

NMRA BULLETIN

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rev 21/2025

KENNETH BOROWSKI

EARNs

MASTER MODEL RAILROADER® #769

Growing up in Chicago near O'Hare Airport, I became interested in planes and trains at an early age. I enjoyed building airplane models and had the chance to construct both N-scale and HO-scale layouts in our family's basement — not really concentrating on a particular prototype railroad, just layouts to run trains from a central control panel.

As a teenager, I spent much of my summers listening to my aircraft scanner and watching the planes fly over my childhood home; I also rode my bike to the tracks and observed the operations of The Milwaukee Road and Chicago & North Western. Both railroads had busy commuter train operations, but I always enjoyed chasing The Milwaukee Road local that ran north from Galewood Yard to Morton Grove.

Then, in 1979, during a trip to my local hobby shop, I came across a book by Kalmbach Publishing titled *Modeling the Clinchfield Railroad in N Scale*, written by Gordon Odegard. It was a step-by-step guide on how to build, model, and operate a small layout based on the prototype Clinchfield Railroad. The Clinchfield Railroad looked very interesting, and the book was a fantastic model railroader's resource. I wanted to save and use it for a possible future layout.

My hobby was soon put on hold as I was now finished with school, out on my own, starting what would become a 41-year airline career. During the mid-1980s and after a move to Minnesota, I lived in a home with a spare bedroom large enough to construct a layout. I returned to the Clinchfield Railroad book I had saved from my teen years and built the "U"-shaped version of the N-Scale Clinchfield Railroad described in the book. The layout was fun to construct and a great learning experience; it was the perfect opportunity to learn various modeling skills while fueling my growing interest in the prototype Clinchfield Railroad.

Then, in 1988, Steve King's book, *Clinchfield Country*, was published. Steve's book really got me interested in the south-



ern half of the railroad, which was very different from the north end, which had numerous coal mines and tipples. The south end of the railroad ran through the spectacular Blue Ridge Mountains and had much more diverse types of car loadings than the parade of coal cars and mine runs located on the north end.

In the mid-1990s, I was now married and moved into a larger house with an unfinished basement; I was soon able to begin construction of my dream layout. The trend in model railroading at this time had shifted to more prototype modeling and operations along with track plans that had a linear concept.

I knew I wanted to model the south end of the Clinchfield Railroad in N-scale, as I had acquired a bunch of equipment from my first Clinchfield layout. I spent quite a while designing a track plan based on prototype locations and scenes that included a long mainline run, pushers for southbound coal trains, and locals to work the areas around the two small mountain towns modeled.

In 1998, I joined the Carolina Clinchfield Chapter of the National Railway Historical Society (NRHS), which introduced me to many great people and resources. I would take yearly railfan trips down to Clinchfield Country and photo-

graph as much of the railroad (now part of CSX) as I could. I also met with and obtained documents, photos, etc., from current CSX and former Clinchfield Railroad employees. I met Ray Poteat, the Carolina Clinchfield chapter president, who has become a good friend and is a wealth of Clinchfield Railroad operational information. I began building my Clinchfield Railroad N-Scale Blue Ridge Division layout that same year.

A few years later, I joined my local NTRAK club (GRVS – Great River Valley System), where I connected with fellow N-scale modelers. Shortly after, I built four NTRAK modules to participate in local train shows while continuing to work on my home layout. Many club members helped me through the years as operators on my layout as I worked on my operating plan.

Over the next 10 years, my list of layout operators grew while I worked on scenery and added structures to closely replicate the scenes I was modeling on the prototype.

I participated in numerous yearly train shows around the region with the Great River Valley System NTRAKclub while also hosting operating sessions and open houses on my home layout. I also enjoyed doing “how-to” clinics at our monthly GRVS club meetings.

In 2011, I joined the NMRA. Later that year, Dave Hamilton, one of the local NMRA members, explained the Achievement Program at one of our GRVS Club meetings. Shortly after that, Dave and John Hotvet, both Achievement Program evaluators, visited my layout and assessed what I had completed. That was when I received the Golden Spike Award.

Over the next several years, I enjoyed making railfan trips around the country and yearly trips to North Carolina to gather prototype information. I worked on finishing more and more scenes on the layout. I held operating sessions on a regular basis while working on improving my modeling skills. I also had a couple of articles and feature stories on my layout published in various model railroad magazines during this time.

