

NMRA BULLETIN

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**Region Secretaries: send all
changes in Region officer infor-
mation to the NMRA Secretary:
secy@nmra.org.**

rev 5/15/21

2022 NMRA National Convention Dates and National Train Show Reservations:
St. Louis, Missouri August 7 – 14, 2022
Train Show Booth Reservations—Jenny Hendricks Registrar - P.O. Box 1328, Soddy Daisy, TN 37384-1328
423-892-2846 • ntsreg@nmra.org
• 2023—Dallas, Texas

INTRODUCING THE 2021 MODEL RAILROADING HEROES

By GERRY LEONE, HLM, MMR®
NMRA VICE PRESIDENT / SPECIAL PROJECTS

During these pandemic times, we've heard a lot about heroes: healthcare workers, teachers, foodservice workers... the list is long. But model railroading also has its heroes, and they're the people who volunteer their time and talents to make their Division more fun, more engaging, and more accessible for other members. They're the volunteers who do it because it's the right thing to do and don't expect recognition for it.

These are the NMRA members who the "NMRA President's Award for Service to the Division" was designed to honor.

In spite of the pandemic, when most — if not all — Division activities were shut down for a year, Divisions still had their heroes who've given of themselves not only this past year, but also for years before that.

This is the fifth year for this award, and it seems there is no shortage of Division heroes. Here are this year's 2021 NMRA President's Award for Service to the Division winners.

JOHN GILLIES (AR) John did above-and-beyond work for the Australasian Region by spending an extraordinary amount of time overhauling and completing the Region's recording methods to ensure all tax liabilities were correctly recorded. He also instituted a system that allows this to be easily carried out in the future.

PETER BOWEN (BR) For the past four years, Peter has been donating his graphic design skills and untold amounts of time as the British Region's *Roundhouse* magazine editor. And in his "spare time," he redesigned and rebuilt the Region's website, as well as making his local Division more effective, engaging, and welcoming.

MARC LACHEY (LSR) Marc volunteered to take the job of Convention Director that had languished for several years and turned the Lone Star Region conventions into "gotta go" destinations for members of all the Region's Divisions. By thinking outside the box and breaking the mold, Marc helped save money and time by planning ahead.

DAVID ELLIS (MCR) From numerous letters to long, involved phone calls, Dave put in countless hours researching legalities and filing the necessary paperwork to keep Division 12 of the Mid-Central Region a proper non-profit. He also stepped up to be the Division's newsletter editor and then got the Division's website up and running again.

JIMMY ABLES (MCoR) is known for stepping up when no one else will. From meeting announcements to show notices, Jimmy keeps the Gateway Division running, and has served as Superintendent and Publicity Chair, and was one of the organizers of the 2020 NMRA National Convention in St. Louis, and is now working on the St. Louis 2022 convention.

ALEX POLIMENI (MER) At age 26, Alex became the youngest Superintendent ever to hold the office in the South Mountain Division of the Mid-Eastern Region. During his three-year term, he managed the Division with distinction and has become a prime example of the "next generation" taking a leadership role.

ROBERT BLAKE (MWR) Bob served as Superintendent of the Michiana Division of the Midwest Region for seven years, formalizing regular meetings with meaningful content to grow the Division. It worked. He also serves as chair of the NMRA's EduTrain Program and grew that program into something beneficial to all NMRA Divisions.

FRANK PASTORE (NFR) Frank hails from the Niagara Frontier Region's newest Division, the Western New York Division — a Division he founded and then served as its Assistant Superintendent. Most members feel there wouldn't be a Western New York Division without Frank's undying help and support.

BARRY HENSEL (NCR) Barry has been at the helm of the North Central Region's *Hot Box* newsletter longer than anyone can remember. He took it from a small publication and expanded it to more than 30 color pages and now includes anything and everything a model railroad magazine would and should have. And he does it all once a quarter, every quarter.

TOM WORTMANN (NER) For 20 years, Tom has been a dominant force in the Northeast Region's Garden State Division. He began by rebuilding it after it had become dormant for many years. A few decades later, he's done it all in the Division, including editing its newsletter and serving as a Division Director, webmaster, convention chairman, Vice President, and President.

