



# The Semaphore

February 2020

A publication of the 2nd Division of the Pacific Northwest Region of the NMRA

## Welcome to 2020!

*Richard Kürschner, editor*

Did you attend our event on the 22nd? If you did, you saw three great clinics and some excellent models displayed. If you didn't, why not? My offer still stands: I'll buy you a beverage of your choice at a location of your choice if you spend some time chatting about why you didn't attend and what we could do to encourage you or make it easier for you to attend. Send me a note ( [secy@2dpnr.org](mailto:secy@2dpnr.org) ) and let's talk!

This issue of The Semaphore includes a review of a program to create cardstock models and a report out on our February 22nd event. Hope you enjoy it!

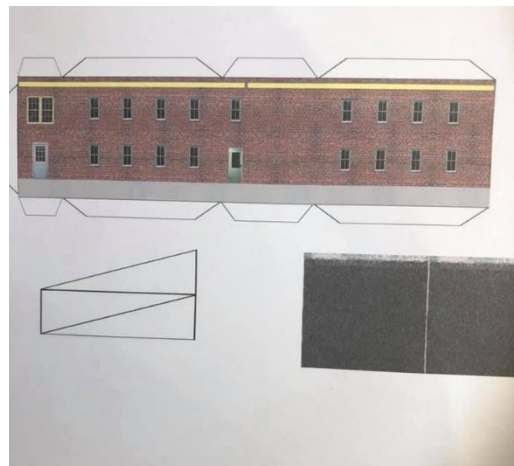
## Software review: Evan Designs Software's "Model Builder" program

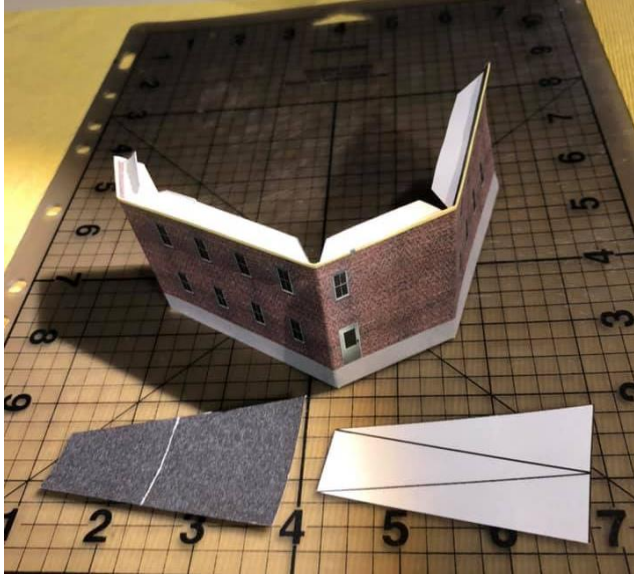
*Article and photos by Richard Kürschner*

You know those cardstock building "kits" that you can download, print and fold up to assemble? Well, this program gives you the power to "scratch build" such models! The Model Builder program allows you to layout walls in any of many different materials (brick, sheet metal, stone, clapboard, etc.), place any of a large selection of doors and windows, and then add needed gluing flaps to create your own fold up model.

The first photo shows my first attempt at a design. It is an oddly shaped brick office building that will replace a foam core mockup and is intended to fit between two spurs. There was a lot of learning involved on my part to understand how the program worked and what exactly I could do with it, but it still only took me about 3 hours to lay it out. I've since designed several other buildings much quicker.

As you can see in the second photo, this model is just paper. Since it is a stand in for a future "real" model, I wasn't ready to spend more time with it, and I wanted to see how well paper alone would work. It works OK, but it really does need to be at





least printed on card stock or glued to light cardboard. I've done some since this on cardboard; they are certainly sturdier, but are harder to assemble and feel "sloppier". I think cardstock really would be best.

The program makes it easy and economical to try different design concepts. If I don't like a siding or a window arrangement, I can easily try something different. Having a library of windows and doors can provide inspiration to your design work. (That special window on the narrow end of the building never would have occurred to me otherwise.) I can easily put together a small-town downtown street of buildings as a background flat, either from imagination or

from photos. And it will print full sheets of bricks, stones, sidings, etc.... for use in your other modeling work.

