NMRA BULLETIN

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Region Secretaries: send all changes in Region officer information to the NMRA Secretary: secy@nmra.org.

Have you changed your address or other membership information?

Notify NMRA Headquarters

e-mail: hq@nmra.org Phone: 423-892-2846 (8am-4pm ET) Mail: P.O. Box 1328 Soddy Daisy TN 37384-1328

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NMRA Canada President—Ed Molenkamp Edmonton Alberta T5M 2M9 e-mail: presca@nmra.org

2024 NMRA National Convention Dates and National Train Show Reservations:

Long Beach, California August 4 – 11, 2024 (https://surfliner2024.org/)

Train Show Booth Reservations—Jenny Hendricks Registrar - P.O. Box 1328, Soddy Daisy, TN 37384-1328

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ANNOUNCEMENTS FROM NMRA HEADQUARTERS

2024 Board of Directors Elections

Voting in the 2024 Board of Directors Elections opens in February. The following positions are up for election:

President Vice President At-Large North American Director Eastern District Director Pacific District Director

All members worldwide will be voting for the President and Vice President. Some members will be voting for the Director for their district.

Ballot packages are being designed specifically for your district. Your ballot package will include candidate statements, the No Campaigning Policy, and the ballot. Candidate statements will be posted on the website no later than **January 10, 2024**.

Voting-eligible members with an email address on file will be sent a ballot package electronically through Electionbuddy, a secure online voting system. Your ballot package should arrive around **FEB 1** and voting will close on **MAR 1.** Voting-eligible members who do not have an email address on file will be sent a paper ballot package via postal mail sometime after JAN 15. Completed paper ballots must be postmarked no later than **MAR 1.**

Do not be alarmed if you learn that one of your friends has received their ballot package when you have not. Since the ballot packages are being distributed from different locations and in different manners, the ballots will most certainly arrive at their destinations at different times. Please take the time to vote and thank you for being a member of the NMRA.

ACHIEVEMENT PROGRAM

NMRA AP CERTIFICATE REPORT NOVEMBER 2023 GOLDEN SPIKE

North Central Region

Stephen Marsh, Okemos, Michigan

Southern Region

W. David Godwin, Canton, Georgia Mark Weiss, Cumming, Georgia

Sunshine Region

Steve Cook, North Fort Myers, Florida

Thousand Lakes Region

Jason Boche, Rosemount, Minnesota William Sampson, St. Michael, Minnesota

MASTER BUILDER - CARS

Australasia Region

Craig Mackie, Parkinson, Queensland, Australia

Midwest Region

Phillip Burnside, Avon, Indiana

MASTER BUILDER - STRUCTURES

Pacific Southwest Region

Robert Behm, San Diego, California

Master Builder - Scenery

Mid-Central Region

Robert Kress, Covington, Kentucky

Mid-Eastern Region

Mike Byle, Richboro, Pennsylvania Stephen Richardson, Malvern, Pennsylvania Steve Wysowski, Royersford, Pennsylvania

Northeastern Region

Robert Dennis, Staten Island, New York

Model Railroad Engineer - Civil Mid-Eastern Region

Stephen Richardson, Malvern, Pennsylvania

Midwest Region

Andrew Kirby, Palatine, Illinois

Rocky Mountain Region

Martin Pirnat, Durango, Colorado

MODEL RAILROAD ENGINEER ELECTRICAL

Mid-Central Region

Robert Kress, Covington, Kentucky

Mid-Continent Region

Jason Wilson, Austin, Arkansas

Mid-Eastern Region

Stephen Richardson, Malvern, Pennsylvania

Midwest Region

Andrew Kirby, Palatine, Illinois

Northeastern Region

Stephen Scharfstein, West Orange, New Jersey

CHIEF DISPATCHER

North Central Region

Andrew Keeney, Dewitt, Michigan

Northeastern Region

Gary Backus, Wellsboro, Pennsylvania

Pacific Northwest Region

Doug Hicks, Burnaby, British Columbia, Canada Joel Morse, Garden Grove, California

Pacific Southwest Region

Per Harwe, Tustin, California

Southeastern Region

Scott Dunlap, Roswell, Georgia

ASSOCIATION OFFICIAL

Mid-Central Region

Robert Osburn, Ashland, Kentucky

Association Volunteer

Australasia Region

Randall Jones, St. Ives, New South Wales, Australia

Pacific Southwest Region

Chris Thompson, Mesa, California

Southeastern Region

Jim Foley, Atlanta, Georgia

MODEL RAILROAD AUTHOR

Northeastern Region

James Fairbanks, Canandaigua, New York John McHugh, Plaistow, New Hampshire

Southeastern Region

Tom Langdale, Walhalla, South Carolina

Sunshine Region

Marty Megregian, Merritt Island, Florida

MASTER MODEL RAILROADER®

MMR[®] #749, Craig Mackie, Parkinson, MMR[®] #750, Martin Pirnat, Durango, Colorado

