

NMRA BULLETIN

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changes in Region officer infor-
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secy@nmra.org

2025 NMRA National Convention Dates and National Train Show Reservations:
July 14-19, 2025 – Novi, Michigan <https://nmra2025.com/>
Train Show Booth Reservations—Jenny Hendricks Registrar • P.O. Box 1328, Soddy Daisy, TN 37384-1328
423-892-2846 • ntsreg@nmra.org
• 2026 Chattanooga, Tennessee • 2027 Tacoma, Washington

rev 3/30/25

ACHIEVEMENT PROGRAM

NMRA AP CERTIFICATE REPORT

MARCH 2025

GOLDEN SPIKE

Australasian Region

Jim Gifford, Hallet Cove, South Australia, Australia

Bob Bevan, Mallala, South Australia, Australia

Mid-Continent Region

Kim Hornbaker, Bonaparte, Iowa

Pacific Northwest Region

Ryan Matthews, Fairbanks, Alaska

James Durst, Fairbanks, Alaska

Robert Murstig, Kennewick, Washington

Sunshine Region

Geoffrey Duncan, Ponte Vedra, Florida

MASTER BUILDER - MOTIVE POWER

Australasian Region

Peter Kendall, Essendon, Victoria, Australia

MASTER BUILDER - CARS

Lone Star Region

C. Randall Wilson, Kingwood, Texas

MASTER BUILDER - STRUCTURES

Australasian Region

Jim Gifford, Hallet Cove, South Australia, Australia

Mid-Eastern Region

Alan Balma, Williamsburg, Virginia

Pacific Northwest Region

Chris Carsons, Vancouver, Washington

Pacific Southwest Region

Chuck Molnar, Del Mar, California

MASTER BUILDER - SCENERY

Australasian Region

Jim Gifford, Hallet Cove, South Australia, Australia

Midwest Region

Bryan Wichmann, Port Washington, Wisconsin

North Central Region

Steve Weber, Beverly Hills, Michigan

Pacific Northwest Region

James Durst, Fairbanks, Alaska

Alan Armbruster, Fairbanks, Alaska

Lawrence Ellison, Fairbanks, Alaska

Sunshine Region

Kevin A. Paige Sr., Ponte Vedra, Florida

MASTER BUILDER - PROTOTYPE MODELS

Lone Star Region

Darrell Cowles, Watauga, Texas

Pacific Northwest Region

James Durst, Fairbanks, Alaska

MODEL RAILROAD ENGINEER - CIVIL

Australasian Region

Jim Gifford, Hallet Cove, South Australia, Australia

Mid-Eastern Region

Jim Fisher, Bel Air, Maryland

Pacific Southwest Region

Chuck Molnar, Del Mar, California

MODEL RAILROAD ENGINEER - ELECTRICAL

Australasian Region

Jim Gifford, Hallet Cove, South Australia, Australia

David Teague, Paralowie, South Australia, Australia

Lone Star Region

Eric Smith, Hurst, Texas

Midwest Region

Timothy E. Jones, Galesburg, Illinois

Pacific Northwest Region

James Durst, Fairbanks, Alaska

Alan Armbruster, Fairbanks, Alaska

Sunshine Region

Kevin A. Paige Sr., Ponte Vedra, Florida

CHIEF DISPATCHER

Australasian Region

Ian Barnes, Batemans Bay, New South Wales, Australia

Mid-Central Region

Frank Trocchia, Fairlawn, Ohio

Mid-Eastern Region

Timothy J. Palmer, Malaga, New Jersey

Bradley Jones, Shelby, North Carolina

Danny L. Peele, Sanford, North Carolina

Midwest Region

Mark Willmering, Wauwatosa, Wisconsin

North Central Region

John A. Campbell, Traverse City, Michigan

Pacific Northwest Region

James Durst, Fairbanks, Alaska

Izzak Shaw, Fairbanks, Alaska

James Farnham, Fairbanks, Alaska

ASSOCIATION OFFICIAL

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Philip Hottmann, Verona, Wisconsin

Northeastern Region

Bruce Robinson, Sandown, New Hampshire

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Carter Jastram, Columbus, Ohio