The software works fine but there are some aspects of the user interface that drive me nuts. These include no true cut/copy/paste, odd and sometimes non-existent tab ordering, no text



capability in the basic program, graphics that sometimes shift unexpectedly without showing up on the screen until you print it or at least show a print preview, and only a single page drawing area for N scale. All that said though, I really do like the application and I think it was well worth the \$40 Santa paid for it. I encourage you to try it out! You can find it at <https://evandesigns.com/collections/modeling-software> .

## February Event Report

*Report and photos by Richard Kürschner*

On Saturday the 22nd, we had our Q1 meet at Garden Home Rec Center. The 28 people who attended (including 9 non-members) were entertained with three great clinics, seven people left with gift cards to Tammies Hobbies ranging from \$10 to \$50, and everyone left with 10% discount coupons to Tammies. How's that for a return on your NMRA investment? If you didn't make it, here is what you missed.

### History of Maintenance of Way Cranes

Our first clinic was presented by **Geoff Bunza**, a history of the maintenance of way crane. His history ran from extended structural beams over second floor doors, through railroad-owned, self-propelled rail-bound steam cranes, to today's contractor-owned, road-based diesel-powered cranes. Here are some items I found interesting:

- We all assume that MOW cranes are used for wrecks, and they are. But they are also used to move cargo, place track panels, and load ash, coal, or other bulk products. So there is as much of a chance that you will find the crane working in a port setting or coaling a steam locomotive, as sitting idle on a roundhouse garden track.
- The boom does NOT do the lifting. Rather the boom is adjusted to assume the best lifting angle, and then the hook is raised and lowered by the cable and pulley from that fixed position.
- You MUST deploy your outriggers and cribbing to support the crane before trying to lift. Geoff told a funny (in retrospect) story of how a Canadian road bent a crane's frame by attempting to lift an entire frozen swamp using a derailed locomotive as a handle!
- Each crane is unique. Because they are owned by an individual division, the same crew always used it and therefore modified it to suit their unique needs. Lights would be added where needed (sometimes from scrapped locomotives), air tanks might be added to power pneumatic tools, and cab walls added or removed. They would even buy diesel repowering "kits" to replace the old steam boilers. No two were ever the same.



You can find Geoff's clinic handout here: <http://www.scalemodelanimation.com/Clinics/MOW-Cranes-2ndDiv2020.pdf>

## Animating Maintenance of Way Cranes

After a short break, Geoff returned with a presentation on how he has animated various model cranes to move, to rotate, to raise the boom, and lower the hook. While he was officially talking about cranes, I found he made some very interesting general points:

- Tiny motors for hobbyists at hobby shops cost \$30. Tiny motors for curtain lifts or car locks on eBay cost \$1.
- Buy one square foot Teflon sheets and a hole punch to make all the high-quality washers you will ever need.
- A single DCC decoder can control multiple motors: use the DCC functions to control micro relays. Then run the DCC motor output through the relays to separate lift, rotate, and movement motors.

You can find Geoff's clinic handout here: <http://scalemodelanimation.com/Clinics/Animated-Crane-Projects-2ndDiv2020.pdf> . If you liked this presentation, Geoff will be giving another at the Eugene convention in April.



## Painting Backdrops with Acrylics

After another break, **Charlie Comstock** gave us a live demonstration of how he paints his backdrops. Key takeaway? Watch lots of YouTube videos and maybe marry an artist! Two of Charlie's points stuck with me. First, if you paint your backdrop somewhere other than your layout room, make sure you are painting under the same light conditions. And second, practice on cheap canvases before working on your layout (Dick Blick sells them 8 for \$10).



I don't mean to give Charlie's demonstration short shrift in this report, but I simply can't give justice to his presentation. I can, however, give you a link to it as we recorded it! You can find it at: <https://youtu.be/eAKMliFzxKU> . Charlie's handout is located here: <http://2dprn.org/BackdropPaintingWithAcrylicArtistPaints.docx> .