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CRAIG MACKIE

EARNS

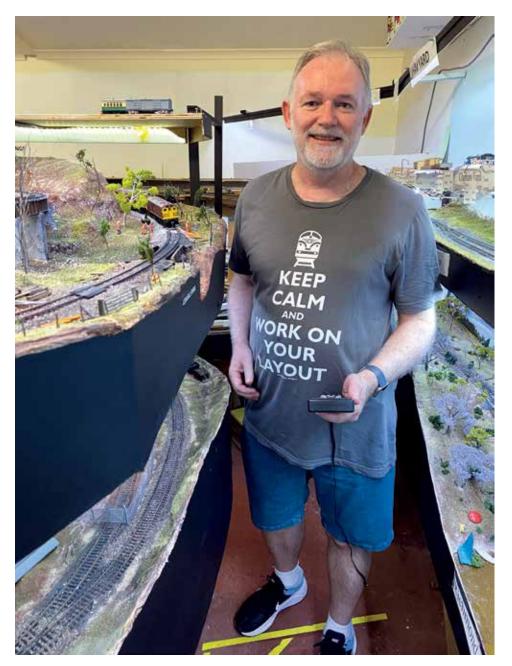
Master Model Railroader® #749

From an early age, I had a model train. It was a Lego train set that continued to grow over time. When I was about 10, with my birthday money, I purchased a train set with a circle of HO track, a steam locomotive, and three or four wagons with a battery-powered controller. This Lima set expanded over time, with additional track and wagons purchased. I grew up about 200 meters, as the crow flies, from a local marshaling yard. When the wind blew the right way, I could lie in bed at night and hear the trains banging and crashing all night. When I turned 11, I started going to school via train from Corinda to South Brisbane. This commuting introduced me to New South Wales (NSW) railways, which used to share the right-of-way with my local Queensland Rail trains from Yeerongpilly to South Brisbane. This started my NSW outline modeling.

Following school, I went to university and started building an 11-foot x 6-foot, 6-inch layout under my parents' house. I developed this for a couple of years and had trains running. A short time later, I married Debbie, and we moved into our house. As the house was developed, I never had the opportunity to build a layout there. I, however, joined a model railway club. I have been a member of that club for almost 35 years. Some people I met back then are still my modeling mates today, one being a young Darren Lee.

Around 1993, my wife and I traded up and moved so that I could have a dedicated train room. The house was designed with a room of about 24x12 feet as my future HO-scale train room. My layout started to take shape. A few years later, I joined a second model railway club. It was here I met another modeler — a young Anthony Palmer. We started operations on the club layout. Together, Darren Lee, Anthony Palmer, and I used to dream that it would be great if we could all have a layout at our homes where we could operate.

Around 1997, I had the opportunity to attend several modeling conventions. These were the Modelling the Railways on



New South Wales conventions in Sydney (held annually) and some Modelling the Railways of Queensland Conventions locally in Brisbane (held bi-annually). However, these were put on hold when my first child arrived. My home layout fell dormant as I had other priorities, and the layout collected too much junk on top of it. Thus, I could not run trains. But I kept collecting various models. When my second child was born a couple of years later, my wife made an executive decision (I was outvoted 1:1) that the train room was to become the kids' playroom. I was given the option of building an extension

on the house to replace my train room, which caused a rethink to my layout room design. I decided I would be better served (with cheaper and larger results) if I built a new train shed instead of an extension to the house. So, I spent my energies designing a layout to fit into the shed. The shed was to be the size of a four-car garage — 40x20 feet. The layout design was completed before the shed was built, insulated, painted, and connected to power and water. Everything was moved from the old train room to the shed just before my son's first birthday.

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So, the benchwork on my current layout was started, my skills tested, and the layout developed; structures were built, the landscape was terra-formed, and the electrical components were installed. This layout was made for DCC from the beginning. I considered the layout trackage to be complete for a couple of years. Then, I added another deck, which included sections of dual-gauge tracks, both commercial and scratchbuilt. The narrow gauge track was 12mm, representing the local railway outline with a 3-foot, 6-inch gauge. I made some track components with Fast Track jigs. My layout developed electrically, more structures were built and installed, scenery was added, and I commenced creating operating sessions.