Around 2019, I became involved with two other N-scale clubs in my area. Along with my original 16 feet of NTRAK modules, I constructed 16 feet of One Trak modules and 10 feet of FreeMo-N modules based on prototype locations along the Clinchfield Railroad. The assortment

of modules lets me participate in various train shows throughout the year.

During the pandemic, I retired from my airline career. At this time, I was also invited to join the Modutrak N-Scale group. They are a group of Fine Scale prototype modelers scattered throughout the country but are mostly based out of the Chicago area and do N-scale modeling on a beautiful, one-of-a-kind, large modular layout. The group comes together numerous times a year to set up and display its southern Wisconsin Milwaukee Road and C&NW-based layout at Midwest train shows. The people in this group are some of the best modelers I have ever seen. Being a part of this group has been a great experience, sharing modeling tips, operating at train shows, and attending other events such as RPM meets. The motto of the group is “Better Modeling through Peer Pressure.”

Now that I am retired, I can attend more and more of our local Twin Cities Division NMRA events and meetings. I have met some fantastic people, and many have become great friends. I was introduced to many different operating groups in my area who operate on layouts of all scales and sizes. One of these groups has turned into a weekly event. Some of the operators in the groups were also Master Model Railroaders®, and since it had been 10 years since I got my Golden Spike Certificate, they encouraged me to look into the NMRA Achievement Program.

Looking at the AP categories and the fact that my layout was over 20 years old, I was able to document my work and qualify for four of the AP Certificates: Author, Chief Dispatcher, Prototype Models, and Scenery.

I spent the next year and a half completing more projects, such as adding lighting, scratchbuilding cars, and hand-laying track, which improved my layout and helped me earn three more certificates: Cars, Civil, and Electrical.

By June 2024, I had earned the required certificates for the Master Model Railroader® designation. I am also working on completing more projects to earn some of the other certificates.

I stay active by railfanning, operating on layouts, attending train shows around the country, and participating in local Twin Cities Division events. I also enjoy coordinating a couple of our local TCD events during the year, along with being a host for operating sessions and layout tours.

The NMRA Achievement Program has been a wonderful experience. I encourage all model railroaders to give it a try; it will take you down many paths to learn and enjoy all aspects of the hobby. I was able to build models and do projects that I would otherwise never have done.

I want to thank the following people who helped and encouraged me during this journey:

David Hamilton, MMR®
Lester Breuer, MMR®
Richard Remiarz, MMR®
John Hotvet MMR®
Neil Maldeis MMR®
Thomas Gasior, MMR®
Damian Kostron

The guys in the Modutrak N-Scale modelers group have also greatly influenced my modeling. Knowing these modelers has truly made me a better modeler.

I also can't thank my wife Joani enough; she has greatly supported me through my model railroading and railfanning adventures.

Certificates Earned Kenneth Borowski, MMR® #769

Model Railroad Author
Chief Dispatcher
Master Builder – Scenery
Master Builder – Prototype Models
Master Builder – Cars
Model Railroad Engineer – Civil
Model Railroad Engineer – Electrical

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DAVID CROSHERE

EARNs

MASTER MODEL RAILROADER® #777

As a young boy, my father once told me, “Son, I don’t care which hobby you choose, but you must have a hobby.” Looking back at all my experiences, how did I end up in model trains as a hobby? As the son of an aeronautical engineer, I lived a mile west of Douglas Aircraft, where planes flew overhead all the time, much to my delight. Unsurprisingly, I modeled airplanes all my young life. We had a Lionel train, but it was only for the holidays. In Santa Monica, California, where we lived, trains did not exist. I don’t think I ever saw any prototype trains up close until I was of driving age. In addition to building model planes, I also played all the usual sports. And we were close to the beach. At ten, I was introduced to sailing, which morphed into racing sailboats, which I pursued extensively and successfully throughout my life. I was also into surfing, swimming, skiing, and soaring. While I continued sailing throughout my life, those other pursuits were short-term. I also loved to dream up designs and build them with my hands.

How did I end up with model trains? Well, a neighbor friend and I built model airplanes, and as the holidays approached each year, we would shift into model trains, first Lionel and then, as we grew older, into

HO. Always back and forth, trains and planes, with the seasons. Then, high school and life got in the way of any serious time with hobbies. I remember always trying to visit a hobby shop at Christmastime and look at trains.

