

# The Semaphore November 2019, Pt 2

A publication of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Division of the Pacific Northwest Region of the NMRA

## Second Section

As previously mentioned, there was just too much information for one issue of *The Semaphore*. So we are doing a double issue this month. Or, in railroad-speak, we are running a second section. Following is my report on our October get together and a whole bunch of *Notes from the Caboose*, including a couple ways for you to win gift certificates!

- *Richard Kurschner, editor*

## 2<sup>nd</sup> Division October Event Report

*Report and photos by Richard Kurschner*

We had 23 people in attendance on Saturday the 19<sup>th</sup> at the Garden Home Rec Center. The business portion of the meeting was brief and then we had formal presentations from three folks and short talks from two others. The meeting wrapped up with a drawing for eight gift certificates from The Hobby Smith. One really nice thing was we were able to use our new video camera to display the work of Bob and Max real time on a big screen.



October attendees waiting to win gift certificates



Bob Leatha

First up was Director **Bob Letha** demonstrating how he makes cedar, hemlock, and western fir trees. Bob starts with 1/2" square balsa strips cut to about 12" in length. Using a spoke shave, he roughly trims these strips into round and tapered trunks. He finishes this portion of the work with a Sureform tool and a rasp. Bob's next step is to super glue a 15p brad into the bottom of the trunk as both a handle for the remaining work and a post for planting it when the time comes. The trunks are finished using brown and black stains as needed to get the right general color.

From a craft store, Bob gets garlands of plastic Asparagus Fern, pulls the sprigs apart from the base and then trimming into a series of branch sizes. These are spray painted with Hunter Green, rolled in a tub of medium turf, then a tub of fine turf. When dry he sprays them with cheap hair spray to fix the flocking in place. (Always wondered, are model railroaders the ones who keep Aquanet in business? Are we now their target market?) For handling these branches, he uses tiny alligator clips glued onto bamboo skewers. If the branches curl, Bob applies weights and a heat gun.

Working again with the trunks, Bob drills three holes around the bottom, 120 degrees apart, then moving up the trunk, 3 more holes offset by about 60 degrees, and on up to the top. Where he starts the bottom row depends on the type of tree he is building. Really low for trees found around homes, but higher up for “wild” trees. Bob super glues the largest branches into the bottom rows, reducing the lengths as he moves up the tree. Occasionally he will put in dead branches he picked up from a Crossman tree kit. At the top he puts a tiny branch pointing upwards.



Bob, on the big screen, drilling holes for branches

Bob makes these on an assembly line, so it goes quick, but he spends about a half hour per tree, and each costs about \$3.

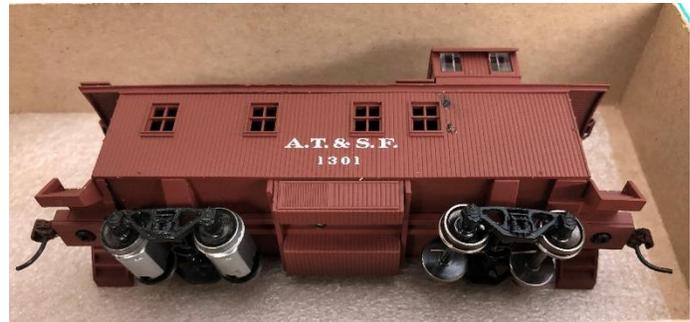


Geoff Bunza

**Geoff Bunza** then shared with us about a rat hole, er, I mean interesting technical capability he has been working on lately. Seems one of his friends is building a Cajon Pass layout that includes replicating the gravity movement of a caboose to avoid extra switching moves at the busy pass summit. Turns out that the physics of 1:1 don't translate well to 1:87 and the caboose tends to stall out. To fix the problem, Geoff installed two tiny traction motors on the axles of one truck. The resulting model he showed has enough power to give the caboose a kick to get it moving after which it coasted just fine.

Could this be done with locomotives? Perhaps. And interestingly, you

could get true dynamic breaking by switching in and out a resistor across the motors! One could also go full-Milwaukee and feed the power back into the rails and achieve regenerative breaking, but you're unlikely to get much at our small size weights. Ah well. We look forward to how his experiments turn out.



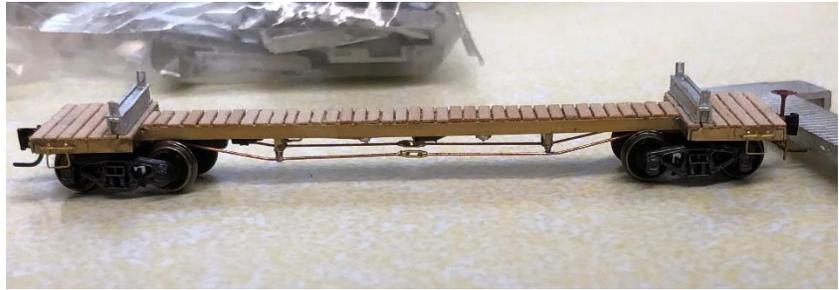
Traction motors on the front two axles.