About ten years ago, I resumed attending conventions. I went to a local NMRA convention on the Gold Coast. At that point, I became an NMRA member. Soon after, I attended more of the Modelling the Railways of New South Wales and Modelling the Railways of Queensland Conventions. I also joined the presenters list at both of these conventions. It was not until about five years ago that I started to attend my local NMRA meetings regularly. What a great group of inspirational guys they are. In October 2019, I obtained my Certificate for Author, and I was off and running and hooked on the Achievement Program. Part of my Author AP included being editor of my club's monthly magazine for ten years and 13 years of weekly posts on my blog. I'm now up to 13 articles published in Australia's national model railway magazine.

In late 2021, I obtained my next five AP certificates relatively quickly. I earned Scenery in October 2021 (there is a lot of surface area on a multi-decked layout inside a 40x20 shed). That same month, I earned Structures with my 12 models presented, six achieving a merit award. For maybe 19 years or so, I have attended the major Brisbane model railway show and demonstrated structure building. The first almost 10 of these were with a very inspirational man and true gentleman, Jim Hutchinson. He taught me a lot about constructing buildings. I have now started attending other regional shows and doing the same presentations. Over the years, I have also presented all-day clinics at my club on trestle bridge construction and wagon building in styrene.

In December 2021, I earned the Electrical certificate. From that initial meeting of the minds between Anthony, Darren, and myself over 20 years ago, we now regularly operate on each other's layout. That meant I could meet the requirements for the Dispatcher certificate in January 2022.

Reading all the AP literature says you can do the Electrical, Civil, and Dispatcher together. I sort of did this. I ran into some issues with the Civil certificate, much to the amusement and friendly ribbing of my Tuesday night modeling buddies — more on them later. The first two items of trackage were built, sleepers (ties) installed, spliced into the layout, painted and ballasted, and trains were running reasonably well through them. The third piece of track presented some challenges. It was a dual-gauge point -12mm and 16.5mm. The first time it was to be assessed on the layout, the solder on the actuator bars came adrift, and the point did not work. Fail. The second time was a very hot day, and the shed was just left open to the elements, waiting for the local AP assessor to come over. Everything had heated up, distorting the track or baseboard, and narrow gauge trains would no longer run through the point. Standard-gauge running was fine. A second fail. That night, I sent the AP assessor a video of a train running through the track after everything cooled down while we talked online, but he just scheduled a new viewing. This time, I rebuilt the dual-gauge point from scratch. It passed — so third time lucky. This occurred in April 2022.

That left me with one more certificate to achieve my MMR, although I have plans for other certificates in the future. My last elusive AP certificate was to be my Master Builder – Cars. I had set my goal to complete this before I retired, likely in the next two years. I spent the last two years building and assembling several wagons, to cater for my needed eight wagons. I took eight wagons to the last NMRA Australasian Convention in Sydney in September/October this year and received five Merit awards. The rest, as they say, is history.

My local Tuesday Nighters meeting has been going every fortnight for what must be close to 25 years now. Membership has grown, some people have moved away, and some have left this

mortal realm, but this group, which now contains about 20 people, of which about 16 are NMRA members, continues to go from strength to strength. This group has some exceptional modelers in it. They inspire others to improve their skills, share their processes and techniques with the group, and gladly assist when asked.

Our local NMRA Division is very active, and these guys are undoubtedly inspirational. There are some very active modelers in the Division, including a few MMR®s, Arthur Hayes, Malcolm Jenkins, and, of course, Laurie McLean. As mentioned earlier, I am a regular at local exhibitions demonstrating various modeling techniques with styrene construction, hoping people will do some scratchbuilding instead of just plonking purchased wagons on the track. I hope to continue this, give back, and inspire others like these guys did before me.

I have created many lasting friendships in the hobby. It is truly satisfying when I travel to an interstate convention, and while on the layout tour, I spot multiple copies of a constructed model building that I had an article published on in the national model press on how to build that building. On the most recent NMRA convention tour, I saw an item I built for a local shop to sell, and the item was proudly incorporated on an interstate layout as detail in a backyard.

This NMRA is pretty good. In what other organization could someone in Brisbane, Queensland, Australia, be on a first-name basis with the top dog and a truly inspirational leader, Gordy Robinson, MMR®, located half a world away? It is a pity his country can't play cricket.

