

# NMRA BULLETIN

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2020 NMRA National Convention Dates and National Train Show Reservations:  
2020—St. Louis, MO • July 12–18, 2020 • <http://www.gateway2020.org>  
Train Show Booth Reservations—Jenny Hendricks Registrar - P.O. Box 1328, Soddy Daisy, TN 37384-1328  
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• 2021—Santa Clara, CA • 2022—Birmingham, England

## ACHIEVEMENT PROGRAM

### NMRA AP CERTIFICATE REPORT

SEPTEMBER 2019

#### GOLDEN SPIKE

##### Mid-Central Region

Robert DiBenedetto, Wintersville, Ohio  
Joel Everly, Steubenville, Ohio  
Kurt Sanders, Vienna, Ohio

#### MASTER BUILDER - MOTIVE POWER

##### Midwest Region

Emory Luebke, Greenville, Wisconsin

#### MASTER BUILDER - CARS

##### Rocky Mountain Region

Paul Brennecke, Golden, Colorado

##### Sunshine Region

John Giammasi, Beverly Hills, Florida

#### MASTER BUILDER - STRUCTURES

##### Mid-Continent Region

Douglas Harding, Colo, Iowa

##### Pacific Northwest Region

Doug Burton, Camrose, Alberta, Canada

#### MASTER BUILDER - SCENERY

##### Southeastern Region

William Robertson, Roswell, Georgia

#### MASTER BUILDER - PROTOTYPE

##### MODELS

##### North Central Region

Brook Qualman, Milford, Michigan

##### Southeastern Region

Stephen Funsten, Roswell, Georgia

#### MODEL RAILROAD ENGINEER - CIVIL

##### Mid-Eastern Region

Victor Bitleris, Raleigh, North Carolina

##### Midwest Region

James Huebler, Brookfield, Illinois

#### MODEL RAILROAD ENGINEER -

##### ELECTRICAL

##### Mid-Continent Region

Douglas Harding, Colo, Iowa

##### Mid-Eastern Region

MER #1357 Victor Bitleris, Raleigh, North Carolina

##### Midwest Region

James Huebler, Brookfield, Illinois

##### Southeastern Region

Randall Watson, Suwanee, Georgia

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##### Pacific Northwest Region

Steve Hauff, Pt. Angeles, Washington

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##### Mid-Eastern Region

Kurt Thompson, MMR, Arnold, Maryland

##### North Central Region

Charles White, Van Wert, Ohio

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##### North Central Region

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##### Pacific Northwest Region

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##### Southeastern Region

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#### MODEL RAILROAD AUTHOR

##### North Central Region

Brook Qualman, Milford, Michigan

##### Rocky Mountain Region

Gerald Carson, Woodland Park, Colorado

#### MASTER MODEL RAILROADER®

Gregory Rich, New Baltimore, Michigan,  
MMR® #645,

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](mailto:fkoch@hotmail.com)

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

# Did you know?

Each year, tens of millions of dollars are donated to charities all across America. These tax-deductible donations can include the NMRA, an educational not-for-profit association that educates, provides outreach, and creates standards for model railroaders around the world.

NMRA members can check with their local employer to see what they can do to make a payroll deduction to the NMRA that fits their company's budget. Several large corporations also provide a match program through [doublethedonation.com](http://doublethedonation.com). As a participant, you provide a donation and your employer matches your donation. The NMRA uses these funds to continue to educate, promote, and develop standards, so all may enjoy the greatest hobby in the world.

We appreciate any and all donations and you will be doing yourself and your hobby some good.

Help your employer donate to a great cause.



**MICHAEL WOLF  
EARNS MMR® 640**

The NMRA Achievement Program (AP) is much more than a series of “merit badges” one earns to become a Master Model Railroader®. It provides a path to improve your modeling skills and knowledge of prototypical equipment and operations, broaden your involvement in the hobby and organization, and so much more. If I were to go back 50 years and tell that little kid in a farmhouse in Pennsylvania with a couple of loops of track and two Lionel locomotives that one day he’d be writing about being a Master Model Railroader, his reply would probably be something like, “Master what? I just want to play trains!”

