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February 2011
Like many others before me, my love of trains started with a Lionel oval around the Christmas tree at age five. The engine, which I still have, ran wide open no matter what the throttle setting. My dad went to the plumbing supply house where he worked, brought home a chunk of lead, and installed it in the tender to slow the train down. Sunday afternoon drives in the car were always along railroad tracks, and we were mystified at how my dad always knew when there would be a train and which direction it would be moving. My brother, Steve, was and still is a big influence in my model railroading life. Being older, his paper route money went into Lionel equipment and we had a train table in our bedroom filled with as much track as we could fit on it. It is a wonder that I am still alive after Steve discovered that I had put the hamster in a stock car and that it had done its business all over the layout.

After college, marriage, time in the Marine Corps, and starting a family, I joined the Ridge Model Railroad Club around 1980 and found an outstanding group of modelers who taught me about the hobby and the NMRA. The late Ray Girouard, MMR, John Wilkes, Bob Miller, Harry Anderson, and others got me started in HO modules. We took the club modular layout to Birmingham, Alabama, in 1988 and to Atlanta, Georgia, in 1995 and were awarded first place at both conventions. Ray, John, Bob, Harry, and I were fortunate to be involved with the HO layout at Florida Cypress Gardens and, under their watchful eyes and patient guidance, were able to acquire and develop some modeling skills.
I feel honored to be added to the list of Master Model Railroaders in the National Model Railroad Association. Like many before me, it was a Lionel train set under the Christmas tree when I was five years old that got me started in model railroading.

It was at the Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, (I think the 1960 NMRA Convention) that I came home with a brass HO scale Red Ball model 4-6-0 Casey Jones that was what made me sell all my Lionel and start into HO scale.

Married and living in an apartment, I was unable to build a layout, so I joined the Delaware & Rutland Model Railroad Club. I left the D&R after a few years and joined the Lakeshore Model Railroaders Association in the late 1960s. The LMRA was a 100% NMRA club and had no layout but met in an ex-CNR Doodlebug coach in Mimico, Ontario. The LMRA had clinics, home and layout visits and I soon was introduced to the AP awards program and the prestige of being a Master Model Railroader. With no room for a layout in the apartment, I started scratchbuilding rolling stock. The late Dave Roberts was head of the NFR Contest Committee and under his prodding I received my first of two Merit Awards in Car Building.

The LMRA back in the early 1970s started a youth program and, if I remember correctly, we had 12 youngsters from 10 to 15. It only ran for one year for reasons lost to
time. I volunteered to help with this Saturday morning club and we had the boys build a wood kit boxcar and I am pleased to say that one of the young lads, Richard McQuade, is still in model railroading giving clinics and participating in the NMRA-NFR today.

I must say when I moved out of Toronto north to Waubaushene in 1977 and built my present home I fell into a lapse and thought it was impossible to attain any of the AP Awards.

My first layout was in the basement where I modeled the Canadian Pacific Railway. In the early 1990s, I put a 20x26-foot room over the garage and started modeling the Chesapeake & Ohio Railroad with a West Virginia coal mine theme. I run an operating session once a month for three to four hours, running 22 or more trains with 12 fellows, using a dispatcher and car cards.

In the 2000s at the urging of Burt Reynolds, I started attending what the Niagara Frontier Region call their Craftsman Corner where the NFR members come to train shows and work on kits, scratchbuilding, or anything they care to bring, all in the name of showing the public what model railroading is all about, promoting the hobby, the NFR, and the NMRA.

If you have been to the November Trainfest in Milwaukee the past couple of years, you will have noticed the NFR group showing their stuff and going home hoarse from talking all weekend. What an easy and great way to sit for a day or two and work on a project and get AP Awards toward car building, structure building, as well as getting volunteer points. Feel free to email the NFR Richard Hatton at ricks.workshop@sympatico.ca and learn how to get a Craftsman Corner at your show.

It wasn’t until 1999 that I was told that I had enough points to qualify for some of the AP Awards. Once I had the ones I had previously thought were unattainable; it was then that I decided to go all out and become a Master Model Railroader.

I also am a member of the Chesapeake & Ohio Historical Society and the North American Rail Car Owners Association and come spring, summer, and fall I am on the rails with fellow owners enjoying the 12-inch to the foot railroad, with my Blue Fairmont MT19, another great bunch of fellows.

I must give credit to Peter Nesbitt, who is the AP chairman for the NFR and who usually travels quite a distance to inspect layouts for awards.

Being in the NMRA has introduced me to many modelers, and have I been pleased to operate on their layouts in various parts of the USA and Canada.

My greatest pleasure was hosting an Operating SIG group on my layout and having the opportunity to open my house for the Toronto NMRA Convention in 2003.

Like many MMR’s before me, I can attest to the fact that gaining the AP awards and becoming a MMR is within everyone’s reach.

I thank my wife, Marilyn, and my son, Ian, for their support in my hobby.

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