

NMRA BULLETIN

HAVE YOU CHANGED YOUR ADDRESS OR OTHER MEMBERSHIP INFORMATION?

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2026 NMRA NATIONAL CONVENTION DATES AND NATIONAL TRAIN SHOW RESERVATIONS:

Scenic City Express
July 27-August 2, 2026
Chattanooga, Tennessee
www.nmra2026.org

Train Show Booth Reservations
Jenny Hendricks Registrar
P.O. Box 1328 Soddy Daisy, TN 37384-1328
423-892-2846 ntsreg@nmra.org

Future Convention Locations
2027: Tacoma, Washington
2028: Rochester, New York

ACHIEVEMENT PROGRAM

NMRA AP CERTIFICATE REPORT

OCTOBER 2025

GOLDEN SPIKE

Australasian Region

Benjamin Featherston
(Bywong, New South
Wales, Australia)

Noel Purdy

(Rosanna, Victoria, Australia)

North Central Region

Nancy Whitehill
(Toledo, Ohio)

Pacific Northwest Region

David H. Enger
(Kirtland, Washington)

Magnus Christerson
(Kirtland, Washington)

MASTER BUILDER (MOTIVE POWER)

Pacific Northwest Region

Russell Kerr
(Milton, Washington)

MASTER BUILDER (CARS)

Pacific Northwest Region

René Gourley
(North Vancouver, British
Columbia, Canada)

MASTER BUILDER (STRUCTURES)

Mid-Eastern Region

Daniel Fisher
(Cary, North Carolina)

Pacific Northwest Region

John Walter
(North Vancouver, British
Columbia, Canada)

MASTER BUILDER (SCENERY)

Mid-Eastern Region

Robert Hans
(Middletown, New Jersey)

MASTER BUILDER (PROTOTYPE MODEL)

Thousand Lakes Region

Mark Carlson
(New Auburn, Wisconsin)

MODEL RAILROAD ENGINEER (CIVIL)

Pacific Northwest

Region Mike Stepner
(Puyallup, Washington)

Rocky Mountain Region

Keith Hayes
(Denver, Colorado)

MODEL RAILROAD ENGINEER (ELECTRICAL)

Mid-Central Region

George B. Stringer
(Westerville, Ohio)

Jim Braum
(Monongahela, Pennsylvania)

Pacific Northwest Region

Mike Stepner
(Puyallup, Washington)

Pacific Southwest Region

Terry Fearn
(Prescott, Arizona)

Rocky Mountain Region

Keith Hayes
(Denver, Colorado)

ASSOCIATION

VOLUNTEER

Australasian Region

Scott Taylor
(Blakeview, South
Australia, Australia)

Glen McCarley
(Sinnamon Park,
Queensland, Australia)

Patrick Britten
(Ambleside, Tasmania,
Australia)

Mid-Central Region

Roy Allan
(Terrace Park, Ohio)

Mid-Eastern Region

Eric Hansmann
(Philadelphia, Pennsylvania)

Midwest Region

David Mashino
(Kokomo, Indiana)

Pacific Northwest Region

René Gourley
(North Vancouver, British
Columbia, Canada)

Edwin Ives
(Issaquah, Washington)

Rich Blake
(Oak Harbor, Washington)

Michael Slease
(Dupont, Washington)

Kevin Klettke
(Hoodsport, Washington)

MODEL RAILROAD AUTHOR

Mid-Eastern Region

Charles Liggett
(Fort Washington,
Pennsylvania)

Sunshine Region

Kenneth Hoot
(Jacksonville Beach, Florida)

MASTER MODEL RAILROADER

Pacific Northwest Region

Russell Kerr
(Milton, Washington)

Rocky Mountain Region

Keith Hayes
(Denver, Colorado)

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 Ray Persing at achiev@nmra.org.

