

# NMRA BULLETIN

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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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• 2025 Novi, Michigan

rev 7/31/2024

## ACHIEVEMENT PROGRAM

### NMRA AP CERTIFICATE REPORT AUGUST 2024

#### GOLDEN SPIKE

##### Lone Star Region

Mal Noone, Carrollton, Texas

##### Pacific Northwest Region

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Warren Bjornson, New Norway, Alberta, Canada  
Michael Andresen, Kennewick, Washington

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Bill Craig, St. Michael, Minnesota

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##### Mid-Continent Region

Cinthia Priest, Parkville, Missouri

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##### Australasian Region

Ian Barnes, Batemens Bay, New South Wales, Australia

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Ray Persing, Beaver Creek, Ohio

##### Rocky Mountain Region

John Pratt, Manti, Utah

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##### Northeastern Region

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##### Pacific Northwest Region

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Wayne Kelly, Nevada, Texas

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Victor Hand, Bar Harbor, Maine

##### Pacific Northwest Region

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Warren Bjornson, New Norway, Alberta, Canada

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##### Rocky Mountain Region

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##### Southeastern Region

Steven Folino, Afton, Tennessee

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##### Southeastern Region

Paul Spilman, Clyde, North Carolina

#### MASTER MODEL RAILROADER®

MMR® #773 Greg Gramlich, Wentzville, Missouri

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](mailto:achiev@nmra.org).

# Did you know?

We have a full archive of all the **NMRA eBulletins**, **NMRA Turntables**, and even the **NMRA Bulletin** section of **NMRA Magazine/Scale Rails** going back to 2005.

Just log into [www.nmra.org](http://www.nmra.org) as a member and click on "Publications" in the red bar.



## STEPHEN DREES

EARNs

MASTER MODEL RAILROADER® #770

I was born with railroading in my genes. My father worked for the Southern Pacific for over 40 years at Number 1 Market Street in San Francisco, California, in the Communications Department. When he retired, he was the department's office manager.

Since my father worked for the railroad, he had a pass so the family could ride the Southern Pacific Railroad for free. I remember when I was very young, for a family outing, we would sometimes take the ferry, which the Southern Pacific owned, from the Ferry Terminal in San Francisco to Oakland. Sometimes, we visited my grandparents in Sacramento for a summer holiday. We would drive there, and since my father had to get back to work, we would stay for the week and take the train to Oakland and then the ferry to San Francisco where my father would pick us up.

My first train set was a Christmas gift to my brothers and me. It was a wind-up train set. My brothers and I would lay the track on the floor in our bedroom and run trains, having many hours of fun. This activity ignited those railroad genes in me. I had so much fun with the wind-up train set that I asked my parents for an electric one for the next Christmas. Sure enough, under the tree the following Christmas, there was a Marx O-27 train set. At first, my brothers and I would lay the track on the floor and run the train. Eventually my dad mounted the track on a sheet of plywood.

One summer vacation, we went to stay with a college friend of my mother on their ranch in Willits, California. On the return trip, my father and I discussed building a model railroad layout in the basement of our home in San Mateo, California. The house was built into the side of a hill, which provided the basement area for the layout, and we decided to build the layout in HO Scale. My father designed the layout, and he built the benchwork, trackwork, etc., which, you might say, was the infrastructure for the layout. At that time, Tru Scale roadbed was the thing to use. Since money was tight, my dad milled similar roadbed on his table saw. He also built his own turnouts and built the manual switch machine out of a pipe



clamp. For the switch throws, he used ribs from an umbrella.

For my part, one of the things I did was build the rolling stock. I bought various model kits, such as Silver Streak and Varney, and I also built the Ambroid 5000 series kits. I still have them today and they are part of the rolling stock on my present layout. Also, I built the various buildings for the layout. Some were scratchbuilt from articles and plans in *Model Railroader*, and others were from kits. I also started to do some scenery but didn't get very far with it.

When my parents decided to use an artificial Christmas tree, my dad and I built a layout under it. He, of course, built the layout and did the trackwork. I then built the buildings from various kits.

