

Capitol Christmas train started as prisoners' handiwork

Layout has been together for more than 30 years

By **CLAIRE WITHYCOMBE**
Capital Bureau

SALEM — The model railroad layout under the main Christmas trees in the Oregon Capitol rotunda every year is the brainchild of the late former Oregon Gov. Vic Atiyeh and, in part, is the handiwork of prisoners.

Don Curtis, who taught vocational training, woodworking and cabinetry at Oregon State Correctional Institution from 1969 to 1999, was first asked to set up trains and a miniature scene to go under the tree in 1984.

"We had some very talented men at the institution that really got into the project and did a great job," Curtis said in a phone interview this week.

Many of the miniatures — such as a scale version of the Bush House in Salem — were built by prisoners in the woodworking shop.

That, too, was a request from the governor, Curtis said.

"Our first layout in 1984 was really sort of modest, and someone asked, I think it was in the paper,



Claire Withycombe/EO Media Group

The model railroad that runs under the Capitol Christmas tree each year since 1984 was the brainchild of then Gov. Vic Atiyeh. The original layout and many of the structures still used were built by inmates at the Oregon State Correctional Institution.

someone asked Gov. Atiyeh what he thought of this," Curtis said.

Atiyeh said he liked the layout, but that he couldn't wait to see models of historic Salem homes the next year, Curtis said.

"Guess what we did the next year?" Curtis said. "We made the models of historic Salem homes."

There's a model of Salem's

Victorian-era Deepwood house, and the railroad station is a replica of the one in Salem around the turn of the century.

The structures are built from scratch — no kits involved. Curtis also made the natural features. Azalea branches are especially good for making tiny trees, he says.

Devoted to making the replicas

of historic buildings to scale, Curtis raised some eyebrows when he went up to the bank building in Independence with a tape measure. He began sizing up the building's features and, after some inquiries from the bank manager, eventually was invited in for a tour.

The trains themselves are antique American Flyer models, most of

them from the 1950s, Curtis said.

Curtis said they chose the American Flyer trains because the company was owned by A.C. Gilbert. Gilbert, a doctor who was born in Salem and went on to develop a host of classic children's toys, is the namesake of the Gilbert House Children's Museum in Salem.

There are a number of locomotives available for use — if the one that is currently running around the tree "gets tired," Curtis says, another can take its place.

The seasons in the Christmas layout have changed over the years, Curtis said. It was a summer scene for a while, then winter for about 20 years. But it was hard to keep all of the fake snow clean, so Curtis redid the set to depict autumn.

The whole structure sits on plywood boxes and can easily be packed up when the season's over.

Curtis works with Alan Bennett, a train enthusiast from Keizer, to put the scene together every year. After more than 30 years, what keeps him setting up the miniatures?

"Well, you know, it's just a real joy to see the reaction of the children when they come to the Capitol building, and not only to see the tree, but they come to see the train and operate the train underneath the tree," Curtis said. "So that's sort of an encouragement to us."

BRIEFLY

Man suspected of domestic assault in vehicle collision

SALEM (AP) — A 32-year-old man is facing charges after authorities say he chased a car that his wife was in and rammed it to cause a rollover crash.

The Statesman Journal reports the man was arrested at his home in Salem on suspicion of domestic assault and other charges.

Three people were taken to a hospital with critical injuries.

One was ejected from the vehicle and fire crews extricated two others.

A Marion County Sheriff's Office spokesman said deputies learned at the hospital that the vehicle rolled over because it was rammed several times.

UO professor who wore blackface lashes out at school

EUGENE (AP) — A University of Oregon law professor who wore blackface to a Halloween party is fighting back against an investigative report released by the university that found she violated the institution's anti-discrimination policies and caused damage to the law school.

The Register-Guard reported Friday that Nancy Shurtz is calling the report "supremely public retaliation."

Shurtz says the report includes errors that take her actions out of context and she is consulting with an attorney.

She came under fire for wearing black face paint and a curly black wig to a Halloween party she hosted.

In an apology, Shurtz said she had dressed up as Dr. Damon Tweedy, a black psychiatrist who wrote a memoir about his experiences with racism.

She says her costume was intended to shed light on racism.

Prosecutor says 81-year-old justified in killing intruder

SULTAN, Wash. (AP) — A prosecutor says an 81-year-old woman had no choice but to use deadly force when she fatally shot a home intruder in April.

