

# NMRA BULLETIN

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2015 NMRA National Convention Dates and National Train Show Reservations:

2015—Portland, Oregon • August 23–30 • www.nmra2015portland.org

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

423-892-2846 • nmrrants@yahoo.com

• 2016—Indianapolis, IN • 2017—Orlando, FL • 2018—Kansas City, MO

## NMRA AP CERTIFICATE REPORT

DECEMBER 2014

GOLDEN SPIKE

## Mid-Eastern Region

Michael Rabbitt, Wayne, Pennsylvania  
John Shefte, Charlotte, North Carolina

## Northeastern Region

Rick Mills, Berwick, Maine

## MASTER BUILDER — MOTIVE POWER

## Pacific Northwest Region

Ross Ames, Troutdale, Oregon

## MASTER BUILDER — SCENERY

## Rocky Mountain Region

Dennis Krausman, Lone Tree, Colorado

## MASTER BUILDER — STRUCTURES

## Pacific Northwest Region

J. Kyle Gardiner, West Vancouver, BC

## MASTER BUILDER — PROTOTYPE

## MODELS

## Pacific Northwest Region

Steve Stark, Nanoose Bay, British Columbia

## CHIEF DISPATCHER

## Southeastern Region

Charles Mason, Roswell, Georgia

## ASSOCIATION VOLUNTEER

## Pacific Northwest Region

Ted Alexis, Victoria, British Columbia

## Rocky Mountain Region

John Griffith, Aurora, Colorado

## Southeastern Region

Tyler Gelmini, Hampton, Georgia

## Thousand Lakes Region

Kenneth Zieska, Plymouth, Minnesota

## MASTER MODEL RAILROADER

Howard Garner, Pickens, South Carolina  
MMR 550

## 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 [fjkoch@hotmail.com](mailto:fjkoch@hotmail.com). If you prefer to write, contact Frank at 4769 Silverwood Drive, Batavia, OH 45103.



STEVE PERRY, MMR #547

Central Illinois was a good place to be a railfan in the 1940s and 1950s. I grew up in Washington — a small farming town near Peoria. It was served by the Toledo, Peoria & Western main line, and Alton (later Gulf, Mobile & Ohio) and Santa Fe branches. The Nickel Plate's Peoria division passed just south of town. Peoria was a hot bed of railroad activity.

It was 1944, and there were frequent trains of war material moving east. It was very exciting for a young railfan. The trains were often long, with double headers and / or a pusher to get the train up Washington Hill — a 0.6 percent, 8.5-mile grade that began in TP&W's East Peoria yard. I watched all the action from an upstairs window.

My story is not much different from other model railroaders growing up in this era. There was a succession of trains — a used O gauge American Flyer set followed by a Lionel O gauge freight set. Add a Santa Fe Warbonnet set, a number of accessories and more track, and I soon had a “plywood Pacific” in the basement. Those trains provided countless hours of entertainment for me and my friends. I also learned about electricity, track planning, and scratchbuilding.

The Santa Fe branch served Washington with twice-daily doodlebug service and a couple of local freights. I used to hang out at that depot in my early teens. Vern Walker was the very friendly agent. He would let me practice Morse code on the local telegraph line and showed me how to “hoop up” orders as a train passed by. Just before passenger service on the line was about to end, some of my friends and I took last rides on the doodlebug.

Ham radio captured my interest at about the age of 15, and trains took a back seat. College, a move to an East Coast job, marriage, and a career in electrical engineering, conspired to keep me from model railroading. After my wife and I bought our Long Island (New York) home, my parents shipped the trains to me.

I decided in mid-1990 to unpack those long-stored O-gauge trains and get them running. Soon, they were running on a good-size layout on our rec room floor, and I joined a new high rail train club that had just formed. Eventually, I concluded I did not have the space to build the high rail empire I wanted, and the O-gauge trains were again packed away.

My friend, Karl (from the high rail club), designed a clever walk-in HO track plan that fit nicely into an 11x7-foot space sandwiched between a cedar closet and the heating system. Over the next few years, Karl and I helped each other build our layouts. In the process, our families became great friends. My layout became the Scary Creek division of the fictitious Wheeling, Beckley & Bluefield Railroad. It connects NKP with Norfolk & Western in south central West Virginia in the late 1950s and early 1960s.

I joined the NMRA in January 1995 and attended the annual convention of the Sunrise Trail Division (STDiv) that spring. I was impressed by its quality and the friendly group of fellows running it; I joined the division on the spot. Northeastern Region membership followed.

