

# NMRA BULLETIN

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## ACHIEVEMENT PROGRAM

### NMRA AP CERTIFICATE REPORT

MAY 2017

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##### Pacific Northwest Region

Marty Quaas, Palmer, Alaska

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##### Pacific Northwest Region

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##### Southeastern Region

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##### Pacific Northwest Region

Patrick Durand, Wasilla, Alaska

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##### Pacific Northwest Region

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Ronald Einarson, Winnipeg, Manitoba

#### MODEL RAILROAD ENGINEER - CIVIL

##### Pacific Northwest Region

James Ogden, Anchorage, Alaska

#### MODEL RAILROAD ENGINEER - ELECTRICAL

##### Pacific Northwest Region

Mark Meehleis, Anchorage, Alaska

Marty Quaas, Palmer, Alaska

Warren Smith, Meridian, Idaho

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### MODEL RAILROAD AUTHOR

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Ronald Christensen, Stevensville, Michigan

#### Pacific Northwest Region

Patrick Durand, Wasilla, Alaska

### MASTER MODEL RAILROADER

Ronald Einarson, Winnipeg, Manitoba

MMR 593

### 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](mailto: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](mailto:cjriley42@yahoo.com).

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

# Did you know?

The Colorado Railroad Museum currently provides a \$2.00 discount for NMRA Members visiting the Museum.

The discount is off of the regular price of \$8.00 for a regular admission. Simply show your NMRA membership card at the door for your immediate discount.

Please visit [NMRA.org](http://NMRA.org) to see other great member-only benefits.

**Benefits for NMRA Members? We got 'em!**





**JERRY (MITCH) MICHNEWICZ  
EARNS MMR #594**

I was born (in May 1939), raised, and educated (Fordson High class of 1957) in Dearborn, Michigan. The day after graduating high school, I started working for the New York Central Railroad as an Extra Board Operator on the Michigan Central Division in the Detroit area. What a fun job that was! I started at Town Line with Dough Campbell, who got me started with the railroad and piqued my interest in model trains during my late teen years.

Town Line was a small shack on the Detroit–Chicago main line ten miles west of downtown Detroit. Looking out the small window overlooking the old scissor phone and the Morse Code ticker, I could see the Detroit skyline. Wayne Tower was another of my favorite places along with the River Rouge drawbridge, YD Tower, and North Yard Tower. In three short years, I was offered a job working with the Dispatchers and the possibility of becoming one. My dad, also a train enthusiast, would spend time with me when I worked the four to midnight shift anywhere in the area. However, Vietnam was starting to raise its ugly head, so I joined the Air Force and never went back to the railroad.

My interest in trains started about age five with Lionel in my grandparents' basement. It came with one green electric-type engine and one green passenger car with red/orange-trimmed windows, one street lamp, and one red flashing warning light.

Sometime around 1950, I saved enough money from my allowance to buy a used American Flyer with several cars and a circle of track. I was in heaven. Gramps was a tailor and let me use his old cutting table to expand the layout and have some real running room.

In my early 20s, and for many years thereafter, my interests turned toward providing for my family. It wasn't until 1997, just a short time before retiring from DecisionOne and the Navy Reserves, that I got back into HO modeling while living in Memphis, Tennessee. Our Memphis home had no extra room, so I did my railroad modeling in the garage. I started with a single 18-foot 2x4 stud bolted to the wall adjacent to the house and ran one train back and forth.

Of course, after a short time, I wanted more, so I hinged two 2x4-foot sheets of plywood end-to-end to the 2x4 stud. I finished the whole layout in a 22x22 square with an extension ladder across the garage door. I layered foam sheets into and on it and had another 2x14 shelf-type table to join the entire layout together. The extension ladder was light enough so that I could lift it out and place it in overhead brackets from the ceiling. When the cars were out, and the tables came down, it was a train room. The whole layout was an engineering feat that worked very well and made wiring very easy. I frequently received encouraging comments from my Memphis train buddies, like Mike Fleming, Greg Scharfetter, Jerry LaChapelle, Cecil

Chaffin, Nep Maury, Lynn Hodge, and the whole Memphis AZO group of guys. Their guidance, suggestions, and encouragement got me where I am today in the World's Greatest Hobby. The Bluff City Division awarded me six certificates: Golden Spike (Sept. 2006), Master Builder-Scenery (June 2007), Model Railroad Engineer-Civil (Feb. 2009), Model Railroad Engineer-Electrical (Feb. 2009), Association Volunteer (Sept. 2009), and Model Railroad Author (April 2011).