JIM COLLINS (PCR) Jim served two terms as the Pacific Coast Region's Sierra Division Superintendent then willingly volunteered to host the Region's 2019 convention. Currently, he's the Division Membership Chair and makes sure that all members are aware of upcoming events. In addition, he's a frequent contributor to the Division's newsletter and hosts monthly virtual meetings online.

CHARLIE HUTTO (PNR) Charlie couldn't be more active in the Pacific Northwest Region's First Division. Besides being on the Division's Board, he edits their newsletter, and he's the self-appointed tech chair, making sure every Division gathering has smoothly running PowerPoint presentations, slide shows, and close-up camera views of live "how-to" clinics.

RYAN DI FEDE (PSR) When the COVID-19 pandemic hit in March 2020, Ryan was Superintendent of the San Diego Division of the Pacific Southwest Region and proposed the idea of virtual monthly model railroading events. He learned and mastered Zoom and developed a monthly “Show and Tell” segment, a layout tour, and a clinic for each month. His events are now watched by modelers across the country.

GEOFFREY CARTER (RMR) While the Rocky Mountain Region is blessed with many who go beyond the call of duty, Geoff’s name keeps rising to the top. As a member of the Northern Utah Division, he takes it upon himself to get to know new members and introduces them to everyone else. His is the first hand up when a volunteer is needed to do a clinic, fill a chair vacancy, and help with a service project.

DAVE WINANS (SER) Dave is a member of the Southeast Region’s Palmetto Division Board and works tire-

lessly on everything the Division does, including co-chairing this September’s Swamp Rabbit Express Convention. In addition, he organized the HO T-Trak modular layout for the Division and personally constructed all the basic modules, adding scenery to three of them.

BRIAN WORDES (TLR) More than 30 years ago, Brian had an idea and became a co-founder of the Thousand Lakes Region’s Minnesota River Valley Division. He served in literally every office of the Division — several more than once — including editing its newsletter. He can always be counted on to step forward and shoulder the load when the Division needs help.

The entire NMRA thanks these individuals for the time and effort they’ve invested in our Association. These are this year’s model railroading heroes, and we wish them a hearty congratulations!

We’re looking for a few good layouts... (Twelve, to be exact)

You’re proud of your model railroad. Why not share it by submitting a photo or two for the 2022 edition of the NMRA Model Railroad Calendar? The calendar is distributed to every U.S. member as a fundraising project. To have your layout photo considered for inclusion, just follow these easy steps:

- Take a horizontal (landscape) format photo of your layout.
- Submit your photo as a digital file. Files must be at least 300 pixels per inch and 8” x 12” (minimum size of 8.6 megapixels – larger is better). Accepted file types are **tiff** (preferred) or **jpg** (highest quality only).
- Write a caption describing the action in your shot, the scale, the builder, and the photographer. Include that information on a separate piece of paper or as a text or .doc file on your submission CD, DVD, or thumb drive.
- Please limit your entries to no more than your **four** best scenes.
- Be sure to include your name, address, phone number, and email with your submissions.

*By submitting images for the NMRA Calendar, you are giving permission to the editors to alter them as needed (cropping, smoke and lighting effects, etc). Please indicate specifically if you do **NOT** give permission to alter your images.*

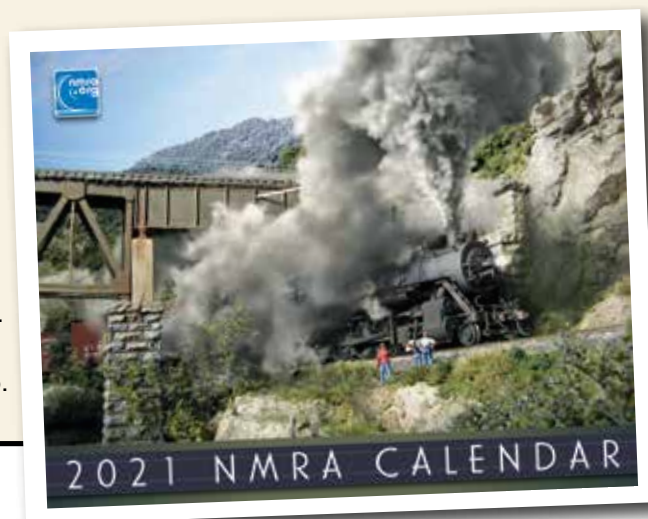
Send to: **NMRA - ATTN: Calendar Project**
PO Box 1328 - Soddy Daisy, TN 37384-1328
UPS/FedEx address: **8414 Gulf View Dr. - Suite A**
Soddy Daisy, TN 37379

Photos must be received by **August 1, 2021** for consideration.



