Personal

Meet David Drake

By John D'Angelo

The Captain's Beloved Monkey-Puzzle Tree.

When I decided to create a model of Gull Cottage, from the book and movie *The Ghost & Mrs. Muir,* a key element of the story was the Monkey-Puzzle tree that the ghostly captain loved. I researched the tree on the web and found pictures describing the jumbled looking evergreen from Venezuela, South America. The tree got its name because it was felt that the limbs of the tree were so erratic that a monkey would have trouble climbing through its branches. The final result, as seen in the above picture, was a pine tree created by David Drake that I downloaded from the *Trainz Download Station* (DLS). Although the tree is listed as being a Swiss Stone Pine (KUID 33404:501526:2), it really matched the description of the Monkey Puzzle Tree.

I have to thank Al Barten, our editor, for advising me about David Drake. Al was very impressed with David's work and felt that perhaps our readers might like to meet him. When I searched the DLS and found David Drake, screen name "dmdrake," I made a *very* interesting discovery.

I found that David Drake, thus far, has contributed 2,868 items for downloading! That is a LOT of contributing and David has created a wide range of items including many different types of trees, buildings and other items. Al suggested that perhaps David would like to be interviewed for *Virtual Railroader* and I contacted him. David was glad to contribute, for which I am very thankful. So, gang, let's meet David Drake!

"My affair with trains and railroads began as a child on our cross country rail trips during the summers of the 40's and 50's. My father, Hubert M. Drake, was an aeronautical engineer with NACA (the forerunner of NASA) and we had moved west to Mojave, near Muroc (Edwards Air force Base) in 1947 for the X-1, sound barrier program. Visiting grandparents in the east via rail, on the El Capitan, was quite an adventure and I was easily hooked on the atmosphere of train travel. Leaving Mojave on the El Capitan and arriving three days later in Chicago, a real city, a really big city, was like a dream.

"My father's father was Harcourt C. Drake. He was head of research at Sperry Products and invented the first rail-testing technology in 1928, which was used by 'Sperry Rail Service' until the 1960's and is responsible for hundreds, perhaps thousands of lives saved. His stories of rail testing 'out west' on the Denver and Rio Grande, among others, were full of humor and colorful characters and added to my love of the rails.

"Now, to *Trainz*! How can one have a layout in a mobile home, even in 'N' gauge! This has perplexed me for 25 years. We live in Santa Cruz, California, in a mobile home and there is no room. Enter *Trainz*. Three years ago I purchased Trainz and found the resolution to my space problem! I wanted to model the Santa Cruz area and the trees required were not available so… I discovered Terry Franks' tutorial on trees and decided to try it. *Gmax*! What can I say that hasn't been said (in several languages!). It's both a revelation and a curse. To this day I can't do attachment points! But seriously, I found that using tutorials to achieve basic skills was the best way to learn *gmax*. I primarily learned by doing, and I also experimented quite a bit and still do.

"Once I started building trees I got hooked and decided to 'carve out a niche' for 'dmdrake' as an arborist. My first efforts were pretty rudimentary, but even those were welcomed by those who wanted a little more than the standard trees. I improved my creations in increments. I learned to use *gmax* better and discovered little tricks that made the trees look more realistic.

"The introduction of *TRS2004* was a big step for my content. I decided to upgrade almost about 1800 of my *UTC* trees to be *TRS* compliant. In the upgrade process I also altered the image files to greatly improve the

appearance of the trees. This took a couple of months and I learned several good lessons in the process. For example: I made the mistake of using the obsolete table between the *UTC* and *TRS* versions of a few trees and discovered that I had caused a lot of grief for several routes! I was finally able to settle the whole upgrading issue by using a completely new series of numbers, which allowed the *UTC* versions to remain on the DLS.

Tree 4 at Pietalba

A tree at San Rocco

Alpine splines

Swiss Mountain Pine 1

"The creation of my buildings follows the same evolution as my trees. Wanting to reproduce the area where I live demanded that I build at least a few local buildings. Once I became proficient with the next level of skill in *gmax* I decided to keep producing buildings. The entire first group of buildings was from Santa Cruz. But I decided that, just as with the trees, I should also expand the buildings to include other types from other areas. Many of this new series of buildings have been included on the content disc of the North American version of the *TRS2004 Deluxe*. I am honored that Auran has endorsed my creations in this way.

Old Generic Tower KUID:33404:50206:2.

Stone Front Shop KUID:33404:502065:3.

"I recently joined TPR (Trainz Pro Routes) and look forward to working with this great group of wizards! My endless struggle to bring the *Tall Trees and Boardwalk RR* to the *Trainz* community will finally be successful because the TPR Team has decided to make it a TPR project.

"*Trainz* has added a great deal of pleasure to my life and will continue to engage me. Thank you Auran! My content has been downloaded over 2 million times and I want to thank the thousands of users around the world who use my content and take pleasure in my creations.

"All Aboard!"

David, I want to say thanks very much for that great insight into your family history and your work with *Trainz*. I inserted some pictures of your work to illustrate your creations, but the only way for one to really appreciate what you have done is to go to the DLS and add your items to our own routes. In addition to the great looking trees and buildings, I was very impressed with the tenement splines that you created. They really can make a neighborhood come alive quickly and easily. I downloaded all of them for use on my routes. Thanks!

Tenement2 Spline KUID:33404:502018:2.

Congratulations on joining up with the Trainz Pro Routes folks. I'm sure that your talents will be put to good use with a great bunch of people who brought us the LARS system. Also, congratulations on being recognized by Auran for your work. Wow! Downloaded TWO million times? You have to be doing something right!

John

Credits

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