Max Magliaro

Next up was **Max Magliaro** showing off his scratchbuilt N scale skeleton logging flat cars. These were old refers that the NP rebuilt into flats by removing the house body and most of the flooring, leaving the frame as just the center sill and the ends for mounting the couplers and the bolsters. GHQ has made kits for these flat cars, but Max felt that the remaining floor boards should be more see-through.

He proceeded on this project by drawing up plans and gluing them to a block of aluminum. Max milled the block based on the plans and ended up with the jig necessary to build the frame. The frame was built from fine brass stock he purchased from Eileens Emporium (UK). The nice thing about this stock is that it is much finer than you can get from hobby shop suppliers such as K&S. After the frame was done, he added the wooden floor boards, details, etc. The result was three very nice cars, well worth the high AP merit score they earned.



Max's N scale skeleton log car



Ross' throttle

While Jeff was setting up his presentation, our division's AP chairman, **Ross Ames** demonstrated the home built wireless DCC throttle he built from Geoff's previous presentations. Ross' version was dramatically different from Geoff's, he used push buttons instead of toggle switches. It ran his locomotive just like a real throttle! In case you don't remember Geoff's demonstration, those push buttons can be much more complex than turning headlights on and off. Depending on how you configure them they can operate stationary decoders and even run sequences of commands. It is nice to know that, even in the age of DCC, we can still build our own throttles. Check out Geoff's MRH postings for more information.

Our final presentation of the day was by Jeff Shultz. He described and demonstrated a proof of concept car card and waybill routing system that uses Near Field Communication (NFC) tags inside each car that can be read by a cell phone. The result is that you do not have to carry around a stack of car cards with you. This is especially nice if you are already using one of the cell phone DCC controller apps.

In practice you move along your train, swiping your phone across each car (just like you do to "Apple Pay" at check out), and a waybill and car card open in your browser for each car. Flipping back and forth in that stack of webpages allows you to see where each car needs to move to next. Besides this being one less thing for you to have to carry as you operate, it is also one less thing for your operators to accidentally walk off with. The cards never leave the computer!



Jeff Shultz

Jeff still has some bugs to work out like finding the optimal positioning of the NFC tags, and the optimal way to swipe (read) them. He did have some issues reading the tags at the rec center most likely due to its different electro-magnetic environment from his home layout. But once the tags were recognized, the car cards and waybills displayed very well. We look forward to future updates from Jeff on his progress.

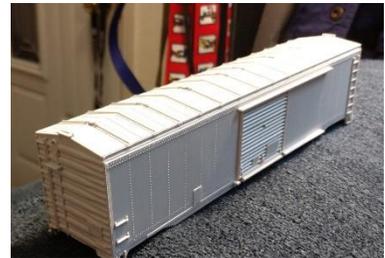
## Notes from the Caboose

Our next scheduled event is February 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2020. We don't have a location set yet, and we don't have speakers set yet, but we got us a date! Rumor has it that there will be gift certificates raffled off again! And a contest! So mark your calendars today!

Some of you may be asking how come so far out? Well earlier this year the BOD decided to have fewer meetings to reduce the effort needed to organize our events. By planning specific dates far enough in the future we will be able to ensure that we have venues, we will be able to schedule presenters in advance, and we will make sure that YOU know far enough in advance so you can make plans to attend. We felt that an approximately quarterly cadence is optimal. Thus, we had a meeting last month, the next will be in February, and another in May (5/16/2020). If you have thoughts on this, please let us know at [board@2dprn.org](mailto:board@2dprn.org).

The other change is that thanks to our convention back in 2018 we have a nice size bank account and are returning some of that to you. Last time we raffled off eight gift certificates to The Hobby Smith ranging from \$10 to \$50. We will do this again at the February meeting, though it may be one of the other area shops.

And did I say contest? Yes I did. Starting at our February meeting you will have the chance to build a model and bring it to the May meeting for your friends to ooh and aah over. And win money! The National organization has made available unpainted Athern boxcar shells for use as we see fit. We decided to have some fun. Here are the details:



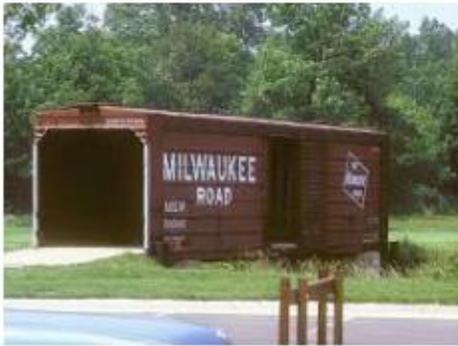
*Jeff Shultz photo*

A boxcar shell will be given to every member who attends the February member event. The member is encouraged to return to the May meeting with the shell incorporated into a finished model. All entries will be displayed and a popular vote of those in attendance will determine the winner. The winner will receive a \$50 gift certificate to one of the local hobby shops.