Questions? contact Mike Brestel at 513-661-2141
or 513-481-0185.

® National Model Railroad Association



ACHIEVEMENT PROGRAM

NMRA AP CERTIFICATE REPORT APRIL 2021 GOLDEN SPIKE

Mid-Central Region

Jim Skillman, Cedarville, Ohio
Christopher Stilson, Beaver Creek, Ohio

MASTER BUILDER - MOTIVE POWER Northeastern Region

James DeMarco, Kendall, New York

Rocky Mountain Region

Paul Brennecke, Golden, Colorado

MASTER BUILDER - CARS Mid-Continent Region

Douglas Harding, Colo, Iowa

Mid-West Region

Gary Loiselle, Rockford, Illinois
Jim Osborn, McHenry, Illinois

Pacific Coast Region

Ted Stephens, Palo Alto, California

MASTER BUILDER - STRUCTURES Northeastern Region

Thomas Emmett, Newport, Rhode Island

Sunshine Region

Kenneth Hoot, Jacksonville Beach, Florida

MASTER BUILDER - SCENERY British Region

Jonathan A.C. Small, Wirral, Merseyside,
United Kingdom

Mid-Continent Region

Douglas Harding, Colo, Iowa

Mid-West Region

Phillip Burnside, Avon, Indiana

North Central Region

Richard Neibert, Canton, Michigan

MASTER BUILDER - PROTOTYPE MODELS British Region

Jonathan A.C. Small, Merseyside, United
Kingdom

MODEL RAILROAD ENGINEER - CIVIL Mid-Continent Region

Douglas Harding, Colo, Iowa

Mid-West Region

Michael Hirvela, Waukegan, Illinois

MODEL RAILROAD ENGINEER - ELECTRICAL British Region

Brian Clark, Great Denham, Bedford,
United Kingdom
Mick Moignard, Aylesbury, Bucks, United
Kingdom

North Central Region

Richard Neibert, Canton, Michigan

CHIEF DISPATCHER Sunshine Region

Richard Segall, Hawthorne, Florida

ASSOCIATION OFFICIAL Mid-Continent Region

Raymond Brady, Brookville, Kansas

Sunshine Region

Richard Webster, Saint Lucie, Florida

ASSOCIATION VOLUNTEER Mid-Continent Region

Raymond Brady, Brookville, Kansas

North Central Region

Scott Pandorf, Lake Leelanau, Michigan

Pacific Northwest Region

Jerry Barnes, Olympia, Washington

MODEL RAILROAD AUTHOR Mid-Continent Region

Raymond Brady, Brookville, Kansas

Mid-Eastern Region

Charles Stevens, Lansdale, Pennsylvania

North Central Region

Scott Pandorf, Lake Leelanau, Michigan

Pacific Northwest Region

Dale Bearden, Sedro Wolley, Washington

MASTER MODEL RAILROADER®

MMR® #675 Jonathan A.C. Small, Wirral,
Merseyside, United Kingdom

MMR® #676 Douglas Harding, Colo,
Iowa

MMR® #677 Jim Osborn, McHenry,
Illinois

MMR® #678 James DeMarco, Kendall,
New York

MMR® #679 Ted Stephens, Palo Alto,
California

AP QUESTIONS: If you have questions about the Achievement Program or requirements, start with your local or Region AP manager. If you still have questions, contact Frank Koch at fjkoch@hotmail.com. If you prefer to write, contact Frank at 4769 Silverwood Drive, Batavia, OH 45103.

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**JOSEPH A. KAVANAGH EARNS
MASTER MODEL RAILROADER® #673**

I have come to view model railroading as an avenue for exploration and creativity. Not that I see myself as an explorer or a creative person, but I realize we each have our own degree of inquisitiveness that suits our preferences. As such, my modeling “career” has evolved over the past six-plus decades. Making things has always been my passion.

In the mid-1950s, my elder brother is the one who got the Lionel trains, but he is not the one who was interested in them. I, on the other hand, was the one who enjoyed working with our father to expand the basement 4x8 layout to include a couple of manual switches so that a second loop climbed over the original loop of track to the top of a chest of drawers placed at one end of the board and then came down to rejoin the original loop. Back then, I washed, cut, and stained popsicle sticks picked up on the street and placed them under the Lionel rails to make the track more “realistic.”