2026 NMRA ELECTIONS

Mike Cummings, Secretary NMRA

In February, we will be holding our 2026 Board of Directors Elections. The following positions are up for election Central District Director, Canada District Director, RAC Director. In addition, the Canada Region will vote on the positions of President and Vice-President. The RAC Director is voted on by the Region Presidents to represent the RAC on the Board of Directors. The following candidates have been moved forward and will be on the ballot for 2025

Canada District Director

Lloyd Henchey
Clark Kooning
Ed Molenkamp

Central District Director

Fred Soward

President NMRA Canada

Fergus Francey
Steve McMullin

Vice-President, NMRA Canada

Fergus Francey

Voting-eligible members will vote for the Director for their district. Ballot packages are designed specifically for your district. Your ballot package will include candidate statements, the No Campaigning Policy, and the ballot. As we have for the last few years, the ballot will not be published in the magazine. Candidate statements will also be posted in the members-only section of the website.

All voting-eligible members with an email address on file will be invited to vote electronically through Electionbuddy, a secure online voting system. **Your election invitation should arrive around February 1 and the election will close on March 1.** All voting-eligible members who do not have an email address on file will receive a paper ballot via postal mail. Your ballot should arrive in late January. Completed paper ballots must be postmarked no later than March 1. Please take the time to vote, and thank you for being a member of the NMRA.

Thank you to all the members that have submitted their names for consideration!

MMR EARNED PATRICK RIVARD



THE CREATIVE PASSION OF MODEL RAILROADING

For me, model railroading has always been more than just a hobby—it has served as a creative outlet that merges technical curiosity with artistic expression. The process of carefully planning and building a layout provided countless hours of enjoyment and a real sense of achievement, especially as the miniature world took shape under my hands. Over time, this hobby became a unique way for me to relax and connect with others who share the same passion.

MEMORABLE EXPERIENCES AND EARLY LESSONS

I recall the classic oval track running on a sheet of 4x8 plywood, complete with the usual plastic hydro poles. My twist was making the copper wire strung through the poles live—a decision that led to a bit of smoke and excitement! The real spark for my interest in model trains, however, was the memorable television advertising from Lionel, showcasing all their operating accessories. The operating

rocket launcher, in particular, left a lasting impression—though it resulted in more than a few dents in the ceiling!

LEAVING AND RETURNING TO THE HOBBY

Eventually, I left the hobby behind and sold my collection. After marrying my wife Mary in the 1970s, I returned to model railroading, initially buying an HO train set for my children, but I was the one drawn back in. I built a switchback layout in our new home and even tackled the scenery. This period marked my first attempts at constructing cars and buildings. Sadly, I lost everything in a devastating fire, an event I witnessed with my friend Gary Shurgold. At that time, I had already entered a motorized passenger car in an AP contest at a convention and was honored with the President's Award for Best in Show. I also joined the local Chatham Model Railroad Club, where I made many friends and learned a great deal about the hobby,

NIAGARA FRONTIER REGION: WOD DIVISION

**MMR:
#805**

thanks in part to Gary, who was pursuing his MMR status and served as an invaluable mentor. My AP journey was put on hold during this time.

VENTURING INTO G SCALE AND THE HOBBY BUSINESS

After rebuilding our home, I explored G-scale, constructing a large outdoor railway with a station built to a scale of 1:1. The layout featured a spacious pond with fish, a waterfall, and a scratchbuilt open-truss bridge spanning the water. Around this time (the mid-1980s), I opened a hobby shop dedicated solely to trains, specializing in G-scale products. I also began manufacturing G-scale rail in both aluminum and plastic tie strips. Eventually, I sold both the manufacturing operation and the shop, relocating from the suburbs to a townhouse in the city.

COMMITTING TO THE ACHIEVEMENT PROGRAM (AP)

This move marked the point where I decided to pursue my AP earnestly. I began by designing my new layout, completing the plans first, followed by the backdrop and benchwork. The design evolved as I built, incorporating several trestles, which I later submitted for evaluation. Over the next two decades, I documented the process through countless photos, capturing my work on scenery, hand-laid track, turnouts, trees, and structures. These efforts contributed to my AP achievements for Civil, Scenery, and Structures categories.