## Other Topics

Superintendent **Jeff Shultz** presented several Track Gang recognition certificates, mostly for the team that put on the 2018 PNR convention in Portland. Sorry, I didn't catch most of the names of recipients. One I did catch was a special thank you from Jeff to **Stan Townsend** for the multiple times he has come through with clinics for our meets.



Several items were also available during breaks for "show & tell". Stan brought in three steam engines from his collection, along with an old railroad map of the Portland area. **Greg Baker** showed off a pair of the micro-dioramas he makes, and another gentleman, who's name I didn't catch, presented a G-scale, radio controlled, battery powered locomotive. Check out the bottom for photos.



Finally, everyone left with a boxcar for the Box Car Contest. See the end of this newsletter for all the details.

## Notes from the Caboose

*Richard Kürschner, editor*

## Upcoming Events

The next major event for most of us is the 2020 PNR convention in Eugene, April 21-24. Yes, this is a little earlier in the year than normal, and it runs Tuesday evening through Friday evening, a departure from the usual Wednesday to Saturday scheduling. Why? Because the convention also includes free admission to the Lane County Swap Meet & Train Show on Saturday and Sunday; two events for the price of one! I encourage you to check out their web site for full details <http://pnr.nmra.org/1div/Eugene2020/home.htm> . They currently have 33 clinics identified, so you won't be disappointed.

The 2nd Division will then have our Annual Meet on May 16th. We don't have a time or a location yet, but it was kinda-sorta decided at this meeting that we should go to a longer format, starting at 10 and having pizza magically show up around lunch time. (Starting at 12:30 meant that Geoff's second presentation got a little short changed...) Keep an eye on your email and our Facebook page for more details <https://www.facebook.com/PNR2ND/> .

Finally, as we move into summer, there will be the National convention in St. Louis, Missouri, July 12th to 18th. Check out <http://www.gateway2020.org/> for all the details.

## Elections

What? Elections? Again? Yep! Every year the 2nd Division holds elections for three of the six board positions. This year the open positions are the Superintendent (Jeff) and two of the Directors (**Craig Larsen & Richard Kurschner**). Craig is NOT running this time, so we really do need you to run to fill his position. And just because Jeff and Richard are running again doesn't mean that you can't or shouldn't run for their positions as well: If you have ideas for Division improvements, I encourage you to put your hat in the ring and tell us what you would like to accomplish!

Note that the position of Division Secretary is NOT an elected position, it is appointed. In other words, if two new people are elected as directors, one of them is not automatically the new Secretary. They could be if they wanted to and if the board agreed, but they don't have to be. So, don't let the fact that the "Secretary" is running for office scare you from wanting to join the board!

You have until March 14th to let **Dave Holden**, [dholden@pobox.com](mailto:dholden@pobox.com), or **Bob Leatha**, [rleatha38@gmail.com](mailto:rleatha38@gmail.com), know if you are interested in running. At the same time please submit a 300 word (1500 character) "campaign statement" of why you are interested in the position, and a headshot photo would be great.

Also let Bob know if you might be interested in running for a position at the Region level as he is on their nominating committee as well.

This is a last call, so don't wait!

## Box Car Contest

Boxcar shells were handed out at the February meeting and we are expecting you to bring them back to the May meeting as 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. The rules:

- 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 make arrangements to pick up a shell from Jeff (Stayton) [jeff@2dprn.org](mailto:jeff@2dprn.org) or Richard (Beaverton) [secy@2dprn.org](mailto:secy@2dprn.org). Shells will not be mailed.
- 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 you choose to DO with it could be anything. You could complete it as a boxcar by adding frame, trucks, couplers, and paint. Or it could be used as a static building in a diorama. Or windows could be cut into it, then outfitted with wings and a scramjet engine, and finally painted as a sub-orbital vehicle of the 1955 Nazi Space Force. We supply the shell, you supply the creativity. Have fun!

We hope you have enjoyed this edition of the Semaphore. As always, we are looking to you to help out your fellow members. Share with us a tip, a trick, a track plan, or a full-blown article. The rest of us would love to read what you've been doing on your layout.

I'll close out with pictures from the February meeting of the rest of Stan's engines. Hope to see you all in Eugene in April, and then in May for our Annual Meeting.

Talk with you on the next run!