My father knew a fellow from work who modeled in two-rail O scale, and Dad took me along on one occasion when he visited him. Above our heads, between the first-floor joists in this man’s basement, were stored sections of double-track and roadbed from some earlier layout — I never knew its origin. My father made an O-scale model of an “Old Dutch Cleanser” Cudahy refrigerator car out of cardstock. Painting the cleaning woman was done by hand, and to my eyes, all the lettering was hand-drawn. The roofwalk was cardstock, as was the brake wheel. The brake staff, grab irons, end steps, and some other parts were steel and aluminum. I still have the car.

I had access to two books my father owned, which I read many times while still in grade school. The first was the 1934 *Model Railroad Manual*, edited and compiled by Emanuele Stieri and published by The Model Crafts Press in New York City with more than 250 pages of construction articles, drawings, and photographs of models. In its discussion of scales, I was introduced to the world of large-scale outdoor railroading and all the different materials and construction methods available to make models. The second book



was the 1938 *How To Build A Model Railroad* by Harold V. Loose and published by The Model Craftsman Publishing Company in New York City with 62 pages loaded with information on building models. I learned about hand-laying track and turnouts from that volume. Its drawings of single-slip and double-slip switches fascinated me. One additional item I had available to me was the January 1943 issue of *The Model Railroader*. Published during World War II, it had some articles and plans and mentioned model building using alternate materials not war-restricted.

In the late 1960s, I switched to HO scale and built several models. I was particularly proud of a scratchbuilt model of a bridge shown on page 84 of the book, *This Was Railroading* by George Abdill. My elder brother bought the book for me. I made the bridge three spans long out of

balsa wood and wire. The base for the model was the wood top fascia from an old Venetian blind. The abutments were on plaster of Paris (it was heavy). That model disappeared over the years. A second model I made from that book is a bridge shown on page 66. It was also made of balsa (I still have it), although it is nowhere near as good as the lost model.

In the early 1970s, after graduating college with a degree in civil engineering, regular work entered the picture. When *Railroad Model Craftsman* published an article in August 1972 by Doug Leffler on how to build a cardstock branchline station, I had to build it, and I still have it. In 1974, I settled down in Brooklyn, New York, and joined the Rockville Centre Model Railroad Club in Nassau County. It became a 100 percent NMRA club in 1974, so naturally, I became an NMRA

member. Among other things, I was the president of the club for a while. I busied myself there installing wiring and hand-laying the track and switches for the major yard on the railroad, did some bridge and structure building, and scenery work too. The Sunrise Trail Division of the NMRA is the local division, and I involved myself with that as Membership Chairman and Circulation Manager for the newsletter beginning in 1980. The first time I was published in the Division newsletter, *The Long Island Cannonball*, was in 1980 with a hint for concealing track feeder wires. It was also that year I began my service as a Division director. So, one could mark 1980 as the year I began my journey to MMR®. The STD was a well-established division and introduced me to the many modelers beyond the members of the Rockville Centre club. One aspect of model railroading I was introduced to at this time was operations. There were a few modelers with home layouts that were set up for freight car forwarding and switching industries in the towns. I found an N scale model railroad just two blocks from my home, and I joined in operations on that road in 1980.

My wife and I married in 1976, and we bought a house in Brooklyn. It had a 13-foot-square room that we turned into a dual-purpose guest/layout room. What would the layout be? I had to think about that. A small branch line seemed to fit the bill for a small layout. The book, *Rails in the North Woods* by William Gove and others, discussed the histories of nine Adirondack short lines. One of the STD members suggested I join the fledgling Rutland Railroad Historical Society. I did. The Rutland ran through Manchester, Vermont, and the Rich Lumber Company (one of the short lines featured in the book) had a logging operation there. Manchester was also the terminus of the Manchester, Dorset & Granville Railroad, a five-mile short line built to serve a marble quarry at Dorset.

