

NMRA BULLETIN

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2019 NMRA National Convention Dates and National Train Show Reservations:
2019—Salt Lake City, UT • July 7–13, 2019 • <http://www.nmra2019slc.org>
Train Show Booth Reservations—Jenny Hendricks Registrar - P.O. Box 1328, Soddy Daisy, TN 37384-1328
423-892-2846 • ntsreg@nmra.org
• 2020—St. Louis, MO • 2021—Santa Clara, CA • 2022—Birmingham, England

ACHIEVEMENT PROGRAM

NMRA AP CERTIFICATE REPORT

OCTOBER 2018

GOLDEN SPIKE

Mid-Continent Region

Mike Barkhurst, Calamus, Iowa

Mid-Eastern Region

Robert Morningstar, Greencastle, Pennsylvania

Phillip Peters, Littleton, Pennsylvania

Northeastern Region

Ron Grant, Saint John, NB, Canada

Southeastern Region

Thomas Klimoski, Hiawassee, Georgia

Joanna Long, Dayton, Tennessee

Philip Stead, Ball Ground, Georgia

MASTER BUILDER - MOTIVE POWER

Mid-Eastern Region

Gilbert Brauch, Jr., Hickory, North Carolina

Malcolm Houck, Maynard, Massachusetts

MASTER BUILDER - CARS

Mid-Eastern Region

Joe Walters, Bear, Delaware

Northeastern Region

Malcolm Houck, Maynard, Massachusetts

MASTER BUILDER - STRUCTURES

Midwest Region

Roderic Thomson, Stevensville, Michigan

MASTER BUILDER - SCENERY

Pacific Northwest Region

Max Magliaro, Oregon City, Oregon

Southeastern Region

Malcolm Sokol, Cropwell, Alabama

MODEL RAILROAD ENGINEER - CIVIL

British Region

Peter Bowen, Wells, SOM, United Kingdom

Northeastern Region

Chuck Thomas, Wilton, Connecticut

MODEL RAILROAD ENGINEER -

ELECTRICAL

British Region

Peter Bowen, Wells, SOM, United Kingdom

Midwest Region

John Coy, Avon, Indiana

Northeastern Region

John McHugh, Plaistow, New Hampshire

Chuck Thomas, Wilton, Connecticut

Pacific Northwest Region

Max Magliaro, Oregon City, Oregon

Rocky Mountain Region

Dennis Krausman, Lonetree, Colorado

CHIEF DISPATCHER

Northeastern Region

George Jarvis, Conception Bay South, NL, Canada

Pacific Northwest Region

Glenn Edmison, Bend, Oregon

Sunshine Region

James Robertson, Lecanto, Florida

ASSOCIATION OFFICIAL

Mid-Eastern Region

Michele Chance, Kannapolis, North Carolina

Ken Montero, Midlothian, Virginia

Pacific Southwest Region

Robert DeMoss, Long Beach, California

Per Harwe, Tustin, California

Pat Raymer, La Crescenta, California

Thousand Lakes Region

Scott Nesbit, Sioux Falls, South Dakota

ASSOCIATION VOLUNTEER

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Drew James, North Syracuse, New York

Chuck Thomas, Wilton, Connecticut

Pacific Coast Region

Doug Smith, Danville, California

Pacific Northwest Region

Charles Hutto, Albany, Oregon

Pacific Southwest Region

Per Harwe, Tustin, California

Dain Leese, Laguna Hills, California

Mona Raymer, La Crescenta, California

Sunshine Region

Donovan Lewis, Bradenton, Florida

MODEL RAILROAD AUTHOR

MidwestRegion

John Coy, Avon, Indiana

Pacific Coast Region

Christopher Palermo, San Carlos, California

Pacific Southwest Region

Per Harwe, Tustin, California

MASTER MODEL RAILROADER

MMR 622 Dennis Krausman, Lonetree, Colorado

MMR 623 Gilbert Brauch, Jr., Hickory, North Carolina

AP QUESTIONS: If you have questions about the AP program or requirements, start with your local or Region AP manager.

If you still have questions, contact Frank Koch at fkoch@hotmail.com

If you prefer to write, contact Frank at 4769 Silverwood Drive, Batavia, OH 45103.

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KURT THOMPSON.
EARNs MMR #619

I'm grateful to the many people who helped me become Master Model Railroad (MMR) No. 619. The beating heart of the MMR program is the support network that (1) guides "We Who Are Hopelessly Hooked On Model Railroading" through the steps to take our skills to the next level; and also, (2) directs us through training and experience to help lead the hobby and make it a better place for us all.

My personal experience of our hobby's support came in the form of mentors who were determined to see me succeed and for whom failure was not an option. They had their work cut out for them. Now I'd like to share with you some highlights of what my path to MMR was like and express my appreciation for the folks who seemed to just show up and help me. Most must have done that for no other reason than I was there, working to be a better model railroader.