When I was in high school, my dad and I joined the Peninsula Model Railroad Club located at the San Mateo County fairgrounds. This is where I met Bob Dupont and Ron Cerighino. We used to hang out together and do railroad-related outings such as going on the Sierra Railroad train trips, visiting the roundhouse in Jamestown, Westside Lumber Company, etc., and I became interested in logging railroads. My dad joined the NMRA, and we carpooled with Bob and Ron to the PCR meetings at various clubs around the Bay Area. Several times, Ron and I would explore railroad stuff around the Bay Area, and on one outing, we found the old Western Pacific roundhouse in Oakland. Stored there were some of the locomotives that were destined

for the California State Railroad Museum in Sacramento. Bob made arrangements with John Allen several times, and we would make a long day of it and visit his layout in Carmel. What a thrill it was to see his spectacular model railroad! I took many pictures of his layout and still enjoy looking at them today.

At the various PCR meetings, I would enter some of my models in their contests. I built the Ambroid outside-braced caboose kit and superdetailed it. When I was in the Army, stationed at the Yuma Proving Grounds in Arizona, the NMRA National Convention in 1968 was held in San Francisco. My dad took my caboose and entered it in the model contest for me. I won the Brotherhood of Railroad Trainmen Brass Lantern Award.

In 1966, I graduated with a Civil Engineering degree from Humboldt State College, now called California State Polytechnical University, Humboldt, located in Arcata, California. This area was a logging railroad bonanza. My friend Dick Harrison and I would explore the area for logging railroad-related stuff. We befriended Henry Sorenson in nearby McKinleyville. Henry had a farm in McKinleyville where he built a three-foot narrow gauge railroad. Henry completely restored locomotive Mattole Lumber Co. No. 1 and Kiso Forest Railway No. 9, which he ran around his farm. On the 4th of July, he had a barbecue at his farm and invited people to ride the train, and I was also able to operate the steam



locomotive. He donated these locomotives to the California State Railroad Museum. They were on display for Railfair 99 in Sacramento.

After graduating from college, for my career, I went from building model railroad models to building major construction projects such as highways, dams, bridges, runways, etc. I put my model train stuff into storage as I lost the patience to work on my models due to the stresses of work. I delved into airplanes, earned my private pilot's license, and started to build an experimental kit airplane, a Glasair, but never finished it. During this time, I met my wonderful loving wife Molly and we got married on Cinco De Mayo in 2002.

After retirement from the conventional 40-hour (or, you might say, 60-hour) work week, I did some consulting work, but I also needed something to keep me out of trouble between assignments. I thought I would try golf because it was outdoors, but it was very frustrating. I thought about getting back into model railroading and still had models and equipment from my earlier years that I had stored. In between consulting assignments, I bought several Bar Mills kits and put them together. I looked for something more of a challenge and ran across SierraWest Scale Models kits. Constructing one of these kits and following the directions will make a very skilled modelmaker out of you. I joined the NMRA and then entered some of my models in the contest held at the Arizona Division Meetings. So, I had the bug again to get back into model railroading, and I was building again. I met Frank Baker from Phoenix at the Division meetings, and he took an interest in my work and mentored me while I got started again with the hobby.

After traveling around for work assignments with the unfinished airplane for about 30 years, I sold it, and it provided seed money to build a layout in my three-car plus-size garage and air-condition the garage to survive the hot summers in Tucson.

I used 3rd Planit, a CAD system for designing my model railroad. As an engineer, I had never used a CAD system before but learned how to use it to get a track plan and benchwork drawn and built. Work on the layout started in January 2016.

After building enough superdetailed structure kits and a scratchbuilt diorama of the Sturgeon Sawmill in Sonoma, California, I applied for my first certificate in the Achievement Program, Master Builder – Structures, in 2018. I was now

interested in getting the rest of my achievement certificates and was encouraged by Paul Buhrke and Bruce Petrarca.

For my certificate for Master Builder – Cars, I superdetailed several Ambroid car kits, including the Matheson Dry Ice Reefer, Combination Poultry and Refrigerator car, and the Vinegar Tank car, as well as superdetailed a Labelle Parlor Car kit to fulfill the requirement for building a passenger car. Since I was into modeling logging operations, I needed a string of logging skeleton cars. I researched what they should look like online and scratchbuilt a string of four.

I started volunteering for various jobs within the Arizona Division to achieve the Association Volunteer certificate. This involved helping the committee for the 2019 PSR convention, holding several open houses of my layout, serving on the Arizona Division executive committee, and hosting the Division meetings in Tucson. I enjoy volunteering and engaging with other people who enjoy the hobby.