Time passed, and my wife and I moved to Northern California, where we raised two boys. We encouraged their sports activities. That was another enjoyable time, and hobby time was in abeyance. At 11 or 12, my youngest son was given HO trains by his grandfather for Christmas. We both enjoyed working on his trains. I still do. About this time, my brother called, wondering if I wanted my old HO trains that he had in his possession for some reason. So I was working with trains and enjoying myself. At one point, I was in a hobby shop and looked at a magazine on the counter. I wanted a copy of this magazine with an article I liked. I asked how I could subscribe to it. I was told I had to join the NMRA and then the magazine was sort of free. My father had always purchased *Model Railroader* magazine despite never pursuing the hobby. Because of *Model Railroader* magazine I was somewhat familiar with NMRA. I even recall reading about the NMRA Achievement Program back in the mid-1960s.

As unusual as it may sound, I joined the NMRA to get the magazine (called *SCALE RAILS* at the time). I then started learning a lot more about model railroading.

I was surprised to learn that I was also a member of a local Division group with my NMRA membership. Going to Division meetings, for some reason, didn’t happen even though I wanted to go. There was always a conflict with busy schedules. Subsequently, I read there was to be a Division picnic at the Western Railway Museum. I felt it was time to see what this group was all about. I went to the picnic knowing no one. I figured at least I could get close to some prototype rolling stock if the meeting fell through. At the picnic, a group of folks sat at tables under a tree. I introduced myself and was asked a lot of questions about my interest in model trains. Before the picnic was over, I was invited to a modeler’s house to visit his layout. I learned a group within this Division met every Wednesday night, rotating between a half-dozen layouts. I was invited to join in, and boy, did my life ever change!

I don’t think I knew what an operating session was, but I was about to find out. Wednesday nights were either operating a layout or working on one. Realizing there were model layouts and people involved in this hobby, I was amazed. Clearly, for me, the big change was the people involved in this group. I was looking forward to learning more from and about them.

That first year turned out to be an eye-opener. I was operating on others’ layouts every week and learning quite a bit about this new hobby. I was loaned books and given suggestions and was able to ask questions of people on a very friendly basis. It gave me a chance to evaluate and decide what I wanted in my layout based on my new friends’ layouts. How I initially thought a model train layout should be and how my thinking changed over the year was a remarkable turnaround.

Quickly, I decided the area I used for my son’s trains had to change. I live on the side of a hill, and there was a perfect area for a layout under the house. However, I really couldn’t invite my new friends over to an area with a dirt floor. I had to do extensive work to make the area usable for my layout. I was still working for a living, so the new project took some time. Finishing the train room took me a year to complete. I was determined not to start with trains until the room was finished.

After a year, I could finally have a group meeting on Wednesday night at my

house. I viewed it as a way to repay them for the many enjoyable times I had taken advantage of their hospitality.

One of my Wednesday night group members asked if I wanted to be nominated as a director of the PCR. I initially declined. After a little thought, I realized that being a director would satisfy the requirements for the Association Official certificate. This was not my first time thinking about the MMR program, but it was the beginning. I realized I wanted an MMR certificate as an acknowledgment of my modeling capabilities. So, I accepted the nomination and was elected.

As a director, I became more involved with and helped to promote the Redwood Empire Division. Part of my duties was planning our quarterly meetings and summer picnics. Over the four years as director, I saw the camaraderie of the NMRA at work in Division meetings.

I was introduced to many other modelers in Northern California at the Pacific Coast Region meetings. Knowing many of

these folks made the annual convention even more enjoyable. I also began to understand more about how the NMRA worked.

It has been approximately 20 years since that first picnic when I met my modeling compatriots. Of the group, Steve Skold helped with my introduction to model trains. Gus Campagna and Ron Buckwalter have helped me make sense of how model train layouts function. Tom Swearingen has helped with many aspects of an operating session. Ron Kaiser has given me constant support for all things trains. Giuseppe Aymar was instrumental in encouraging me to stay with the program and finish the MMR certification. Special thanks go to many who have made the journey so enjoyable.