In the beginning, however, my very first source of model railroading support was...my parents! It was they who allowed my much-older brother to have a Marx Road-and-Rail Set to race the slot cars with, but only if he and his friends would first set up the train-half of the Marx set for his then-four-year-old brother, Kurt. When that first train pulled out, there was no turning back.

I fell in love with the F7 in that set with its New Haven McGinnis paint scheme.

When I wasn't running the train, I carried that locomotive everywhere. It was my favorite toy and my closest companion.

The Baltimore & Ohio running alongside our backyard in Washington Court House, Ohio, led to an unexpected bonus: an early fascination with full-size trains. B&O's Midland Subdivision ran right by our house just on the other side of our back fence. Even better, Joe O'Brien, one of my father's fellow Boy Scout commissioners, was the railroad's local track supervisor. Joe saw to it that I visited a small yard in town, where he and my Dad managed to get me up onto the local SW7 switcher. A few years later, just before my 10th birthday, Joe arranged for me to be on the train when the railroad brought its first load of ribbon-rail to the Midland Sub. I even got to operate the caboose hop to pick up the rest of the train, which had been parked out of town so as not to block all of Washington Court House's grade crossings.

It wasn't until my teen years that I learned of a national magazine about model railroading. In it, I found an ad for the National Model Railroad Association and its upcoming convention. Alas, knowing and joining were not the same thing. I had become a teenage armchair model railroader and then, a 20-something armchair modeler. But the seed was planted.

In the mid-1980s, I finally joined the NMRA and attended my first National Convention, "Full Steam to Eugene [Oregon]." Although I was far from home, I felt very much at home in the company of other model railroaders of all ages and skill levels. I was single, flush with funds, and enjoying everything the Convention had to offer. Fellow-conventioner Curtis Brookstone and I even took an unscheduled trip to Southern Pacific's Eugene engine facility, where we snapped what turned out to be the only two photographs of 4449 getting turned that day for its run back to Portland, Oregon. I still treasure my photograph from that day's unexpected little bit of railfanning.

As I read the *NMRA BULLETIN*, I became aware we had local chapters, "Divisions" in our parlance, and there I wasn't! That is, I was not participating. However, I soon settled in Rockville, Maryland, where I became active, some would say slightly active, in the Mid-Eastern Region's (MER) Dixie Division.

Dean Ebner, one of my co-workers, invited me to attend an operating session with a model railroad group known as the RifRaf. The next 2½ years saw most of my Friday evenings spent operating Ed Martin's "South Mountain Division" in the company of Dean and Ed, along with Bill McMillan, Phil and Jeannie Sieg, Steve Sherrill, and several others. Here, I found my special home in the hobby: operations with a group of like-minded people. To this day, the social side of the hobby remains most important to me.

During the same period, I spent most Tuesday evenings in Dean's basement, working on train projects under his tutelage. I did some work, and he would paint my locomotives, which emerged from Dean's backshop beautifully painted and, as if by magic, having sprouted several new details.

By this time, I was married, and as our family history unfolded, my wife's job took us to Western Pennsylvania. There I "took the plunge" and became involved with the Mid-Central Region's (MCR) Division 2 in Pittsburgh. I logged my first volunteer hours as a helper at the National Train Show. I didn't get to see much of the Convention that year, but what a trade show! And, what wonderful people I met, particularly other Division 2 members and some "National" volunteers as well.

With the Convention over, I became a regular at Division 2's monthly meetings. There, Divisional AP Chairman Loren McCollough, along with Dennis Vaccaro, were talking up the Achievement Program. Suddenly: the "Aha!" moment. I probably had enough dispatching experience from my RifRaf days to qualify for the Chief Dispatcher Certificate. A call to Ed Martin produced an invitation to send my paperwork to him, where he and our colleague, Bill McMillan, would quickly sign off. I tackled the remaining requirements, and things came together without a hitch. In spring 1993, my very first AP Certificate was in hand.

I'd become a stay-at-home husband and father and I did more volunteer work on both the National and Divisional levels. I also wrote several articles, some of which were published in the *NMRA BULLETIN*. Others went into *The Keystone*, the MCR Division 2 publication. Along with the articles, I rewrote two Data Sheets. Before long, I'd earned two more Certificates: AP

Author and AP Association Volunteer. The years 1993 and 1994 were, indeed, very good ones.

Not long afterward, our family moved to Annapolis, where I was back in the MER. As I reached out to become active near my new home, I found we were awkwardly situated between, and equally inconvenient to, the Washington Metro area's Potomac Division and the Baltimore Metro area's Mt. Clare Division. Then, as often happens, a new job and burgeoning family activities crowded out model railroading, in my case, for what turned out to be 14 years. Fortunately, I'd purchased a Life Membership, so the NMRA magazine kept showing up. At least, I hadn't completely ghosted model railroading. Wouldn't you know, all the while, I kept reminding myself that 23 model-building projects stood between me and my MMR.

