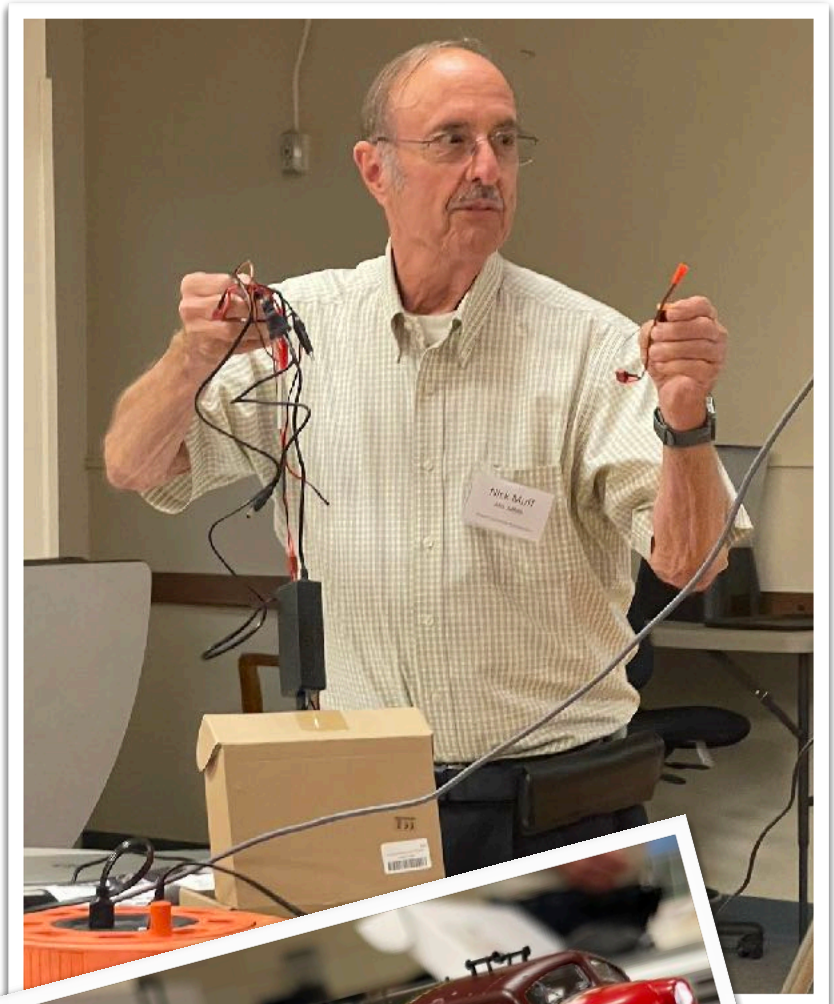
“Because when I want to run my railroad, I want to put a battery in and run it. I don’t want to spend my first half hour cleaning track,” Dale concluded.

“The way that I got into this,” Nick said, “is Steve McCartt has encouraged me to take some videos of my layout much like the video they did at the club in Alger using cameras mounted on flat cars which were then run around the entire layout.” However Nick pointed out that all lot of his layout hasn’t been run in a long time and even if he could scrub it down, which he argued that he couldn’t, he isn’t sure a camera car would make it all around the layout. “That’s why I considered dead rail and so being me, what did I select?” Nick asked, “An A/B F-Unit. It seemed the best thing would be to put the battery in the B-Unit and the A-Unit would be standard.”

So Nick began putting together his Dead Rail by disconnecting the A Unit from the track wiring, installing a Blunami decoder, and running a two wire plug out the back of the unit which would be plugged into the battery in the B-Unit to give it its power. The B-Unit then houses the battery, of course as well as a board that allows Nick to turn it on and off with a reed switch. So everything looked good to go, but the B-Unit which at first seemed perfect due to its flat bottom with in the shell had an issue. The wheels were “pizza cutter” size and could not make it through the numerous switches and turnouts on Nick’s layout. So he had to rethink the B-Unit and so using a trick he learned from Roger Crawford, who worked at Boeing, he was able to fashion a unit that could make it around the layout navigating the multiple switches after disassembling the trucks and making it a dummy.

To insure that his A/B Units didn’t come uncoupled during the process, Nick created some drawbars using his 3D printer as opposed to buying the more expensive sets on Ebay. Both Nick and Dale pointed out that you almost need a two man crew when running Dead Rail as even if a locomotive jumps the track it keeps rolling.

Nick showed Al Carter, who had also been encouraging him to film his layout, the final product a week after the clinic running around the entire layout. Success! On October 10th Nick, Steve McCartt and Don Jones ran the consist around the layout using two cameras and the video will be uploaded within the next several weeks.



Last Page: Wrapping up the final details.

Coming Down the Track

October 21, Mt Vernon

Swamp Creek & Western

November 9, Alger

WSMRC Open House

November 18, Mt Vernon

Clinic on Kit Building

November 30, Alger

WSMRC Open House

December 14, Alger

WSMRC Open House

December 16, Mt Vernon

No Clinic During Winter

December 28, Alger

WSMRC Open House

January 11, Alger

WSMRC Open House

The Laugh Track

Take A Mans Wallet and Make Him Poor for a Day



Teach a Man to Play with Model Trains And Make Him Poor for Life.

Schedule Change Reminder: The Mount Vernon clinic will be shifting to a schedule of March through November, effective now. The clinic will still be held on the 3rd Monday of those months, at 7:00 pm at the Mount Vernon Senior Center. Driving to and from the clinic is easier during spring/summer/fall months and we won't have to venture out in the darkest days of winter to go to the clinic.

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 winter months (December, January, February). 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.

CONTACT US

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Roster Keeper and Videographer: **Bob Stafford**

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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/4dprMovies

You can also visit the NMRA youtube channel <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UChw-7-1FWB5zOgTM0ZVY-Yw>

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