Certificates Earned Craig Mackie MMR® #749

Model Railroad Author
Master Builder – Scenery
Master Builder – Structures
Model Railroad Engineer – Electrical
Chief Dispatcher
Model Railroad Engineer – Civil
Master Builder – Cars

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MMR EARNED

MARTIN PIRNAT

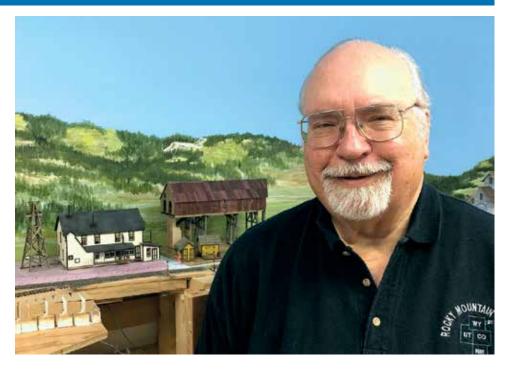
Earns
Master Model Railroader® #750

came relatively late to the hobby of model railroading. Yes, at about age 6 or 7, I had a wind-up train set with a loop of track, including a passing siding across the top of the loop. My father, a tool and die machinist, fastened the track to a large piece of cardboard so my four-year-old younger brother and I could place the track inside a closet when not in use. (My brother got an HO set while I was in college and built a small layout with my father some years later.) Yes, I did build plastic models over the next several years, but they were ships, planes, and rockets that were popular at the time. Yes, I grew up a few blocks from the Colorado Midland roundhouse and shops on the west side of Colorado Springs, but was never aware of any train activity. I always knew the shops as a western-themed tourist attraction and the roundhouse as the home of the world-famous Van Briggle Pottery. Yes, I knew my father had worked for the Golden Cycle Mill in the late 1920s, and my uncle was the superintendent of the Carlton Gold Mill in the Cripple Creek-Victor area in the late 1950s and early 1960s, but didn't connect them with their railroad history. And yes, I took a break from modeling anything for many years, with high school, college, medical school, marriage, and family, before returning to/ entering a modeling hobby.

My model railroading hobby has always been marked by a "Series of Fortunate Events" (apologies to Lemony Snicket) mixed with a large dose of serendipity.

Following my family medicine training in southern California, my wife Charlotte, with our infant son, wanted to return to Colorado, and I was able to join a medical practice in Durango, Colorado, in 1977. The next years were spent establishing my practice and spending time with family. I returned to childhood philately, dabbled in photography, and was briefly interested in astronomy, but was pretty much at loose ends for my minimal leisure time.

When he was 10, our son and I began building and launching model rockets. The scarcity of local supplies led us to look at hobby stores in Denver while on



a family vacation in 1987. Driving down Broadway, we saw the sign for Caboose Hobbies, and on a whim, we stopped to see if, despite the sign, they might have model rockets as well. They did not, but suddenly, the lights went on as we walked the aisles and saw the full scope of model railroading. At that time, the one display I remember was a mountain scene with many rocks, a river, and a Galloping Goose crossing a high trestle. The focus of our other hobby store visits that vacation widened from rockets to trains, and a return visit to Caboose netted us several books. an N-scale Bachmann set with Northern steam engine, a copy of Atlas' N-Scale Track Plans, copies of Model Railroader, and a 1987 Walthers Catalog. The hook was set.

At home, the guest room was converted to a train space, and over time, the "Monopoly & Octopus," a 4x4-foot layout, was started using the Atlas plans, sectional track, and some plastic piers. This project was truly a "lone wolf" affair with help from Charlotte and our son, and the magazines and books of the time. Once the track was completed and powered, it was clear that the quality of the Northern engine at that time, along with my general ignorance, was not creating an enjoyable experience. A Life-Like diesel was minimally better, but again, it was not what I imagined from the magazines, and I contemplated dropping the whole thing.

The fortunate events now began.

In 1987, Durango had a small train store a couple of blocks from my office so I could browse locally at my lunch hour. Doug Little, the proprietor, offered experienced advice and encouragement, and I came home with a Kato diesel of that time's technology. Doug's store also had many back-issue magazines, and this is where I found my first issues of the *Narrow Gauge and Short Line Gazette*.

More importantly, I joined the NMRA in October 1987 and began, through the magazine, to learn more about the organizational aspects of the hobby. Meetings in our very geographically dispersed Division were infrequent but provided a chance to meet other modelers.

I learned one of my partners' nurses and her husband had modeled in N-scale and were long-time members of NTRAK. We became good friends, referring to ourselves as the N-scale club of Durango. Over time, we decided to build some NTRAK modules. Several were completed and eventually shown at the 1991 NMRA National Convention in Denver and at an NTRAK convention in 1996 in Albuquerque, New Mexico. One 1991 module received the National Modular Chairman's Award.