A clinic by the NER AP chairman, Paul Allard and articles in the *BULLETIN* made me curious about the Achievement Program. Our Division AP chairman, John MacGown, furnished me with an AP information packet. The requirements seemed intimidating at first, but I knew I could probably earn the Electrical, Volunteer, and perhaps the Civil Certificates, but Master Model Railroader just wasn't in the cards. Those guys (and ladies) were on a much higher modeling plane. I had, however, forgotten the proverb: "The longest journey begins with the first step."

Two events happened in a rather short time: I was elected Secretary of the STDiv (beginning my service to the hobby) and I met Al Sohl — one of the most talented modelers I know. He was impressed with a scenery module I had entered in a Division contest and invited me to join his club. Al was the principle architect of the HOn3 Western Bay RR that was one of three layouts at the Long Island Model Railroad Engineers.

By the end of the Millennium, I was actively working on Electrical and Civil while accumulating points for Association Volunteer and Author. I discovered I enjoyed getting up at Division events and sharing what I was learning about scenery, DCC, and later operations with my fellow model railroaders. Soon, I was also presenting clinics at Regional conventions.

I was getting serious about the AP. By 2001, I had earned four certificates. Master Model Railroader no longer seemed impossible, and I started making plans to achieve it. Al and another friend (the late) Tony Capato both had five certificates, and I started urging them to finish. Within a couple of years, they both were MMRs.

After one of Al's monthly informal operating sessions on the WBRR, I proposed we operate the Western Bay to earn our Chief Dispatcher Certificate. The idea was enthusiastically received, and Al asked me to research it and to be the time keeper. We soon started regular op sessions every other Friday night and Saturday. Six months later, most of the crew had acquired the requisite hours. It gives me great pride know-

ing I played a part in helping those seven members, including the 11-year-old son of another crew member, earn their Chief Dispatcher Certificates. Ultimately, four other crew members, combining their time earned on the WBRR and other roads, also became Chief Dispatchers. It was also one of the last certificates Al and Tony needed for their MMR.

The STDiv area director to the Northeastern Region board resigned in early 2003. I volunteered to finish the remaining three years of his term and was voted onto the board. About that same time, the STDiv board voted to award a cash prize to the new modeler who had earned the highest score in the NER model contest. I am proud to have proposed the award and that several recipients are now MMRs. Another, the first recipient has won the NER Best in Show several times and the NMRA Gold Award at least once.

With two more AP Certificates on the wall outside my layout room, MMR was getting close. The layout scenery was underway but needed a town and lots of trees and details. I had scratchbuilt an old time 20-foot wood flatcar and super-detailed some kit cars, so I decided to go for the Cars and Scenery Certificates.

The Achievement Program, in my case, has achieved its purpose — to learn new skills and techniques. In the process of constructing my scratchbuilt cars, I have learned how to make molds and resin castings for parts as well as to design and build tools and jigs to construct the cars and detail parts. I have also learned that "good enough" often was not good enough in the judge's eyes and to be ready to start over if necessary. The result is five scratchbuilt cars — two that were kitbashed and one super-detailed laser kit. All have earned no less than second place in contests. My friend Al's mantra "Think like a Master Model Railroader" has served me well.

I have made many friends and acquaintances in the 20 years I've been an NMRA member. The social part, to me, is as important as other aspects of this hobby. It has been very rewarding for me to belong to and support the Sunrise Trail Division and the Northeastern Region. I have at one time or another held a number of offices. Currently, I am the Division treasurer and membership chairman.

Shortly after it was announced at the NER convention that I and three other NER members were the Region's newest

MMRs, some of my friends and their wives hosted a surprise luncheon for me. They presented me with a very nice certificate from the Division to go with my MMR plaque and certificate. I learned recently that I am my Division's twelfth MMR.

I would like to thank several current and former members of the STDiv for their advice, help, encouragement, and friendship: Walter Neumen, John MacGown, and Al Sohl — all MMRs; our current Division AP chairman, Mike Siegel is a valued friend and advisor. Rick Mazzola deserves special thanks for his valuable assistance in planning the village of Beckley, showing me how to make furnace filter trees and critiquing my work before the scenery was judged. I am also grateful for the encouragement and guidance I have received from Bob Hamm, Bill Brown, and Paul Allard in the NER.

All of this would not have been possible without the loving support and encouragement of Jeanne, my wife of 50 years. She is my biggest fan and periodically pulls me out of "Grandpa Munster's" cellar for wine and snacks. Thank you, honey.

Two other hobbies that I enjoy very much are stained glass crafting and carving song birds, wild fowl, and fish.

## AP Certificates — Steve Perry

**Golden Spike**  
**Model Engineer – Electrical**  
**Chief Dispatcher,**  
**Model Engineer – Civil**  
**Association Volunteer**  
**Model Railroad Author**  
**Association Official, Model**  
**Builder – Cars**  
**Model Builder – Scenery**

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