CERTIFICATES EARNED

Patrick Rivard, MMR® #805

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

BIG benefits of a NMRA membership



100's of clinic videos



NMRA layout tours and educational videos

15% off

25% off

45% off

Discounts from over 30 NMRA Partner companies



Text - Voice - Video



NMRA Interchange on Discord with free video hangout rooms



A positive and supportive learning community

NMRA

Your portal to more fun in model railroading.



nmra.org

MMR EARNED STEVE JACKOBS



CERTIFICATES EARNED Steve Jacobs, MMR® #807

- Model Railroad Author
- Master Builder – Structures
- Model Railroad Engineer – Electrical
- Master Builder – Scenery
- Master Builder – Cars
- Chief Dispatcher
- Master Builder – Motive Power

Achieving the MM designation has been an enormous thrill, though frankly, I feel more like a Jack-of-All-Trades Model Railroader than a master of any. I would be hard-pressed to write an authoritative text on any one aspect of model railroading, as much fun as I have had in the hobby. But fun is the point, isn't it?

From the very beginning, I especially enjoyed creating, building, and detailing. My dad got me started at age 10 when he handed down his Varney diecast F3 and several wooden and stamped-metal cars. He found other avocations, but I took to model railroading. Every boy discovers his obsession at a certain age. I found a good one.

In my teenage years, I enjoyed scraping off cast-on grabs from my Athearn blue-box Geeps, adding Kemtron railings and details, assembling Hobbytown of Boston chassis, hand-laying track with BK Enterprises turnout cores, and airbrushing rolling stock for my "Western Great Lakes" railroad, among other activities. I spent so much time at our local hobby shop, Carr's Hobby in Duluth, Minnesota, that they hired me for weekends and holidays. I took home a lot of product but not much money.

As for many of us, college, a career, marriage, the start of a family, and a move or two got in the way for a while. When I returned to the hobby full force in my forties, I felt like Rip Van Winkle waking up to a whole new world. Rudy at King's Hobby in Austin, Texas, showed me a Proto Alco S3 that ran significantly better than my Hobbytown chassis, so I packed them all away and began anew. The space above a filing cabinet in a spare bedroom provided

me with room for a small town switching district, and I laid the first track for my little Austin & Taylor & Pacific.

King's Hobby has been an especially great place for tips, tools, and techniques from the world of styrene armor and aircraft. With the staff's support, I tackled a project much more ambitious than scraping off grabs from blue-box models. Years before, I had come across a photo of a beast of a switcher in *Diesel Spotter's Guide*. It was a tall, boxy, 112-ton centercab by Davenport Bessler — one of only two produced. I like one-of-a-kind oddballs, and I like the challenge of recreating them. I stitched together a Kato chassis from a ConCor EMD switcher, a deck from a Proto Alco, and hood pieces from four AHM critters. I call it my Frankenstein kitbash.

I felt so good about the 112-tonner project that I wrote it up in 2016 and submitted it to *Railroad Model Craftsman* for the Dremel Kitbashing Award. It was accepted! The following year, I kitbashed an "ice service car" to deliver block ice to reefers at a meatpacking plant with no ice facilities. This time, I learned a bit about model photography and submitted photos and an article to *RMC*. They must have been short of kitbashing submissions, because they not only accepted it, but awarded me a second Dremel.

About then, Bob Thiele, our Lone Star Cen-Tex Division Superintendent, began urging us to work on our Achievement certificates. I hadn't really thought about it, but he pointed out that publishing the two articles gave me some pretty good points toward the Author certificate. I had long daydreamed about writing up the story of my little layout, which by then

LONE STAR REGION: CEN-TEX DIVISION

had expanded to a shelf halfway around the spare bedroom. I pitched it to then-RMC Editor Stephen Priest, MMR. He encouraged me, so I wrote something up and submitted it. Then he moved on, and I heard no more.

Flash-forward to 2019, and a visit to the Oregon Railroad Heritage Center in Portland, and coming upon another odd duck diesel, an "SW10" from a Union Pacific repowering program. It was itself a prototype kitbash: an EMD switcher frame, with the hood elevated nine or so inches to upgrade to a 645 prime mover, and a radiator housing scavenged from a GP9. I couldn't resist the challenge. I submitted an article to RMC (now under the leadership of Otto Vondrak). He accepted it and, apparently still short on submissions, sent me a third Dremel to boot. I repitched the layout article, and Otto published it in July 2022. This article completed the points needed for the Author certificate!

