

NMRA BULLETIN

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2017 NMRA National Convention Dates and National Train Show Reservations:
2017—Orlando, Florida • July 30, 2017 - August 6, 2017 • <http://nmra2017orlando.org>
Train Show Booth Reservations—Jenny Hendricks Registrar - P.O. Box 1328, Soddy Daisy, TN 37384-1328
423-892-2846 • ntsreg@nmra.org

• 2018—Kansas City, MO • 2019—Salt Lake City, UT • 2020—St. Louis, MO

ACHIEVEMENT PROGRAM

NMRA AP CERTIFICATE REPORT OCTOBER 2016 GOLDEN SPIKE

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Charles Rausch, Chapel Hill, North Carolina
Louis Sassi, Willow Spring, North Carolina

North Central Region

Steve Hudler, Rochester, Michigan
Kevin Smith, Rochester Hills, Michigan

Southeastern Region

Gerald Mabry, Meridian, Mississippi
Roy Masterson, Chattanooga, Tennessee
William Orman, Soddy Daisy, Tennessee

MASTER BUILDER – CARS

Australasian Region

John Parker, Umina Beach, NSW, Australia

MASTER BUILDER – STRUCTURES

Pacific Northwest Region

Dale Sproule, Calgary, Alberta, Canada

MASTER BUILDER – SCENERY

Pacific Northwest Region

Dale Sproule, Calgary, Alberta, Canada

MODEL RAILROAD ENGINEER – CIVIL

Rocky Mountain Region

Stewart Jones, Denver, Colorado

Thousand Lakes Region

Thomas Gasior, Hopkin, Minnesota

MODEL RAILROAD ENGINEER – ELECTRICAL

Rocky Mountain Region

Stewart Jones, Denver, Colorado

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Southeastern Region

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MASTER MODEL RAILROADER

John Parker, Umina Beach, New South
Wales, Australia, MMR 580

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

MMR GROUP

All Master Model Railroaders (MMR) are invited to work with other MMRs by contacting C.J. Riley, MMR, at cjriley42@yahoo.com.

MMRs: Master Model Railroader shirts and extra patches are available by contacting HQ in Soddy Daily, TN

MMR EARNED



ROD VANCE EARNS MMR #581

Consider model railroading to be a journey — a fascinating and never-ending adventure to create a miniature world fo-

cus on the railroad. For me, the purpose of the journey is to master the art of model railroading in all its many aspects, although

I honestly never expect to fully achieve this goal. The adventure is one of continuous learning — there's always something new to challenge the model railroader. Becoming a Master Model Railroader wasn't a planned part of my journey initially, but it definitely became a major aspect of my adventure.

In considering my "journey," I could talk about the ubiquitous Lionel train set that my grandmother gave my brother and me when we were very young. Or about my "conversion" to HO and the couple of small layouts that I built, followed by a number of years where model railroading was relegated to the armchair while I concentrated on family and career. But I think I'd rather focus on the people aspect of the more recent MMR-phase of my journey.

My wife and I retired in late 2008 and moved into our "retirement house" that we had custom built. The house is large enough to give both of us space for our hobbies,

including a dedicated “train room” since I now had the time, space, and money to build my dream layout. My wife, Patty, has always been a big supporter of my model railroading efforts. She takes a special interest in helping me populate my layout with people, vehicles, and other figures. She works with me to determine the appropriate figures for various scenes, and then searches the Internet to find the right items at a good price. Patty also painted the beautiful backdrop that surrounds my railroad. Needless to say, I could not have accomplished my MMR without Patty’s unwavering support.