The Herald reports Snohomish County deputy prosecutor Craig Matheson wrote in his decision that Barbara Moles fired as 25-year-old Steven Sheppard advanced toward her.

Sheppard had broken into the home and stabbed and struck Moles' husband.

Moles called police and a dispatcher helped her stem the flow of blood from her husband's wound.

An autopsy found methamphetamine in Sheppard's system.

Inslee, Kreidler ask McMorris Rodgers to help save Obamacare

SPOKANE, Wash. (AP) — Two of the state's prominent Democrats are asking its most powerful congressional Republican to help save Obamacare.

Gov. Jay Inslee and Insurance Commissioner Mike Kreidler wrote a letter Thursday to Rep. Cathy McMorris Rodgers in an effort to save the Affordable Care Act.

The Spokesman-Review says the two wrote that repealing Obamacare would result in financial hardship for hundreds of thousands of state residents.

They said it could also destabilize the state's health insurance market and hurt the state budget and economy.

McMorris Rodgers represents the Spokane area in Congress and is in House leadership. She has voted against the act numerous times.

With Donald Trump set to be

inaugurated next month, Republicans are again talking about repealing and replacing the law.

Snowmobilers rescued after getting stuck overnight

IDAHO FALLS, Idaho (AP) — A group of snowmobilers has been rescued after becoming stranded and running low on fuel in Fremont County's backcountry.

KIFI-TV reports that Fremont County Search and Rescue was called into the area around 2 a.m. Thursday.

The six people in the group told the first two responders who reached them that they had a fire burning and were OK to spend the night.

A team started out at daybreak and reached the group before noon.

Everyone was tired but OK when they returned to base camp that afternoon.

Corrections

The East Oregonian works hard to be accurate and sincerely regrets any errors. If you notice a mistake in the paper, please call 541-966-0818.

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AccuWeather.com Forecast

TODAY	SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY
32° 23°	30° 17°	30° 23°	42° 32°	40° 27°

PENDLETON TEMPERATURE FORECAST

32°	23°
30°	17°
30°	23°
42°	32°
40°	27°

HERMISTON TEMPERATURE FORECAST

34°	23°
31°	19°
31°	25°
45°	33°
43°	26°

ALMANAC

PENDLETON
through 3 p.m. yesterday

TEMPERATURE	HIGH	LOW
Yesterday	40°	30°
Normals	39°	27°
Records	64° (1950)	-19° (1983)

PRECIPITATION
24 hours ending 3 p.m. 0.26"
Month to date 1.75"
Normal month to date 1.16"
Year to date 13.05"
Last year to date 10.07"
Normal year to date 12.67"

HERMISTON
through 3 p.m. yesterday

TEMPERATURE	HIGH	LOW
Yesterday	34°	26°
Normals	38°	27°
Records	62° (1936)	-17° (1983)

PRECIPITATION
24 hours ending 3 p.m. 0.07"
Month to date 1.18"
Normal month to date 1.11"
Year to date 9.08"
Last year to date 7.16"
Normal year to date 9.61"

REGIONAL FORECAST

Coastal Oregon: Variably cloudy today with a shower in places; chilly in the south.

Eastern Washington: A snow shower today; partly sunny toward the Cascades. Clouds breaking across the south.

Cascades: A stray flurry today. Partly cloudy tonight; a couple of flurries across the north.

Northern California: Partly sunny today; very cold in the interior mountains. Mostly clear and cold tonight.

Eastern and Central Oregon: Snow, accumulating up to an inch east; partly sunny back to the west.

Western Washington: More clouds than sun today; a rain or snow shower in spots, but dry at the coast.