In August 2013, we moved to Marietta, Georgia. Moving the garage layout was easy: remove the bolts, and it came apart with ease. I crated it in 2x4 crates that I made, rented a 22-foot truck from Home Depot and, with the help of three train buddies, loaded the crates. I drove the M&NYC to its current location in the basement of our home. My layout has been in place for three years and has expanded even more. Living in the SER's Piedmont Division, I have made great friends who share my interest in HO modeling, and they have been a great encouragement. I was awarded Master Builder-Structures (Aug. 2015) and Master Builder-Cars (June 2017). Dr. Joe Nichols Jr. and his dad, Dr. Joe Nichols Sr., set the challenge for me to get the Master Builder-Cars Certificate, which led to my MMR certification.

I want to thank several other train buddies in the Piedmont Division who all had words of wisdom to offer: Paul Voelker, who helped with my Model Railroad-Author Certificate by publishing my articles in the *Southerner*, and Lee Farris, Howard Goodwin, Randel Watson, and Charlie Mason, who all had words of wisdom and encouragement. And lastly, a special *thank you* to my wife, Betty, who for six months sat alone in the evenings while I was in the basement designing and building railroad cars. My MMR #594 comes at a great time and is another project that I can check off my "bucket list."

### **Certificates Earned Jerry (Mitch) Michnewicz**

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



### BILL BUSACCA EARNS MMR #587

**L**ike most NMRA members, I started out with a childhood train set. In my case, it was an American Flyer, while most of my friends had Lionel sets. I did not do a lot of train chasing when I was young, but I distinctly remember the *Zephyr* roaring through LaGrange, Illinois, at 70 miles per hour. I recall my grandmother coming to visit us on the New York Central and watching with wonder as the F7 pulled into LaSalle Street station in Chicago. While I lived in LaGrange, I found HO and built a 4x6 plywood layout with Burlington F7s in silver. During high school, college, and dental school in California, I didn't come into contact with trains very much. However, in 1968, I did manage to purchase an HO USRA 0-8-0 switcher for \$48!

It took a complete change of scenery to rekindle by railroad interest. I served in the U.S. Public Health Service from 1970 to 1972 in Northern New Mexico and watched the *Super Chief* and *El Capitan* come through Gallup, and that was all it took to get me "going again." Then, my wife, Lynn, brought home a book on the Rio Grande Southern, and I was hooked for life. A little "Narrow Minded" maybe, but the trips up to Durango and the other RGS towns in the San Juan Mountains were utterly fascinating to me. I was fortunate enough to run into a bunch of narrow gauge modelers in Albuquerque and then did some volunteer work on the Cumbres & Toltec Scenic Railway. Needless to say, my SD45 HO model in Union Pacific paint did not hold my interest after I saw live steam engines in Colorado.

We moved to western Washington in 1972, and I joined the NMRA as a life member. Mallory Hope Farrell's book on the RGS was my bible for many years along with the *Narrow Gauge And Short Line Gazette*, until many more books were published covering the RGS. What kept me going were two HOn3 locomotives I purchased from the Albuquerque guys while they switched to Sn3½. After we built a new home in 1975, I made sure there was a room for a small HOn3 layout. I modeled the town of Rico, Colorado, on a 5x9 layout made of tongue-and-groove fir found in an abandoned house. The RGS and HOn3 kept me going for 15 years until I hooked up with a broad collection of Puget Sound Narrow Gaugers and discovered Sn3. I got involved with the Puget Sound group and helped them host the 11th National Narrow Gauge Convention in 1991. I sold off the town of Rico and built the town of Dolores, Colorado, in Sn3 in a newly added third garage bay that was insulated and had plastic under the concrete, so the room was warm and dry. I built the town as accurately as possible from the increasing number of books available on Colorado narrow gauge.