A modeler friend asked me back at the beginning of this journey, “why do you want to spend your time becoming an MMR? All those requirements are old and out of date. Seems like a big waste of time.” My reply was simple: “Why do people climb Mount Everest? You always need a goal.” For me, a definitive goal provides a focus for the task at hand and the tasks ahead that need to be accomplished to achieve that goal.

My first model railroad was a very ambitious but crude attempt in a spare bedroom as a teenager. Oak, rough-sawn boards for a frame, brass track, and a TYCO locomotive and cars — not exactly up to MMR standards! Twenty-three years of moving around the world in the U.S. Air Force pretty much kept my model railroading in armchair status. The prospect of “settling down” in one house for more than three years lit the fire to create a layout. While our realtor had no idea what a model railroad looked like, she quickly figured out which basements would and wouldn’t work for one. Goal set — build a model railroad like the ones I have been reading about in *Model Railroader* since I was a teen.

It was also about that time I found an ad for an upcoming Regional convention for the NMRA in Columbus, Ohio. I had heard about the NMRA, but other than the advertisement for the insurance plan that ran in *MR*, didn’t know much about it. I joined the NMRA via a Railpass, attended the convention, learned a lot from the clinics I attended, and visited a couple of layouts on my side of town. A couple of months later, I attended my first meeting and got to tour another layout. It was during that meeting that I met the first person I’d like to thank on my journey



to MMR — Bill Hanna. Bill recognized me from the layout tour during the convention and invited me to join the Tuesday Night Gang (TNG) for operating sessions. To this day, the group doesn’t have a formal name, but we are a gang, and we do travel from basement to basement on Tuesday nights running trains or working on each other’s railroads. Some are NMRA members, some are not, but we all love trains. Bill’s invitation and the friendships formed with the TNG and other NMRA members is the main reason my membership in the NMRA extended past the end of my Railpass. Thanks, Bill.

I spent a couple of years finishing the basement and making plans for my layout, all while operating on about a half-dozen layouts. I learned a lot about operations that year and continued to revise my layout based on those lessons, which leads me to my second thank you — Scott Williamson. Besides introducing me to the OPSIG and operations, Scott has been there to help build my layout, refine my operating scheme, and even hold a cloud backdrop up for a really long time when I was photographing a scene. The wide-angle version of that shot with Scott’s “thrilled to be here/my arms are about to fall off” look is priceless. He was also the one who convinced me to submit an article about my layout to *Railroad*

*Model Craftsman* when I didn’t think it was worthy of a national magazine. As a former newspaper editor, he’s also assisted as my editor for numerous articles in *Model Railroad Hobbyist* magazine while working on my Author Certificate. Teamwork is a valuable part of the hobby, and I appreciate Scott’s assistance in these and many other ways.

Somewhere about six years ago, I started looking into the AP. I analyzed the criteria and requirements and decided that some of them were going to be easy and other areas would be tough, but I plotted a path and made it a goal. Along the way, I’ve expanded my modeling knowledge and skills immensely, made many new friends in the hobby, have educated the next generation (through our Scouting Merit badge program, numerous clinics, and articles), worked to improve the Division (as a director, member of our Membership Retention and Recruitment Committee, and member of the Regional Convention Committee), had my layout featured in *RMC*, and was awarded Best of Show for my scratchbuilt locomotive at a Regional Convention. Few, if any, of those accomplishments would have been achieved without the NMRA and the Achievement Program. While the short-term goals and priorities have changed, the ultimate goal remained fixed and out there to achieve.

Before I close, I have three more thanks to pass along. First, thank you to the guys in the Tuesday Night Gang (I don't want to list them because I'd miss someone). You've all added so much to my modeling toolbox over the years, and I couldn't have gotten here without your help. A second thank you is to Dick Briggs, MMR, and our Division AP Chair. Dick has been supportive in guiding me along the way and encouraging me to "git-er-dun." And finally, a big thanks to my family for tolerating those railroad-related side trips, "vacations" to conventions, the ops sessions that run until 11 o'clock at night, and the hours and hours I've spent in the

basement. I couldn't have done it without your support along the way.