Mid-Eastern Region

Joe Skorch, Kannapolis, North Carolina

Midwest Region

Mark Willmering, Wauwatosa, Wisconsin

David Dingman, Madison, Wisconsin

MODEL RAILROAD AUTHOR

Mid-Central Region

Barbara Soward, Louisville, Kentucky

Pacific Northwest Region

Keith Nore, North Pole, Alaska

Pacific Southwest Region

Pat Raymer, La Crescenta, California

Rocky Mountain Region

Cameron LaFleur, Clearfield, Utah

MASTER MODEL RAILROADER®

MMR® #790 Peter Kendall, Essendon, Victoria, Australia

MMR® #791 Ian Barnes, Batemans Bay, New South Wales, Australia

MMR® #792 Kenneth Hanawalt, McMurray, Pennsylvania

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.

JIM MURPHY

EARNs

MASTER MODEL RAILROADER® #783

The first Berkshire Short Line Rail Road started in the 1950s in an apartment in Holyoke, Massachusetts, with Marx 0-27 tinplate under the tree. A local hardware store sold used magazines, and next to the *Popular Mechanics* were *Model Railroader* and *Railroad Model Craftsman* issues for 5¢ each. There went my allowance.

My city was home to many textile and paper mills with a neat passenger depot all waiting to be modeled. This aging New England mill city and its manufacturing have been my lifetime inspiration for the structures on the layout. Boston & Maine and New Haven railroads provided full passenger and freight service to the city. The era saw both steam and diesels side-by-side.

The original layout was a piece of plywood with fiber-tie flex track under my bed. An Athearn Hustler and later a Varney Dockside negotiated the painfully tight curves. Structures could be no taller than three inches.

By ninth grade, our YMCA was gifted a large amount of American Flyer track and rolling stock. The “Y” recruited teenagers and some very patient adults until a model train club was formed. The roar of tinplate on plywood was music to our ears. Teenage enthusiasm led to a basement empire of roadbed cut with a keyhole saw, sawdust grass, lichen trees, and cardstock structures!

That club started a lifelong interest. We were to build models of structures in our hometown for that layout. Many years have passed, and my friend Duncan took photos and drawings of our B&M station for me. The model took First Place—Structures at an MER convention. It will be donated and permanently displayed in our home city museum.

Two founding members are still involved with trains over 60 years later. I moved to HO, and Duncan went to the real Maine two-footers at the WWFRR Museum.

Our adult advisors were also Pioneer Valley Live Steamers members, so S-scale was supplemented by learning 1½-inch-to-a-foot scale. We learned real tracklaying, ballasting, welding, brazing, and operating machine tools. My first car project was a



Lou Sassi photo

¾-inch scale steel caboose that ran on an elevated trestle track.

After college, I spent years on the road, engineering and constructing major projects in the chemical industry. We lived in many places, including Macon, Georgia; Chattanooga, Tennessee; and Merrimack, New Hampshire, finally settling in Cary, North Carolina. Clubs in the Macon hobby shop, the Choo-Choo, the Bedford Boomers, Carolina Piedmont Division, and other locations, even Santiago de Chile, have made these travels so special because of the friends I've made.

I brought simple kits with me while on consulting assignments and built them in motel rooms. I looked for something more of a challenge and ran across South River Model Works, Fine Scale Miniatures, and Ipswich Hobbies. Constructing one of these great kits will make a very skilled modelmaker out of you.

Back in North Carolina, the current BSLRR was started from my son's Boy Scout project of a finished attic family room. It became an 18x29-foot train room. We set up the Boomer modules, craftsman kits from road trips, and rolling stock accumulated from 49 states and a few foreign countries. Dan Fisher developed a layout design used for over 30 years now with minimal revisions. Do it right the first time.

We added more benchwork, track, cars, locomotives, structures, scenery, and especially electrical equipment, with help from Will, Bill, and Dan. Realistic backdrop areas were painted by my artistic wife, Nancy.

The layout focal point is the city of Holyoke and the industrial water-power canals. The layout features a double-track main line with an emphasis on passenger operations. All local trains offer express service for LCL and refrigerated dairy and brewery. Twenty-eight lineside industries provide the peddler freights plenty of work.