Although the railroad never made it to Granville, New York, something in my mind clicked. I altered history a bit and decided the railroad did make it to Granville. I called my version the Rutland & Washington Railroad, named for the two counties through which it ran. The real MDG line serving the marble quarry ran from 1904 to 1918, but my version was still running in 1945 and connected with the D&H Railroad at Whitehall, New

York, as well as the Rutland Railroad in Manchester, Vermont. The model railroad was rooted, but I was still free to do as I pleased with it. A layout was designed to fit along three walls of the room with space along the fourth wall for a modeling table. The middle section of the railroad was the yard area and fixed in position. The sections along the other two walls were made to swing up to reveal a sofa bed, TV, and coffee table — it was a dual-purpose room. The HO railroad took shape, and the first operating session on it was held in 1983.

During those years in Brooklyn, I also made a good number of modules to jump-start the Division's entry into HO modular railroading. Some of the members were perplexed as to how to handle my offer to make bare-bones 4-, 6-, or 8-foot modules for the cost of materials for anyone in the Division who wanted one. Each module had two tracks with wiring, a stained birch plywood fascia, and a skyboard behind. About eight modules were built and sold. The group regularly got together with those and numerous other modules at local model and public events. Eventually, I built a 12-foot long, three-module set with a passing track for

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each main line so trains could be added or removed without stopping the action on the main lines — an important feature when a layout is in front of the public. Then, in the early 1980s, I built a 16-foot long, four-module set with turnouts and track from each of the two main lines disappearing behind a skyboard and splitting into four tracks as a double-ended yard to store trains off the main line. I had also joined the Long Island Live Steamers while living in Brooklyn, but commuting way out to Long Island for fun was too difficult, so I did not participate there. Joining in the modeling activities just in New York City and Nassau County included visiting, working on, and operating on individuals' layouts, in addition to the Rockville Centre club and Division activities, and was more than enough to fill up any spare time.

In 1984, my wife's work required us to relocate to Westchester County north of New York City. The move north meant leaving the STD and the Rockville Centre club. But all was not lost; I finally had a basement, and over the next 20 years, I made many trips back to Long Island to participate in STD activities. I also joined the New Jersey Live Steamers and the fledgling Metro North Division of the NMRA. I became the first Westchester Director of the new Division and joined in their activities. Work on my HO layout had begun in the late 1970s, and the layout came with us, this time set up in the basement where it continued to improve. In addition, I started building 1-inch scale models and was involved in building and installing a signal system for the 1-inch scale ground track at the NJLS. I was enjoying two worlds of model railroading: HO-scale indoor railroading and 1-inch-scale outdoor railroading.

This period was when much of the work toward earning Achievement Certificates took place. I scratchbuilt freight car models in 1-inch scale. I gave clinics in the two Divisions and the Northeastern Region. I participated in operating sessions at model railroads. I earned the Civil, Electrical, and Chief Dispatcher Achievement Certificates for my HO activities and the Association Volunteer Certificate. In 1997, I wrote that I hoped to achieve MMR® status within the next few years. Who knew it would take another 24 years? In 2004, my priorities changed, and so did my thoughts about achieving MMR® status.

In 2004, we decided to move again. This time it was to the southern Adirondacks where my wife and I still live. Once again, the HO layout came along and was set up in the basement. But this time, the focus of my modeling turned to the creation of a 1-inch-scale outdoor railroad on our 20 acres. It also meant leaving the Metro North Division and joining the Hudson Berkshire Division, the third NMRA Division of my modeling career. I was pleasantly surprised by the large number of active modelers. It also meant I could join the Adirondack Live Steamers just 25 miles to the south. Our efforts since moving here have resulted in the construction of our own railroad with just over two real miles of 1-inch-scale track through ten towns with passing sidings and industrial spurs, two yards for crews to assemble and break down freight trains, a fully signaled main line of 4,440 real feet, a "792-scale-foot" long tunnel, and multiple structures for use on the industrial spurs. We don't have to leave home to enjoy it all, and just like with indoor layouts, we get to have friends over to enjoy it with us.

With my focus on building models in 1-inch scale and a railroad to run them on, my thoughts of achieving MMR® status took a back burner. I built freight and passenger cars. I wrote articles for a national publication, *The Home Railway Journal*. I gave clinics at the Division and Regional levels. The only Achievement Certificate I earned until recently was Master Builder – Cars in 2010, my fifth certificate. I have scratchbuilt many more cars since then. What can I say? I enjoy it. I have been scratchbuilding 1-inch scale structures, mostly buildings for use on the industrial spurs in the towns on the outdoor railroad. I was having fun.