I now had one more certificate to go. Since I enjoy building models, I chose to pursue the Master Builder – Prototype Models Certificate. I decided to build a diorama of Schellville Station on the Northwestern Pacific. Schellville was

the only gateway to the Southern Pacific Railroad and the Bay Area.

My model railroad layout is a free-lanced short line railroad connecting to the Southern Pacific in the Southwest during the transition era. If I had known I was going for the Prototype Models certificate when I started its construction, I would have incorporated a prototype scene within it, saving time and effort for the many other phases of the hobby.

My wife is a great supporter of my hobby. She has enjoyed going to conventions and on road trips to different tourist railroads around the West (and other attractions along the way) with me.

### Certificates Earned Stephen Drees, MMR® #770

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

## Meet a bunch of modelers in your backyard.



When you're a National Model Railroad Association member, you're never very far away from fellow model railroaders because you're automatically a member of your local Division. There are over 150 of them all across the country! Some hold monthly or quarterly meetings. Some sponsor swap meets. Some take tours to factories and prototype facilities. Some do it all and more.

But one thing they all have in common: they like model railroads...and model railroaders.

Visit [www.nmra.org](http://www.nmra.org) to find your local Division. Then meet up with some of your best friends, right outside your door.



**We make it even more fun.**

[www.nmra.org](http://www.nmra.org)  
4 2 3 - 8 9 2 - 2 8 4 6

## TONY THOMPSON

EARNs

MASTER MODEL RAILROADER® #772

I was born in Burbank, California, and grew up in Glendale. Our home in West Glendale was only a few blocks from Southern Pacific's four-track line coming west out of Los Angeles from Taylor Yard, giving me an early introduction to the SP.

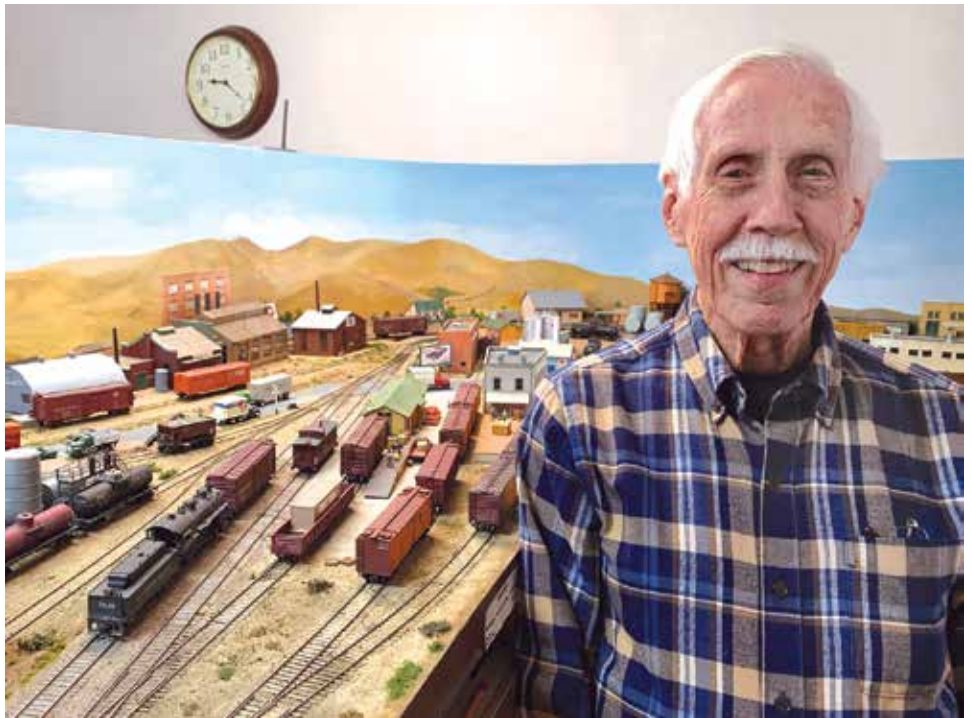
I often rode my bike down to the tracks and watched the parade of trains passing in both directions, to and from the Coast Line and the San Joaquin Valley Line. This was not a new enthusiasm; my parents told me I wanted to watch any passing train since I was about two.