In the early and mid-2000s, I met other local model railroaders, including Jeff Mutter, Don Marvel, Jack Keene, Travers Stavac, John Stralka, and Russ Forte. Jeff was building an Erie Lackawanna Scranton Division layout. The intervening decades have been filled with camaraderie as we worked on Jeff's layout, along with Jack's, Don's, and my own small layout. We grew a little community that even included our wives, all of whom continue to at least tolerate our hobby activities.

In 2008, Roger Cason, then the MER President, sent an inquiry to NMRA members in the greater Baltimore metro area. The old Mt. Claire Division had finally passed away, despite several heroic resuscitation efforts during the previous decade or so. Roger mentioned two alternatives: (1) Join one of the two nearby active Divisions, either Greater Washington's "Potomac" or Pennsylvania's big "Susquehanna;" or (2) take a run at breathing life into a new Baltimore-area NMRA Division.

I reached out to other respondents who expressed interest in creating a new Division, and late that year, 12 of us met to form what would become MER's Chesapeake Division. I was elected the Division's first superintendent — a position I held for five years. At our first meeting, I made a commitment to knuckle down on the Achievement Program and become the Chesapeake Division's first post-startup MMR.

I liked being superintendent. The job put me in touch with lots of new people. The new Division manned tables at train shows and brought the NMRA to people's

attention. We hosted several contests, including the "One Square Foot" contest and a layout design contest. We hosted a special make-and-take scenery event for non-model railroaders, where teenage boys and girls fabricated trees, laid ballast, and applied ground foam to their own one square foot of HO real estate. Most proved to be mighty good modelers. Some dads even used their kids as a great excuse to try their hands at scenery.

Meanwhile, on the home front, after plenty of wrangling and several false starts, I finally built a nice HO-gauge layout in the laundry room. That little miracle earned my fourth and fifth AP Certificates: Electrical Engineering and Civil Engineering. While working on the railroad, I also scratchbuilt nine On30 logging cars. And, so came my sixth AP Certificate.

Now on a roll, I did a structures "blitz-build," followed by an AP judging party at my house — a thrust to complete my seventh AP Certificate. Results were, well, mixed. But where models failed to earn Merit Awards, the judges listed specific recommendations on how I could rebuild them to be worthy of a Merit Award and how I could do even better on the next model. Everyone seemed to be pulling for my success, and I know this is the care and feeding the Achievement Program would visit on any participant. I was humbled by the judges' intensity and quality. They took their job very seriously. After the judging, however, it was time for Kurt to put the models away for a while and take a breather.

In 2016, a couple of years after finishing up as Chesapeake Division's superintendent, the MER's nominating committee asked me to run for vice-president, and I was elected. Then-current President P.J. Mattson was term-limited, and there was the prospect I might be asked to run as his possible successor. So I decided to buckle down and complete the work needed to earn my Structures Certificate, just in case the presidency and its considerable workload were to show up. Good plan because, sure enough, I am now the MER President.

With encouragement and guidance from Martin Brechbiel, Brian Kampschoer, and Dave and Michele Chance, friends and fellow model railroaders whom I met through my work with MER, the last of my structures to earn Merit Awards were judged this past August. With that done and the AP and MMR paperwork submitted, I finally completed a now-10-year-old

commitment to be that first Chesapeake Division member to earn an MMR since the Division was launched. Looking back now, it was quite a journey and a heck of a lot of fun.

Did I learn anything while earning the MMR? Oh, yes. In addition to the things that the AP and MMR are all about, I learned...

- First and foremost, I'm a social creature. The best part of being an NMRA member and a model railroader is our built-in group of friends who share a love for our hobby and who are just about always ready to help one another.

- Second, I'm not a well-known model builder, and I'm not a nationally recognized personality. I admire those who are, but not everyone can be or wishes to be a star. For me, the importance of those things is overshadowed by my wife's caring, along with the hobby community's support, which together lifted me over the top to get to be an MMR.

- Third, I work better with wood than styrene.

As for requirements to earn various AP Certificates, I found that while the process required me to learn, develop, and use virtually all the skills needed to be a successful hobbyist and NMRA leader, I did make it harder for myself than is truly necessary. I just read more into the requirements than were there.

Turns out, the requirements are thoughtfully designed so that you must get to be pretty darned good, but you don't have to be perfect, and you don't need to jump through hoops just for the sake of it.

The Achievement Program did for me what it's done for at least 618 or more model railroaders before me. It taught me how to improve my modeling and organizational skills to be a better railroad modeler and a better citizen of the hobby. Please enjoy our hobby, and if you haven't already, think about letting the Achievement Program into your model railroading life.

Certificates Earned
Kurt Thompson, MMR 619

Chief Dispatcher
Association Volunteer
Model Railroad-Author
Model Railroad Engineer-
Electrical
Model Railroad Engineer-Civil
Master Builder-Cars
Master Builder-Structures