Then, in late 2020, I realized maybe these buildings would qualify for the Structures Achievement Certificate. I'd built enough of them by that time. I counted 24 scratchbuilt structures and invited the Division judges to take a look. They chose and judged six of them as qualifying for merit awards and witnessed another six as required for the Achievement Certificate. Now I had six Achievement Certificates and was asked what I intended to work on for the seventh. I had to think about that. There were two categories within reasonable reach: Scenery on the HO layout and Author. I had freshened up the HO scenery just before the move in 2004 but did not have

it judged. It would have to be refreshed again. What about Author? I assembled the list of articles published and clinics given and found out that I had qualified for Author six years earlier without realizing it. Hey, remember, I was having fun all that time! The year 2021 became the year the seventh Achievement Certificate was realized.

What's next? Another structure has been built and two more are under construction. After five years in use, my 1-inch scale scratchbuilt model of an REA express refrigerator car received ice hatch details when another modeler told me a company was making 3D-printed parts available. And on my workbench is a battery-powered engine my wife has already claimed as hers to use. The chassis is a kit; the superstructure is scratchbuilt. It will be ready for her by the time the snow melts and the railroad is cleaned up from winter's ravages. After that? There are plenty more models to build. In the basement are parts for two tank cars, three hopper cars, a combine, a baggage car, and more. And there will be many opportunities to visit other modelers and for others to visit us. There are many modelers to gather with and enjoy what we all have created.

Over the years, countless friends have made modeling an enjoyable hobby, and they continue to do so today. Each place we have lived has introduced us to new friends who love trains and joined us in enjoying life and making models. Attending conventions and meets, sometimes contributing to their success by giving clinics, meeting people, and sharing what I have learned in this hobby, all the while having fun, are the things that have made the hobby so rewarding. Without the human connections the NMRA provides, it would not have been possible to meet so many people and learn the many skills this hobby requires and supports. A lifetime with friends is what we have. Going it alone is just not the route for maximum enjoyment. That's what I know.

Certificates Earned
Joseph A. Kavanagh, MMR® 673
Model Engineer – Civil
Model Engineer – Electrical
Association Volunteer
Chief Dispatcher
Master Builder – Cars
Master Builder – Structures
Model Railroad Author

**JOE D. FIELDS EARNS
MASTER MODEL RAILROADER® #674**

Trains have been in my life from a very young age. However, my first exposure to trains wasn't of the model variety but the real deal. As a young boy of just two or three, I remember watching the Louisville & Nashville coal drags in Whitesburg, Kentucky, where I was born. From the front porch of my grandfather's house and my backyard, I would watch the trains as they snaked through the mountains, following the natural curves of the Kentucky River. I would wave at the engineers as the locomotives passed, and they would always return my waves.

The trains came so close to my house, a house my dad built with his own hands, that he would later recall the salt and pepper shakers would vibrate off the stove as the trains passed. My love for all things train was further fueled by my three great-uncles who had retired from L&N and would share with me stories of their years on the rails whenever they could.

At about four years old, I got my first taste of "model" trains, at least as much as a Marx wind-up toy train can be considered a model train. Although I wasn't strong enough to wind it myself, my always-patient mother wound it up countless times so that I could enjoy playing with it.

All that winding finally ended, though, in 1955, when I was seven years old. That year, I received my first train set for Christmas — a Marx electric train set, to be exact. My parents gave me a Plasticville station and house to round out the set, and my dad mounted the track on strips of plywood just wider than the track. He elevated the track using small blocks of wood, thus completing my first "real" layout. I then added scenery to the layout by using construction paper to make a farm field. Complete with some of my toy cars and trucks, the little world I had created came alive, at least in my mind.

One of the great aspects of that first train set was that I could change it as much as I wanted. For example, when I imagined my train was, in fact, the



Disneyland train, I transformed my layout into Disneyland's Main Street USA and the four themed lands making up the rest of the park: Adventureland, Fantasyland, Frontierland, and Tomorrowland. As I watched my train travel around the track at eye level, I often wondered when I would get my first ride on a real train. My train even became a tool for me to take out my frustrations. When I got upset with my parents, instead of slamming doors or making plans to run away from home, I would turn my train on full speed until it ran off the tracks. By the time it derailed, I always felt better.

Although, like most boys, I got rid of those first trains, I have since been able to find collectible trains matching those original models. The trains now have a proud place on a display shelf in my layout room as part of my collection along with some of the original accessories.