- One shell/entry per member.
- The boxcar shell must be a part of the completed model. How it is used is up to the member.
  - The "majority" of the shell should be used to maintain the spirit of the contest.
  - The entire boxcar shell does not need to be used, but it must be recognizable in the completed model: cutting it up as a scrap load is acceptable, melting it down and recasting the plastic as something else is not.
  - While the scale of the shell is HO, the scale of the resulting model is up to the member.
- A power strip will be available at the May meet for any models that require electricity.
- The member is responsible for providing any other materials necessary for their model.
- If the member desires, the completed model may be separately merit judged after voting is complete for AP credit in an appropriate category.
- If a member cannot attend the February event but still wishes to participate in the contest, they should arrange to pick up a shell from Jeff (Stayton), Richard (Beaverton), or Dave (Vancouver) after the February event. Shells will not be mailed. Shells will not be given out before the February event.
- In cases of questions regarding the rules and their applicability or the eligibility of a given model for the prize, the decision of the Superintendent is final.

- In case of a tie vote, the decision of the Superintendent is final.
- The Superintendent is not eligible for the prize.

To be clear, it IS an HO box car shell. What the modeler DOES with it could be anything. The modeler could complete it as a boxcar by adding frame, trucks, couplers, roof walk and paint. Or it could be used as a static structure in a diorama (real life examples below). Or windows could be cut into one end, wings and a scramjet engine added to it, and finally painted as a sub-orbital vehicle of the 1955 Nazi Space Force. We supply the shell, you supply the creativity. Have fun!



Former box cars as examples for your consideration. *Collage from Frontier Flimsy, a publication of the NFR*

It is November and officially National Model Railroad Month. What are you doing to promote your hobby? Many of you are club members and they often have their major open houses and fundraisers this month. But there are other options too. Some people bring something into their place of work. Here is what I have set up year-round. (Yeah it is broken and yeah it is Horribly Oversized, but there's a story behind that!) Some libraries and other public places welcome displays. So I was wondering. Could the Division build a display to use next November to bring in members? Is anyone out there interested in building a small layout or maybe a bunch of us build a set of T-Trak modules? Thoughts anyone? Contact me at [secy@2dpnr.org](mailto:secy@2dpnr.org) !



*Richard Kurschner photo*

Do you realize how easy it is to get the AP Author certificate? Send me an article about what you are doing and you will be on your way as a Published Author in the Semaphore. For example, from his article Jeff would get about 19 points towards the 42 he needs for his certificate. (He already has his

Author certificate, so he isn't counting any longer.) Heck if you want to take over as editor of the Semaphore, you could get Author AND Volunteer AP credit! Let me know if you have an idea you'd like to share with others, and I'll be glad to work with you.

Every year the Division elects three members of its Board of Directors, two Directors and either the Vice Superintendent or as in this year, the Superintendent. We are again looking for folks who are interested in running for these offices. Why would you run? Well perhaps because you want to help your organization. Perhaps because you think you can do a better job than we are doing now. Perhaps you want to work on your AP Volunteer certificate. Or perhaps you really hate me and want to take my job. All are great reasons! Please let Director **Craig Larson** ([clarsen1125@gmail.com](mailto:clarsen1125@gmail.com)) or Treasurer **Dave Holden** ([dholden@pobox.com](mailto:dholden@pobox.com)) know of your interest. Holler at them if you want a better understanding of the Director or the Superintendent positions.

Maybe Jeff's article has inspired you to go to a convention? Its never too early to start thinking about heading to conventions. As he mentioned, next year the PNR regional convention is in Eugene on April 21-24. Yes, this is an unusual Tuesday through Friday range, but convention attendees will also get free admission to the annual Lane County model train show and swap meet on Saturday and Sunday, the 25<sup>th</sup> and 26<sup>th</sup>. Check out <http://pnr.nmra.org/1div/Eugene2020/home.htm> . Next year's National convention is in St. Louis, July 12-18. Their website is <http://www.gateway2020.org/> .

If you've read this far and weren't one of the 23 people at last month's event, I'll buy you a beer to tell me why not. I know that conflicts happen, but if that doesn't apply to you, I'd like to know what is keeping you away, and what we can do to entice you to join us. So, a free beverage of your choice at a location near you to the first 3 folks who'd like to sit and talk about your interests and your concerns. Contact me at [secy@2dpnr.org](mailto:secy@2dpnr.org) , and we'll arrange a meeting!

I'll close with a couple more pictures of Bob's trees. We hope you have enjoyed this issue of the Semaphore. Talk with you on the next run!

- *Richard Kurschner, editor*