However, I got distracted from 1977 to 1984 by mountain-climbing in the Olympics and Cascades — eventually climbing about 30 peaks, including some north face ice climbs in the Cascades and Mt. Rainier three times. From 1989 to 2008, I raced go-karts, winning four regional championships and two seconds in the 250 shifter class at the Grand Nationals. In spite of these major distractions, I always kept on modeling — I knew that climbing and karting were young

people's sports and that modeling would always be there for me when I got over the need for adrenalin rushes.

Thank goodness for the Northwest Narrow Gaugers — they always inspired me to up my modeling skills. Several of them had gotten their MMRs way before me. I was never sure that my modeling skills could match theirs, but I kept modeling, entering contests, and publishing articles.

Eleven years ago, I moved into the town of Shelton, from out at the end of a farming valley. Not only did I find a great place to build a house, but I also got to put a 20x30-foot room on top of a separate garage to hold my layout. I was lucky enough to have previously built Dolores with two-inch aluminum angle and blue foam in two pieces each 30-inches by 8-feet, so they moved easily into the new layout room. Since then, I have added another town, two mainline scenes, a staging yard under the town of Rico, and installed DCC to run the layout.

Working with friends is one of the best parts of the hobby, and the NW guys are a huge help. My move into town put me ½-hour closer to my good friend Dale Kreutzer (MMR #588), so we have inspired each other to keep upping our skills and completing more of our layouts. I've been fortunate enough also to be friends with Paul Scoles, Dave Woodrell, and several others who had already achieved their MMRs. Thankfully, Jack Hamilton and several other MMR friends — Jim Younkins, Greg Wright, and Roger Nulton — nudged me to get evaluated to see how much of the Achievement Program I had completed. I was exceedingly happy to achieve eight AP certificates on the first try. It looks like I got a lot done without noticing. I'm finally adding the last four scenes to my 2nd division of the RGS. My friends Dale Kreutzer and Dave Woodrell each model a different third of the RGS, so we three have modeled the complete RGS without ever consulting each other in advance. What a terrific hobby this is!

### Certificates Earned: Bill Busacca

**Master Builder—Cars**  
**Master Builder—Structures**  
**Master Builder—Prototype Models**  
**Master Builder—Scenery**  
**Master Builder—Motive Power**  
**Model Railroad Engineer—Electrical**  
**Association Volunteer**  
**Model Railroad Author**



### RON HOPKINS EARNS MMR #592

**D**uring my grade school years, I lived in a small Iowa town on the Chicago & North Western mainline. I enjoyed watching the many daily trains, especially those occasionally switching at local businesses. My Marx train set was well used. I had some extra track and a couple of manual turnouts and experimented with numerous track arrangements. At that point, the page or two of trains in the Montgomery Ward Christmas catalog was my main source of inspiration.

By age 10 or 11, my horizons expanded. I discovered *Model Railroader* magazine and the model railroad books of Fawcett Publications on the newsstand. I spent many hours studying these materials. I also found a hobby shop in the town where my grandparents lived. Several times per year I would harass the patient and friendly shop proprietor with my naive questions and admire the astonishing 4x6 HO layout in the window. I built my first freight cars (a Varney ore car and a couple of paper-sided Strombecker boxcars) and began to dream more knowledgeably about the possibilities.

In junior high, we moved to larger Iowa railroad town. Boone was both a division point on the C&NW and an important stop on the Fort Dodge, Des Moines & Southern interurban. (It is also now the home of the Boone & Scenic Valley Railroad — a tourist line operating on some of the old FDDM&S right-of-way.) I built a Mantua Booster and constructed my first layout: a 4x4 foot empire in the corner of our apart-

ment's bedroom. We soon moved to a house with a basement, and I began constructing a 4x8 layout. Through high school, I continued to study model railroad magazines and putter in the hobby, but I didn't really make much progress on my layout. In addition to the regular distractions of high school years, I usually had a part-time job, and my interest in the competing hobby of building and flying model airplanes also peaked. I was fortunate for one year that my part-time job was at the local hobby shop. I was only 15, and the pay was minimal, but I benefited from the hobby mentoring of owner Harold "Red" Theis. And working there was fun.