In 2012, my adult son, Nate, and I decided to go to the NMRA National Convention in Grand Rapids, Michigan — my first National Convention. I became an NMRA member to facilitate my registration for the convention, and off we went to Grand Rapids. We had a great time and saw a number of fantastic layouts. Not long into the convention, my son started commenting that my HO-scale layout, which was about 90 percent complete by this time, was every bit as good as the layouts that we were visiting. Initially, I didn’t agree with him. But he kept up the mantra and caused me to reassess my model railroading skills. After we had returned home, I thought a lot about Nate’s comments and eventually decided to “measure” my skills against the requirements of the NMRA Achievement Program (AP). I credit Nate for giving me the impetus to start my MMR journey.

Being new to the NMRA, I hadn’t yet become involved in the activities of my local Division, the James River Division (JRD). I contacted Charlie Flichman, AP Chairman of the Mid-Eastern Region (MER), and he directed me to Chuck Hladik, JRD’s AP Chairman at that time. I had a lot of questions about the AP process and understanding the various requirements, so I contacted Chuck and began exchanging emails to get answers to my questions. Chuck and I eventually had a 90-minute telephone conversation to discuss my various questions and concerns, the biggest concern being that the AP requirements wouldn’t match or might interfere in some way with my style of modeling. After much work on Chuck’s part, he convinced me that the AP requirements were sufficiently flexible that my concerns would not be a major issue. With that encouragement, I began the quest for my initial four certificates: Scenery, Structures, Electrical, and Civil. Most of the requirements for these AP categories could be satis-

fied based on the construction of my model railroad layout.

Toward the end of 2015, I was awarded these initial four certificates. Now my challenge was to decide which AP categories to tackle next. By now, I was starting to attend JRD events, and the Division sponsored an “operations weekend” that gave newcomers, like me, a chance to experience model railroad operations. By the end of the weekend, I was hooked on operating with a team of other modelers (something I’d never done before), and I immediately began tracking the requirements of the AP Chief Dispatcher category. I also made contact with the new JRD AP Chairman, Gerard Fitzgerald, and he began guiding me through the various category requirements. Gerard and I exchanged many emails and had a few telephone conversations to answer my many questions and to address my frustrations as they came up. I remember one time, in particular, when I was so frustrated with some of the requirements that I was actually considering quitting my AP efforts. Gerard was good to “talk me down” from quitting and gave me the encouragement needed to press forward.

AP Chairmen are also good at pushing you over the edge, when appropriate. I had finished my final scratchbuilt diesel locomotive and needed to have it evaluated against the AP Motive Power requirements. Timing wasn’t good for gathering appropriate evaluators within the JRD, so Gerard suggested I take the model to the 2016 MER Convention and have it judged in the modeling contest. I had never entered an NMRA contest and wasn’t sure I wanted to submit myself to this type of evaluation. With Gerard’s encouragement, I finally decided to bite the bullet and enter my model. The diesel scored very nicely in the modeling contest and earned me the final Merit Award that I needed for my seventh AP certificate. As a result of Gerard’s encouragement, my confidence in my modeling capabilities got a significant boost.

Members of the JRD and other local modelers who aren’t currently NMRA members were invaluable in helping me along my MMR trek. They taught me how to dispatch model railroads; they helped critique model railroading articles that I was having published (I eventually became the editor of our Division newsletter, and completed the AP Author requirements); they suggested courses of action for accomplishing various AP requirements and

encouraged me at every step; and they always reminded me to record my AP-related events and to get the requisite validation signatures. I learned that you can’t complete the MMR journey without lots of assistance from fellow modelers. I learned to value these individuals, and they’ve become good friends. Thanks guys!

At the outset, I said that model railroading is a journey. The quest for my MMR has become a significant milestone in that journey — not that it’s an endpoint, but rather a means of significantly enhancing my modeling capabilities and understanding just how much I still have to learn. Along the way, I also realized that my focus had changed. Instead of looking at how much I could benefit from this hobby, I started to look at what I could do to contribute back to this hobby — a focus on giving, rather than just receiving. It’s an honor to have reached the MMR milestone, and I’m looking forward to my continuing model railroad journey.

AP Certificates Earned Rod Vance, MMR 581

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

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