That sums up my journey to MMR. Despite rumors to the contrary, the paperwork isn't really that bad, the standards and requirements aren't out of date, and the judges aren't mean. It isn't something you can knock out in a weekend or two, but if you set a goal, plot the course, and remain focused on the task, your modeling skills and knowledge will benefit from your efforts. There are so many different facets of this great hobby. Enjoy the ones you are comfortable with but challenge yourself in areas you're not. You'll be glad you did! As Dick Briggs has often said

(and I'm going to start saying), "If I can do it, anyone can do it." Just do it! As for my next goal — there are still four more Certificates out there I'd like to obtain...

**Certificates Earned**  
**Michael Wolf, MMR® 640**  
**Model Railroad Engineer –**  
**Electrical**  
**Model Railroad Engineer - Civil**  
**Master Builder - Scenery**  
**Master Builder - Motive Power**  
**Chief Dispatcher**  
**Model Railroad Author**  
**Association Volunteer**

## MMR EARNED

### NEAL ANDERSON EARNS MMR® 641

**L**iving in the Chicago area, I had plenty of opportunities to see trains moving all around the city and suburbs. I also had two uncles with trains set up in their homes, and I would sit and look at the layout long before someone would even come to run trains on it.

For Christmas one year, I opened up a box with a Marx train set in it, but it had no track. Come to find out, the preformed layout and track were waiting for me outside at the back door. Some rough-housing destroyed the layout, and after some time, two sheets of plywood replaced it. Half the board was slot cars, and the other half was my train.

My mom would take the family to go fishing in a nearby park, and I would run up the hill and watch the trains on the Chicago & North Western. C&NW ran close to my parents' house. I went to work at O'Hare Field and soon after bought my own home near the Lake County Model Railroad Club, where I ran trains and operated a switchboard. The club board said it was mandatory to build a switch. At that time, that was way over what I could do, so that ended that. I then became an armchair model railroader until I found a hobby shop (Iron Rails of Kenosha) that also had a layout in the basement next door (Tri-County Model Railroad Club), so I became a member.

I took a trip to Boulder, Colorado, to see my brother and saw a 7.5-gauge railroad with a steam engine that used an ice bucket as the sand dome. That was so cool, and I figured I could do that. I took a ride on the Durango & Silverton narrow gauge train with my wife and loved it. I got involved in changing the Tri-County layout benchwork while it was

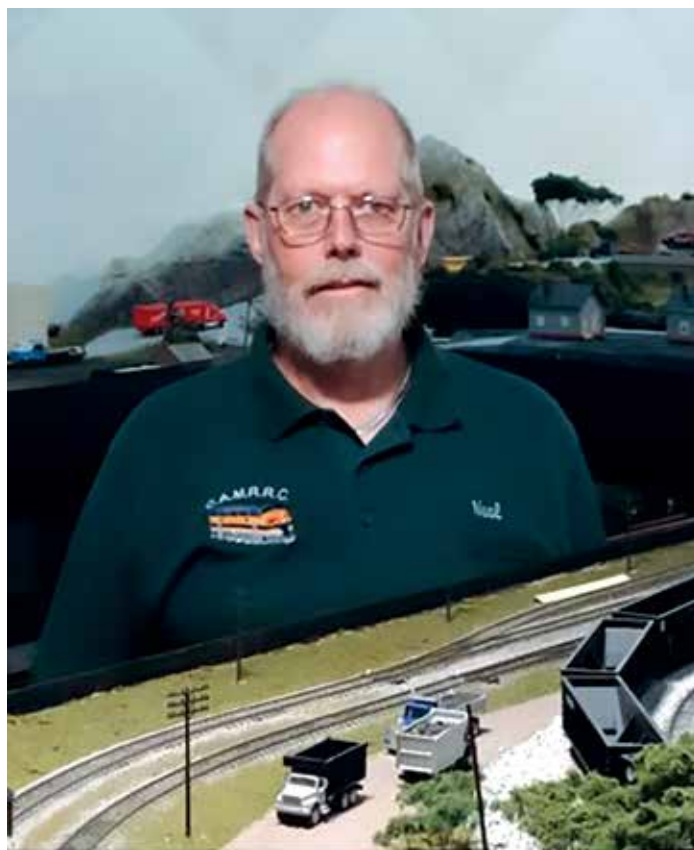
still operating. The layout was shut down in the morning and reopened in the evening. After that project, I was no longer intimidated to tackle any major job. I started modifying many ore cars and engines to run on the Tri-County layout.

