

Tarpaper, Shingles, Wine Bottle Tops, Matches & Incense!

By Bill Jacobs

Okay, there has been some interest in this slightly weird column (I had a pretty good turnout at the clinic in Temecula), so I'm just going to press on! Last time I wrote about toothpicks and trees, this time I think we should talk about roofing, say tarpaper and shingles, wine bottle tops, and maybe matches and incense. Strange enough for you? So let's get on with it.

I'm an Air Force retiree, so when I say "Janie leads me through the commissary", just substitute "grocery store." Well, we were looking for Band-Aids and they had a tremendous display, apparently everybody bumps into things as much as we do, and what do I spy-Nexcare Gentle Paper Tan Tape. Apparently this is intended for folks who are latex allergic and in small letters it even has a hospital name. Of course it's made by 3M, but the consistency looked just like tarpaper and the width was about right in HO, if only it was black or gray. So, naturally I bought some, it comes in a dispenser just like normal Scotch tape. When I got it home I tore a piece off and stuck it on a scrap of wood and hit it with my normal stain mix of rubbing alcohol and black leather dye and it looked great, but the alcohol seemed to kill the glue, so in disdain, I gave it up as a bad idea. A day or two later I used the same piece of scrap wood for something else and I found that I couldn't pry the tape off. Apparently, the alcohol activates the glue and when it dries, it will not come off. Our editor, Gary Butts, used this on the cab roof of his super prize winning locomotive to great effect.

I built an abandoned shack, as a contest model, a few years ago. An aside here, everything I build will have a place on my "still under construction" layout. This will actually serve as the decrepit office of an oil field outfit. Think about this for your own purposes. Anyway, this model, though small, actually had a complete

interior with wall studs and roof trusses, and shake shingles, but just a few (maybe 100 still attached) with many on the floor inside. So I decided to make my own shingles. I gravitated toward brown paper grocery bags. You would be amazed at the difference in bags, I probably tested 6 to 8 of all different sizes with my stain mix until I hit on the best one, it had the heft and a good thickness for shake shingles. So every one I get, I keep. I maybe shouldn't admit this but they are used to put the smaller bottles of liquor in the larger bags so that they don't clank together. The company is US based, called AJM, but most importantly, they are 8 pound, extra heavy duty. Now, unless you are as anal as I am, I don't suggest you do this on a really large building. While we are on the subject of this particular model, I've got a few more suggestions since it was never painted, only bare wood on the exterior, nails had to be simulated in all the siding at each stud. I now have a Jimmy Simmons nail punch, which is a great tool, but I didn't then. I admit I have a pen and pencil fetish, it came from 4 semesters of engineering drawing many years ago in college. So, use your 4H or 5H very sharp pencil stubs or a Uniball Micro lead pen to make small indentations and there you have nails.

Now, let's talk about matches. We have a fire place, but it's rarely used (make that never, it was 115 yesterday, although we have seen snow here in the valley 4 times in the last 37 years), we had a box of those fire place matches, which just grabbed me. They are about a (real) footlong and they are snarly. I have spent a lot of time up on the C&TS working on cars and riding trains. One of the two tunnels is called the mud tunnel and the other the rock tunnel. The mud tunnel is, obviously, totally lined with a portal on each end. So I decided, because I needed one, to build a tunnel portal from the matches. Now, we need to suspend realty just a little, this was built in about 1880. So I figured the portal had to have been rebuilt, or at least shored up about every 30 years, until my time in the 1950's. This wood is outstanding for this, it's close to 12 x 12 and it looks like it's been through the wars. I used the portal as a show and tell at the recent Henderson meet. Hey, I didn't get to the wine bottle tops or the incense. Maybe next time.

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