As Bob continued to encourage us, I picked up the pace. Designing, building, wiring, and scenicking my layout, even though small, gave me substantial points toward Electrical, Scenery, and Structures. With the scenery on a module I built for our Austin Model Railway Society's modular club, I had enough square footage to earn that certificate. Jack Merkel, an MMR and a dean of our local modeling community, generously guided me through the AP paperwork. He and fellow MMRs Steve Blackson and Lou Adler judged and nudged my Scenery and Structures submissions, identified areas for improvement, and rejudged me. Projects stretched me in all three areas.

By then, I had accumulated enough hours to meet the operating hours requirement for Chief Dispatcher, but I still lacked the necessary hours for Yardmaster and Dispatcher. I am someone who best does one thing at a time, which does not define a Yardmaster, and definitely not a Dispatcher. Taking up the challenge, I tackled Yardmaster on the layouts of George Zapalac and David Nicastro. Jack gently mentored me to accumulate sufficient hours dispatching on his layout and its full CTC signaling system. Though running a train is still my comfort zone, I no longer shrink back from the challenge of Yardmaster. (Dispatcher, however, is still pretty intimidating.)

All the APs require study and paperwork, Chief Dispatcher especially so. George walked me through the creation of a string diagram for my layout. It initially baffled me, but then it made so much sense. It guided me in restructuring the timetable for my layout, and I came to understand how much railroads sacrifice efficiency for routine. (It still seems wrong to me that a boxcar spent only about 10 percent of its time earning revenue.) I became increasingly intrigued by the nuances of railroad operations, incorporating more prototypical LCL

MMR: #807

service, meets, and clearance/train order rules into my operational scheme. Completing the paperwork, I earned the Chief Dispatcher certificate. I enjoyed what I learned so much that I wrote up my little A&T&P's new operating system for the OPSIG publication, *Dispatcher's Office*.

At this point, I surveyed the status of my other APs. I was close in Civil Engineering, Cars, and Motive Power. I needed two to complete the MMR.

- Scratchbuilding some frogs and associated track would finish off the Civil Engineering AP.
- To complete Motive Power, I would need to scratchbuild a locomotive. *Yikes!*
- Cars would require me to scratchbuild a bunch of cars. I had plenty of superdetailed kit cars to submit, but over the years, I had scratchbuilt only one car — a wooden tank car from 40 years ago, following instructions wishfully titled, *Easy-to-Build Model Railroad Freight Cars*.

I decided that scratchbuilding more oddball rolling stock was more interesting than a set of frogs. I put my accumulated styrene skills to work on a Canadian National horse car, which I lettered for Texas service on the A&T&P. Intrigued by a photo of a Katy homebuilt yard caboose, I built two in parallel — one lettered prototypically for the Katy and the other for my A&T&P. I updated my wooden tank car, gathered a bunch of superdetailed cars and took them to the 2023 National Convention for evaluation. Enough of them merited and I completed my Cars certificate.

One more certificate to go. I still wasn't excited about frogs. I had long been intrigued, however, by another oddball from the *Diesel Spotters Guide* — a 1939 Whitcomb rigid-four-axle boxcab. It was not a terribly successful design and, to my knowledge, no model manufacturer ever replicated it. I decided it would be an apt capstone to my MMR journey. Oh, my gosh, how it stretched me. I learned Computer Aided Drafting. I then tackled 3D-printing. I put together a functioning drive from a grab-bag of components. It was a year-long challenge. In June 2025, I took Texas-Mexican 502 to the 2025 Lone Star Region convention. It merited, and with that, I completed the MMR!

Pursuing the APs and the MMR has been a terrific journey. It continually stretched me beyond my comfort zone and gave me more enjoyment in the hobby. I am totally appreciative of Bob, Jack, George, David, Lou, Steve, and so many others for their coaching and encouragement. I look forward to giving back whatever I have learned and helping others have as much fun in the hobby as I do.