I started attending the NMRA - Fox Valley Division meetings and got involved with the High Wheeler Shows and the Division's home layout that was made up of modules. I built four of them to take to shows. I took a job transfer in 1996 to Charlotte Douglas Airport.

My daughter booked me on a train excursion through the Nantahala Gorge. That fired up my interest again. I lived in Linwood, North Carolina. Little did my wife know that Norfolk Southern had a train yard there with cars banging all day and night!

I now lived in an area where the NMRA really didn't exist. I looked for a group to get active with and joined the Concord Area Model Railroad Club. At that time, I couldn't find a better group of people to be around. I helped with the 1998 MER Convention. Most of the club members were running the convention at that time.

I built a barn and used the loft for my trains. The power for the railroad was a set of



solar panels and storage batteries. Between the heat and the cold, I wanted somewhere else to run my trains, so I started looking. We found some land in Troutman, North Carolina, that would fit the bill. I designed the basement to my liking and built a house above it to my wife's liking. We moved in on February 2, 2002 (02-02-02).

I built 11 modules to take to shows and became the Treasurer for the Concord Club. I started a more permanent layout in 2004. Dust from the rafters forced me to put up a ceiling. I had to work around the layout and try to keep it from getting covered in plaster dust.

With the Division, I attended a class on making switches, made one, and it worked fine. I liked building different scenes as my railroad, KK&L, grew larger.

I have been an Instructor for Railroad Model University for several years. A *Charlotte Observer* newspaper reporter came in 2007 to do a story on the RMU and published photos of my layout.

The KK&L Railroad ran ops sessions on the railroad for several years with car cards. I found the layout hard to run, so I turned it into a dual main line railroad and added a lower level for some storage tracks. I also added a second helix to the layout to make it a full dual main line all the way around.

I had some issues with the lighting in the room, so I installed some 3W LED lights (solar-powered). I created the [www.kklrailroad.com](http://www.kklrailroad.com) web page to show various layout construction techniques and help other modelers to overcome similar problems with their layouts.

Many of the things done on the KK&L layout were covered by AP Certificate requirements, so I started filling in the paperwork. In January 2018, I earned five AP Certificates. I joined the rankings of the Carolina Southern Division 12 as the AP Chairman and became the President of the CAMRRC.

Then, I earned another certificate and needed one more, so I started work on the

AP for cars. I built several cars — even a 1/6-scale car from scratch. I started a program to give classes on Chief Dispatching and operations of a railroad.

I started building a 1/6-scale engine from scratch, along with a caboose. Another little push toward MMR® was to consider work had already done that could earn Merit Awards. I had other kitbashed cars and engines on the layout that would do the job. . All that was left was to complete the paperwork for MMR®.

I want to thank everyone who helped me in all my railroading efforts. My goal is to help fellow model railroaders learn more about the hobby, help them achieve awards, and, of course, enjoy many operating sessions with them!

## Not getting the bi-monthly NMRA eBULLETIN?

The new **NMRA eBulletin** comes out every other month near the 1st of the month. Either your SPAM filter is blocking it, or you need to update your email address with us. Have HQ update your address at: <http://www.nmra.org/customer-service-request>

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