At the local quilt guild, my wife met another quilter whose family were narrow gauge enthusiasts. Bob Shank, a nationally known modeler in Sn3, furthered my

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narrow gauge interest. Through Bob, I became a member of the Durango Model Railroad Club. I became friends with Andy Saez, a former accident inspector for the Santa Fe, and Leo Campbell, who had moved Campbell Scale Models from Southern California to Durango.

By the mid-late 1990s, the Monopoly & Octopus became a corner in a larger unnamed layout and then was subsequently removed for a new N-scale layout, which had hidden lower-level staging, a double track, and a Bob Ross-style around-theroom backdrop. This layout progressed to the early scenery stage, but my interests were moving to HOn3, starting with my first craftsman kit by Bret Gallant of Sierra West Scale Models.

With life interruptions, it took a couple of years to complete the kit structures, but it was a valuable introduction to the various tools and techniques to build more detailed structures. I took two models to the Rocky Mountain Region Convention in 2004 — my first contest entries. The Contest Chairman, whose name is lost to me, suggested that I not only enter the popular vote contest but also fill out the paperwork to have both structures judged separately for NMRA merit awards. I received several awards, but more importantly, my first two merit awards and a new interest in participating in the Achievement Program.

For me, the path to Master Model Railroader® took another 20 years. I had help and support from other modelers and soon had leadership positions in our local Division and club. I eventually held elected positions at the Division and Region levels and gave clinics at both. As Division Superintendent, I wrote reports published in the Region and Division newsletters. Volunteer work on the board of a nonprofit immunization group took me to Denver monthly, which led to many trips to Caboose Hobbies, friendship with Duncan Harvey, and through him, attendance at the Narrow Gauge Circle, as well as eventual membership in the Near Sighted Narrow Gauge Club. By staying over a couple of days, I could work on and gain operating experience with Pat Lana's Crandic layout. I had met Pat at an RMR convention in Grand Junction, Colorado, and he warmly welcomed me into his Crandic N-scale operating group.

The Achievement Program requirements moved me from my comfort level of building simple kit structures to scratchbuilding structures from plans or photographs, learning to assemble and scratchbuild rolling stock and turnouts, and wiring and working with DCC decoders. After my initial success with merit awards, I learned to take constructive feedback on future entries, rework models to correct their weaknesses, and have them rejudged in a future contest. I ended up building one piece of trackwork three times before I had a satisfactory outcome.

At home, circumstances led to the full transfer from N-scale to HOn3, and I began the ongoing construction of an HOn3 layout in a new building in our backyard with proto-freelance scenes of the Denver & Rio Grande Western and Rio Grande Southern. (After all, I live in Durango.)

Construction on the HOn3 layout continues, with much progress in the six years since I retired from full-time medical practice, but much work remains. Because of the layout size, I have had help over the years from several people, some of whom have passed on. Bard and Bobbie Heroy, our N-scale friends, helped with finishing and painting the interior walls of the room after they were coved by a handyman friend of my wife's. Helen Looman painted the backdrop along the room walls and on sheet styrene dividing the peninsulas, completing it in three years of once-a-week visits. As an artist, this was the first backdrop she had painted. I had painted the backdrops for the room-sized N-scale layout and our NTRAK modules and knew my limitations in this area.

I have to recognize Ray "That'll never fit there" Schmudde, who has kept me on track when my ideas were grander than the space involved. Ray has helped me for more than ten years, putting up with my ideas and foibles. Also, I greatly appreciate the help and feedback of Mark Evans MMR® and Gary Myers, RMR contest chair and AP chair, for their constructive feedback on evaluating models. Thanks also to Pat Lana, who talked about his MMR® path over a pizza in Denver years ago and encouraged me along this adventure. As I have received help from these and other individuals, I look forward to helping others in this hobby.

Mostly, I am indebted to my high school sweetheart and wife of 54 years, Charlotte ("Ray is right; it won't fit there"). She has always been encouraging when I would stall out on a project by providing new ideas, holding rock molds in place, making some trees, and never complaining when I would return from Denver with new model railroad items.

Certificates Earned Martin Pirnat MMR® #750

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

THE NEW

NMRA MODEL RailRoad Directory Is now Online

READY to USE

Now whether you're at home or traveling, you can contact other NMRA members for a layout tour, to talk trains, or even to join in an op session! There are maps, descriptions, photos, videos, and more. And it's only available to NMRA members.

Visit www.nmra.org, click on "Member Home," then "Directory" to see layouts in your area or to list your own layout (as long as it's an operating home or garden railroad). Join in the fun!



We make it more fun!

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