As a boy, I built lots of models, mostly airplanes. I was given a Marx train set that went around in a circle, but its cars stamped out of thin steel looked rather crude to a frequent observer of prototype railroad equipment. Eventually, I graduated to railroad models, first Strombecker wood kits and soon Varney and Athearn metal HO kits.

About this time, I saw a flyer for a teen group being organized at the Glendale Model Railroad Club. Most senior members did not want to be around the teens, so we had our own meeting night. The best thing about the teen group was that adult advisers required us to work on the club layout for an hour each evening before they permitted us to run trains. They taught us everything we needed, from soldering feeders to adjusting twin-coil switch machines and repairing rolling stock, and supervised our tasks. It became a great foundation.

This was also the time I built and ran my first layout, following a *Model Railroader* project article, the Evergreen Central, described in the November 1953 issue. With my dad's help, it was suspended by ropes over the family car in the garage, and, counterweighted, it could be lowered onto sawhorses. It never progressed to scenery.

One time when I had ridden my bike down to the SP tracks, watching a familiar train, the Burbank local, working switch leads on both sides of the mainline tracks, the conductor asked if I would like to ride along (he had probably noticed me



watching them before). I said, "But I have to get home for dinner," and the conductor said, "We'll let you off whenever you want." Still unsure, I said, "I've got my bike here," and the conductor said, "Put it in the caboose." So I got to ride out to the Burbank depot.

Before long, the conductor explained what they were doing, using various railroad lingo. When I didn't understand, he was happy to explain. Watching the crew pick up and set out cars while the conductor sorted through waybills was a marvelous insight into real railroading.

It was a great afternoon — one of my best memories — and yes, I was late for dinner.

Back in those days, many a young person received kindness like this from a railroad employee, but today, railroaders would lose their jobs for this kind of thing. Times were just friendlier back then.

Like most people, high school, college, and graduate school were times when I rarely thought about model railroading. But when we lived in Thousand Oaks, California, and our two boys were 4 and 6 years old, my wife Mary, knowing of my former hobby, suggested I make them a layout. I built a simple 4x6-foot layout that could slide under a bed, and they enjoyed it for six months or so. But

the hobby hooked me again, and I have continued ever since.

Meanwhile, I had an offer from Carnegie Mellon University in Pittsburgh. Mary and I talked it over, and we agreed I'd take the job, but that someday we would want to return to California. As it turned out, we stayed in Pittsburgh for 17 years.

During those years, I was active in Pittsburgh's Division 2 of the Mid-Central Region. I served as newsletter editor and, eventually, superintendent and attended many Region conventions, not only MCR but also MER and NFR. I was involved in contest modeling and judging at the Region and National levels. Our Division hosted some MCR Region conventions, and in 1990, we hosted the NMRA National Convention. I served as Clinic Chair.

At that time, I was part of a group that questioned how points were allocated among the categories in the NMRA contest rules. The contest point structure essentially reflected what was good model-building decades earlier. We proposed an alternate allocation to reflect the growth of prototype modeling.

The change did happen, with the points for prototype conformity increasing from 10 to 25, the points for scratch-building reduced from 25 to 15, and the



points for quantity of detail decreasing from 25 to 20. These changes remain in effect to this date.

Having a nice basement in our Pittsburgh house, I built an HO layout based on the SP in coastal California. One goal for layout operation was perishable traffic, and I began researching Pacific Fruit Express (PFE). In 1987, I published four articles on PFE for *Railroad Model Craftsman (RMC)*, articles covering wood reefers, steel reefers, PFE's rebuilt cars, and the express cars and reefer operations, describing modeling the cars as well as prototype information. In 1988, *RMC* ran a fifth article on PFE's mechanical reefers.

My layout was on the tours during the 1990 National Convention, and it was featured as the cover article in the June 1990 *RMC*, in the lead-up to the 1990 National. In my Pittsburgh days, I learned a great deal from my good friends C.J. Riley and Larry Kline, much of it in our round-robin work group.

Meanwhile, as we approached being "empty nesters," we remembered our intent to return to California. We moved to Berkeley in 1994. Mary got a position at the Lawrence Berkeley Laboratory and I worked there and had a teaching position at the University of California. I retired in 2007.