Having had no exposure to real railroads for most of my life, I have no compulsion to follow any particular prototype carrier. Therefore, I have chosen to model a fictitious theme where my imagination can govern as long as historical norms are observed. I model a small railroad circa 1936,

where steam is king, and I am comfortable with the scenario. What has become meaningful for me during my op sessions is taking a moment to watch eight or ten train people enjoying themselves operating the layout I created with their help.

I have continued my indulgence because I enjoy modeling trains and the relationships that have evolved with several close friends. Over the years, with their wives, we have become friends in other aspects of our life. It has been a most enjoyable and rewarding experience.

Certificates Earned David Croshere, MMR® #777

Chief Dispatcher
Model Railroad Engineer – Civil
Model Railroad Engineer – Electrical
Association Official
Master Builder – Structures
Master Builder – Scenery
Master Builder – Cars



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RAY MEYER

EARNs

MASTER MODEL RAILROADER® #779

I began building models at about age 8. I started with model airplane kits and World War II ships and then got into sailing ships, becoming an expert at identifying and installing complex rigging. It is perhaps somewhat surprising that it took me so long to get into railroad modeling since, as a boy, we lived in Racine, Wisconsin, right next to The Milwaukee Road's Southwestern Line. My grandmother's backyard fronted Chicago & North Western's passenger line into Milwaukee, so I saw a lot of trains. But I was hooked on planes then (though I did have for a while one of those Lionel sets many kids in the 1950s had).

College, the Marines, and law school interrupted my hobby. Still, in 1987, I bought a model train set for my son at Christmas and built a small layout for him on a 4x8 sheet of plywood (later building another one for my daughter so there was no gender inequality). My son and I went to Milwaukee's Trainfest a year or so later and discovered a club in our hometown of Port Washington, Wisconsin. My son wanted to join. Always wanting to do things with him, we did, and now I have been a member for more than 35 years, the last 21 as President. He moved on to another club with his college friends. So, my interest in model railroads started at age 42!

It was fun learning about all the details of railroad equipment, and I got a lot of pleasure doing extensive detailing of those blue-box kits, painting and decaling them in all the bright roads that existed, mostly Western roads. C&NW is my favorite road. Being a member of a club has been a great asset to me. Other members' knowledge and skills can accelerate the learning curve for complex model railroad operations, and the camaraderie is pleasant. I have gone on many railfan trips with them, and the thousands of pictures taken helped me create truly prototypical models. The 4x8 plywood is long gone; I have 1,200-plus pieces of rolling stock and not one inch of track in my house. How can you compete with a large club layout?

It was in modeling railroads that I discovered my love of scratchbuilding. I have scratchbuilt hundreds of structures for my club, scores of rolling stock (many of which have won prizes at C&NWHs conventions and WISE Division meets), a bunch of circus wagons, and the one locomotive I needed to finish my Master Model Railroader® — a Whitcomb 44-tonner in C&NW paint. I have a special interest in 1890s railroading, and many of my freight cars were scratchbuilt in accordance with photos from that period.

The way I looked at layout construction was inspired by George Selios' Franklin & South Manchester. The intricacy of detail is what I think makes for a special layout. Even though I model in HO standard gauge, I love looking at what narrow gauge modelers have done. Their craftsmanship is a standard to which I aspire. Pictures of some of the things I have done are on the Facebook page of the METRO Model Railroad Club.

I have given several clinics on modeling to my club and have written a number of construction articles for the model railroad press. I enjoy telling the world about my love of modeling and want people to understand that model railroads and toy trains are two very different things. I really want to encourage others to attempt scratchbuilding, as the creative process can bring a real sense of achievement and fulfillment that building a kit cannot attain. The NMRA's Achievement Program broadens your view and sharpens your skills in that area.

I am also an avid historian, especially relating to railroads and the growth of the United States, with more historical books, especially on trains, than I have shelving for. As for the future, I am building models with my young grandsons, hoping they will find the pleasure I found in them.



My thanks go out to Bill Stadler, Don Laubenstein, Jim Bartelt, and other members of the METRO Club for teaching me the intricacies of model railroading, and to Dan Larkee for quickly supplying the materials that I have needed. Also, thanks to Dave Poquette, WISE's AP chairman, for his encouragement and for making my MMR® journey easier and more pleasurable.

Certificates Earned Ray Meyer, MMR® #779

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

ACHIEVEMENT PROGRAM

NMRA AP CERTIFICATE REPORT DECEMBER 2024

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