I have always felt that hobby-related things I learned in those years (using a few tools, building benchwork, soldering and wiring, understanding electricity at least enough to comprehend cab control and pulse power, and generally working with my hands) have served me well as an adult. They have been very useful to me in the hobby and, more generally, as the family handyman. Acquisition of broadly useful skills may be one of the more underrated benefits of our hobby.

After a 15-year hiatus while in college, graduate school, and starting a family, I became more active again. I built a few kits, primarily structures, sketched many layout ideas, and actually started a couple of layouts with benchwork, tracklaying, and wiring. But my career kept me too busy for much railroading. I did join the NMRA and attended my first convention, the 1987 National in Eugene, Oregon. A little later,

I began to more seriously build some structures and dioramas. In 1998, I entered my first National Contest (Kansas City) and won first place in the off-line display category. The unsophisticated craftsmanship of my winning oil storage depot is now a little embarrassing, but the success really hooked me. I have since participated in numerous contests and always enjoyed it.

My modeling activity accelerated in 2001. A young grandson provided justification for acquiring a Bachmann On30 train set at a swap meet. I was so impressed by the potential of this equipment that I switched my major interests from HO to On30. I have been totally satisfied with the change, but it took time to adapt to the amount of space required for 1/4-inch scale buildings.

The final major inspiration for my current level of activity was, perhaps surprisingly, our purchase in 2005 of a vacation property on Washington's Olympic peninsula in the oceanside village of Moclips. I learned about Moclips' interesting railroad history through the excellent Museum of the North Beach located in Moclips. This now tiny village had been the western-most terminus of the Northern Pacific, home to a vibrant shingle mill industry, and an important tourist destination. I built a 1/4-inch scale replica of the original Moclips station for the museum to assist in their efforts to solicit funds for rebuilding that station as a home for the museum. My Moclips & Beck's Creek is mostly fictional but certainly guided by that local railroad history. I am firmly a freelance modeler, but having a story grounded in the prototype situation has been extraordinarily valuable in stimulating and sustaining the momentum necessary to build a layout.

My interest in the Achievement Program (beyond entering structures in contests) began in 2007, spurred by a clinic on this topic by Jack Hamilton, our Regional program chair. Initial research, however, suggested that I could reasonably think about earning certificates in only five areas; achieving the required seven would not be likely. So, I didn't take any action. Then, in 2013, I received an email from Jack suggesting dates for possible team visits to conduct AP evaluations of my work; I have assumed this contact was based on my contest success at the recent Regional Convention. We arranged a visit and it resulted in my first three Certificates of Achievement; I also realized I was close on two more and heard strong encouragement to consider a couple of areas that I had not



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really thought feasible. So, I modified my modeling goals and worked toward completing the requirements for the remaining certificates. Those four certificates followed from AP evaluations in conjunction with the 4D PNR spring meet in 2017. The initiative and assistance by Jack, with help from people like Di Voss and Ken Liesse, were critical to my success and more broadly to the success of the Achievement Program in the Pacific Northwest Region. The encouragement, interest, and fellowship of the perhaps 100 members of the loosely organized Northwest Narrow Gauge Group have also been invaluable.

### Certificates Earned Ron Hopkins

- Master Builder - Motive Power**
- Master Builder - Cars**
- Master Builder - Structures**
- Master Builder - Scenery**
- Model Railroad Engineer - Civil**
- Model Railroad Engineer - Electrical**
- Association Volunteer**

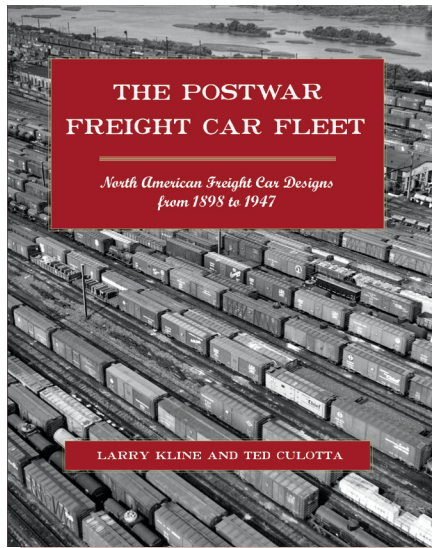
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