Even when I received something unrelated to trains, such as an HO-scale Marx race car set in 1963, my love for trains still played a role. After playing with this set for a while, I decided to use my own money to buy the railroad crossing set and add it to the oval of the race car set. Now, rather than merely racing each other, the cars had to race to try and beat the train at the crossing, too.

Shortly after that, at 14 years old, trains suddenly moved way down on my priority list. For the next 13 years, things like cars, girls, a four-year stint in the Navy, marriage, and two kids were my focus. Even with these other pursuits, trains still found a way to remain in my life. One way this happened was when I took my first train ride in 1967. While at boot camp in Great Lakes, Illinois, I took the train to Chicago while on liberty. I enjoyed this experience so much that I

did it again the next time I was on liberty. Since that first train ride, I've been able to enjoy many rides on excursion trains, including a cab ride in L&N No. 152, the only known L&N steamer in existence, located at the Kentucky Railway Museum.

My present-day love for model trains began around 1976 when I joined the NMRA. I enjoyed being a part of this organization to the point that I became a life member in 1983. That first year, though, was when I went to my first MCR Division 8 meeting. After that one meeting, I was again hooked on model railroading. This meeting was at the home of Bob Johnson, the individual I credit with getting me started in the NMRA Achievement Program.

At his urging, I had the judges take a look at a model of a British steam locomotive I built for my pastor's mom. Her brother was retiring as an engineer from British Railways, and she asked me to build an HO-scale model of one of the locomotives he had worked with to present to him upon his retirement. Although I didn't build it to be judged, it earned enough points to give me my first Merit Award in 1992. Since the model was meant to be displayed instead of run on a layout, I didn't power the model, meaning that my first certificate came in the Cars category instead of the Motive Power category.

Over the next few years, I worked off and on with my layout, earning two of seven certificates along the way. I earned Association Volunteer in 2002 and Structures in 2003. I then entered a long "off-season" where I didn't work on my layout or achievement items at all. I wish I had those years back because now it seems that I'm playing a catch-up game with my layout.

I was saved by then-Superintendent of Division 8, Mark Norman, when he asked me to be the Division's Achievement Program Chairman. I agreed but knew I was entering uncharted territory. After all, I had never judged other folks' work. Nonetheless, I decided to give it a try.

Being AP Chairman for the Division helped me become a better modeler, as I know what is expected as a judge, and I could incorporate those criteria into my modeling. Another perk of being AP Chairman is that I get the privilege of awarding many Merit Awards and multiple Master Model Railroader® certificates to my fellow modelers. In fact, seeing

others achieve their goals is part of why I decided to start working seriously on the other five certificates I needed for my MMR® certificate in early 2019. To "hold myself accountable," or as I like to think of it, "provide encouragement," I announced my intentions to "practice what I preach" at a Division 8 meeting.

As I worked on the remaining certificates, I was challenged in areas in which I didn't know I could succeed, areas like scratchbuilding turnouts and dispatching. Dispatching was especially hard for me since I'm more of a model-builder than an operations person. Nevertheless, I was surrounded by a great group of people who I want to thank for their continued encouragement over the years of my journey toward Master Model Railroader®.

I want to thank Bob Johnson and Charlie Hansen, who helped me earn my first Merit Award in Cars for that British steam locomotive. I want to thank Mark Norman for asking me to be AP Chairman for the Division and Fred Soward for helping me scratch-build turnouts. I'd like to thank Tom Guenther, Rick Tipton, Rob Cooper, Bob Frankrone, and Russ Weis for invit-

ing me to operate on their layouts. I also want to thank Bob Dawson, Bill Lynch, Ed Brennan, and so many others who have judged my models and offered advice and encouragement over the years.

I'd also like to thank Frank Koch for putting up with and answering so many questions when I didn't understand a particular requirement.

Finally, I would like to thank my wife, Sue, my son, Jonathan, and the rest of my family for encouraging me on my journey to Master Model Railroader®. It has given me a sense of accomplishment and shown me that anything is possible if you make up your mind to do it and have great friends who are willing to help you and enjoy the same hobby that teaches you so much.

Certificates Earned
Joe D. Fields, MMR® 674

Association Volunteer
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Master Builder – Cars
Chief Dispatcher
Model Engineer – Civil
Master Builder – Motive Power
Master Builder – Scenery

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