REGIONAL CITIES

	Today			Sun.		
	Hi	Lo	W	Hi	Lo	W
Astoria	45	32	c	44	34	c
Baker City	26	10	sn	17	-2	c
Bend	30	10	pc	28	10	pc
Brookings	47	33	pc	47	33	pc
Burns	26	3	sn	19	-8	pc
Enterprise	27	16	sn	22	7	sn
Eugene	41	27	sh	38	25	c
Heppner	32	20	sf	29	14	pc
Hermiston	34	23	sf	31	19	pc
John Day	29	19	c	28	10	pc
Klamath Falls	31	7	pc	27	7	pc
La Grande	28	20	sn	25	8	c
Meacham	26	17	sn	25	8	c
Medford	40	24	pc	40	22	c
Newport	45	34	c	44	33	c
North Bend	47	33	c	48	33	c
Ontario	33	15	sn	25	5	c
Pasco	36	21	pc	32	18	pc
Pendleton	32	23	sn	30	17	pc
Portland	41	31	pc	41	28	c
Redmond	32	6	pc	27	7	pc
Salem	41	29	pc	38	27	c
Spokane	32	19	sn	27	17	pc
Ukiah	28	17	sn	25	7	pc
Vancouver	41	32	pc	38	29	c
Walla Walla	34	24	sn	29	19	pc
Yakima	34	16	pc	31	16	pc

WORLD CITIES

	Today			Sun.		
	Hi	Lo	W	Hi	Lo	W
Beijing	38	24	s	37	28	c
Hong Kong	70	67	pc	73	67	c
Jerusalem	53	40	s	48	42	pc
London	50	47	c	58	42	c
Mexico City	74	45	s	73	45	s
Moscow	32	26	c	29	27	sn
Paris	51	42	c	54	49	pc
Rome	59	40	pc	58	39	pc
Seoul	36	23	pc	44	28	pc
Sydney	82	70	pc	82	70	pc
Tokyo	54	37	s	51	40	s

WINDS

(in mph)	Today	Sunday
Boardman	WSW 4-8	WSW 3-6
Pendleton	WSW 6-12	SW 4-8

UV INDEX TODAY

0 0 0 0 0 0 0

8 a.m. 10 a.m. Noon 2 p.m. 4 p.m. 6 p.m.

0-2, Low 3-5, Moderate 6-7, High; 8-10, Very High; 11+, Extreme

The higher the AccuWeather.com UV Index™ number, the greater the need for eye and skin protection.

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NATIONAL WEATHER TODAY

Shown are noon positions of weather systems and precipitation. Temperature bands are highs for the day.

National Summary: Snow will fall over part of the Northeast today with rain from the mid-Atlantic to the southern Plains. Snow will blanket the interior West with low elevation rain and mountain snow over the Southwest.

Yesterday's National Extremes: (for the 48 contiguous states)
High 89° in McAllen, Texas Low -27° in West Yellowstone, Mont.

NATIONAL CITIES

	Today			Sun.		
	Hi	Lo	W	Hi	Lo	W
Albuquerque	53	30	pc	39	22	sn
Atlanta	68	50	c	72	54	pc
Atlantic City	51	37	r	49	37	s
Baltimore	50	32	r	48	32	s
Billings	22	10	c	16	9	sn
Birmingham	70	55	c	75	60	pc
Boise	31	15	sn	25	10	pc
Boston	45	33	c	40	23	s
Charleston, SC	74	51	c	71	53	c
Chicago, IL	51	45	c	60	50	c
Chicago, WV	37	30	c	38	36	r
Cleveland	42	30	r	39	37	c
Dallas	70	63	c	73	54	t
Denver	47	29	s	41	19	sn
Detroit	38	28	c	35	34	c
El Paso	68	48	s	53	32	pc
Fairbanks	13	6	c	18	1	pc
Fargo	24	23	c	36	23	sn
Honolulu	81	70	pc	81	71	pc
Houston	78	66	c	78	68	c
Indianapolis	42	34	c	50	48	c
Jacksonville	79	56	pc	75	59	pc
Kansas City	45	39	pc	61	31	t
Las Vegas	50	36	sh	47	33	s
Little Rock	59	54	r	69	63	c
Los Angeles	59	43	pc	59	44	s
Louisville	52	46	r	61	55	c
Memphis	63	59	r	72	63	c
Miami	83	73	pc	83	74	pc
Millwaukee	36	31	c	38	35	r
Minneapolis	33	29	c	37	27	i
Nashville	59	56	r	70	61	c
New Orleans	75	61	pc	74	62	sh
New York City	46	36	c	46	31	s
Oklahoma City	63	53	c	64	36	t
Omaha	40	33	s	56	27	t
Philadelphia	49	34	r	46	31	s
Phoenix	59	41	r	55	40	s
Portland, ME	40	28	r	33	10	s
Providence	46	30				