Once back in California and thus Pacific Coast Region, I got involved with the Contest program and agreed to serve as the PCR Region Contest Chairman, in part to help lead implementation of the new contest rules. I served in that position for five years.

Another big change accompanied the move to California. During my research on PFE, and while still in Pittsburgh, I contacted well-known SP author Bob Church to see if he had any resources about PFE's history and operation. By a remarkable coincidence, he had begun work on a similar project. We soon became friends, worked together on the book, and once it was published, decided to form our own publishing company. We named it Signature Press.

Bob handled the business end of the company, dealing with finances and shipping, while I recruited authors, edited the books, and managed book production. The company ceased operations at the end of 2022. It was a 30-year effort that produced some excellent titles. I am

proud that we contributed to the recording of railroad history, and did it while operating in the black.

Following the PFE book, I returned to my interest in SP freight cars and ultimately published five books between 2002 and 2014: *Vol. 1, Gondolas and Stock Cars*; *Vol. 2, Cabooses*; *Vol. 3, Automobile Cars and Flat Cars*; *Vol. 4, Box Cars*; and *Vol. 5, Hoppers, Covered Hoppers, and Tank Cars*.

In 2000, my interest in SP's Coast Line led my friend John Signor and me to publish *Southern Pacific's Coast Line Pictorial*, following up on John's earlier book about the Coast Line.

I served on the Board of Directors of the Southern Pacific Historical and Technical Society (SPH&TS) from 1990 to 2018, and as its president for five years. I also wrote the SP modeling column for the SPH&TS magazine *Trainline* for 25 years.

All this publishing of prototype information arose from the urging of my friend Richard Hendrickson. He maintained that we would only get more accurate models from manufacturers if modelers demanded them, and they would only demand them if they had the necessary information to recognize accuracy. He never ceased urging me to publish more.

In 2000, I again served as Clinic Chair for the 2000 NMRA National Convention held in Santa Clara, California. It was so much easier than the same job in 1990 because, by 2000, most people had a computer and e-mail access, eliminating the need to mail everything (presenter bios, clinic descriptions, schedules) back and forth.

In both 1990 and 2000, in conjunction with the NMRA Convention Clinics, I edited books on select clinic write-ups (*Learning from the Prototype* in 1990 and *21st Century Clinics* in 2000).

Another part of moving to California was to modify part of my Pittsburgh HO layout, based on a section of the Central California Coast south of San Luis Obispo, into a new layout size and shape. I model the transition era from steam to diesel (1953) on a fictitious branch line (the Santa Rosalia Branch) of the SP that is dense with switching. I have tried to develop a prototypically accurate operating scheme, and my typical operating sessions keep two train crews busy

for several hours. You can see my layout and get an overview of how it operates by viewing the TSG MultiMedia video "Santa Rosalia Branch" on YouTube.

In 2009, Joe Fugate, editor and publisher of the online magazine *Model Railroad Hobbyist*, approached me, asking if I would join a rotating group of six modelers and write articles about some aspect of prototype modeling in turn as part of the "Getting Real" column. I felt complimented to be included, and I've written an article about every six months, the most recent being the 26th article.

In 2016 I co-authored, with Dick Harley, the book *Southern Pacific Freight Car Painting and Lettering Guide*, published by the SPH&TS. The book covers PFE as well as SP.

For 40 years or so, I have enjoyed presenting clinics on various subjects, both at Railroad Prototype Modelers (RPM) meets and NMRA conventions. In looking at a log of these presentations, I count about 50 different topics or titles for these talks.

I also posted on a blog I started in 2010 called "Modeling the SP." By now, I have posted about 1,700 times, averaging a post every three days over the past 13 years. You can find this blog by Googling "Modeling the SP."

In 2009, I received the John Allen Award from the Pacific Coast Region's Coast Division, which is annually awarded for contributions to the hobby. In 2014, I received the Guy Dunscomb Award from SPH&TS for contributions to the preservation of SP history. The names of previous and subsequent winners for both awards make me feel humbled to be included in their company.

### Certificates Earned Tony Thompson, MMR® #772

**Master Builder – Cars**  
**Master Builder – Structures**  
**Master Builder – Scenery**  
**Model Railroad Engineer – Electrical**  
**Chief Dispatcher**  
**Association Volunteer**  
**Model Railroad Author**