Through trains originate in a unique eleven-track, 90-car capacity sliding staging yard, possibly the longest (eight feet) around. All tracks have a positive, verified locking mechanism on both ends of the track.

Duck-unders are not desired as we age, so access to an adjacent storage closet was a problem. A notable safety feature is a lift-up section to provide access to the room. It has stand-up headroom and a self-latching, positive locking device, as featured in the February 2017 *Model Railroader Magazine*.

Documenting the sliding yard and lift-up section for our Division and Region newsletters and publication in a national magazine led to my Author AP Certificate.

The first AP certificate was Association Volunteer. The most fun hours were spent

thanks to my scoutmaster, Bob, as a Boy Scout counselor for the Railroading merit badge. The additional time came from serving on an NMRA Standards committee. With amazing help from our Carolina Piedmont members, I was a Division official and convention clinician chairman; thank you, Gene.

We all try to take photos of our layout progress. I wanted to see how close my scenes could be to my prototypes. Later, Lou Sassi offered to take shots to appear in the 2015 and 2016 Walther's Catalogs. Preparing for the photos encouraged the completion of the Scenery AP.

Convention layout tours (and the need for running trains!) made the Electrical AP necessary. Thanks to Dan for all the help in tracing all the bugs that have crept in over the years.

I really enjoy scratchbuilding, which we all did by necessity during our early days in the hobby. I also built the Ambroid 5000-series kits to sharpen my skills. For my Master Builder - Cars Certificate, I built a reefer, depressed-center flatcar, and caboose. Construction materials were wood, styrene, and brass. For a "New Tracks Modeling" Build-Along series, I interior-detailed a Labelle Business Car kit to fulfill the AP requirement for building a merit award passenger car.

During all this time, enough points added up for me to qualify for Structures and Cars.

At conventions and trips, I assisted our hosts with operations duties. Keep your logbook with you! Special thanks to Mike, Charlie, and Bob for enjoyable hours on

their layouts to finish up Chief Dispatcher hours.

The most important action an MMR can take is to encourage others to follow. My home workroom has been used for many AP meetings. Weekly build and "BS" sessions have encouraged Division members to finish models for evaluation, pursue certificates, and get the paperwork finished. Keep pushing!

Certificates Earned **Jim Murphy, MMR® #783**

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

MMR EARNED

PETER KENDALL

EARNs

MASTER MODEL RAILROADER® #790

Inspired by the steam era and narrow gauge railways, model railroading has been a fantastic hobby for me for the last 30 years. I joined the NMRA about ten years ago, and it has introduced me to many like-minded modelers. Their knowledge and experience with model railroading have really helped me develop and diversify my skills in the hobby. Over that period, I have completed numerous layouts, mainly in HOn30, On30, and On18.

In recent years, I have focused on creating portable exhibition layouts that are slightly different from the usual. My freelance modeling style involves exotic locations, waterfront scenes, a variety of lighting solutions, and interesting storylines that justify particular visual themes. Some layouts represent railways from Southern Australia, Tasmania, and Sri Lanka, along with novelty layouts displaying "haunted" and "underground" scenes. I particularly enjoy talking to members of the public during these exhibitions. Explaining the hobby's technical, historical, and artistic aspects is a great way to highlight model railroading's diversity of interests.

Like many modelers undertaking the Master Model Railroader challenge, working toward the required certificates has taken me outside my comfort zone. I have needed to learn new skills and seek ad-



vice, particularly in areas where I have less experience. Great Australian modelers, including MMR® Peter MacDonald, Bill Black, MMR® Laurie Green, and Grant McAdam, have been a great source of advice and inspiration. David O'Hearn, our Australasian Region Manager, has also been very helpful in explaining some of the technicalities of the MMR® process.

Challenging and frustrating at times, ultimately, my involvement with the

MMR® journey has been a very enjoyable and satisfying experience.

Certificates Earned **Peter Kendall, MMR® #790**

Association Official
Model Railroad Author
Master Builder – Motive Power
Model Railroad Engineer – Electrical
Master Builder – Structures
Master Builder – Cars
Master Builder – Scenery

KEN HANAWALT

EARNs

MASTER MODEL RAILROADER® #792

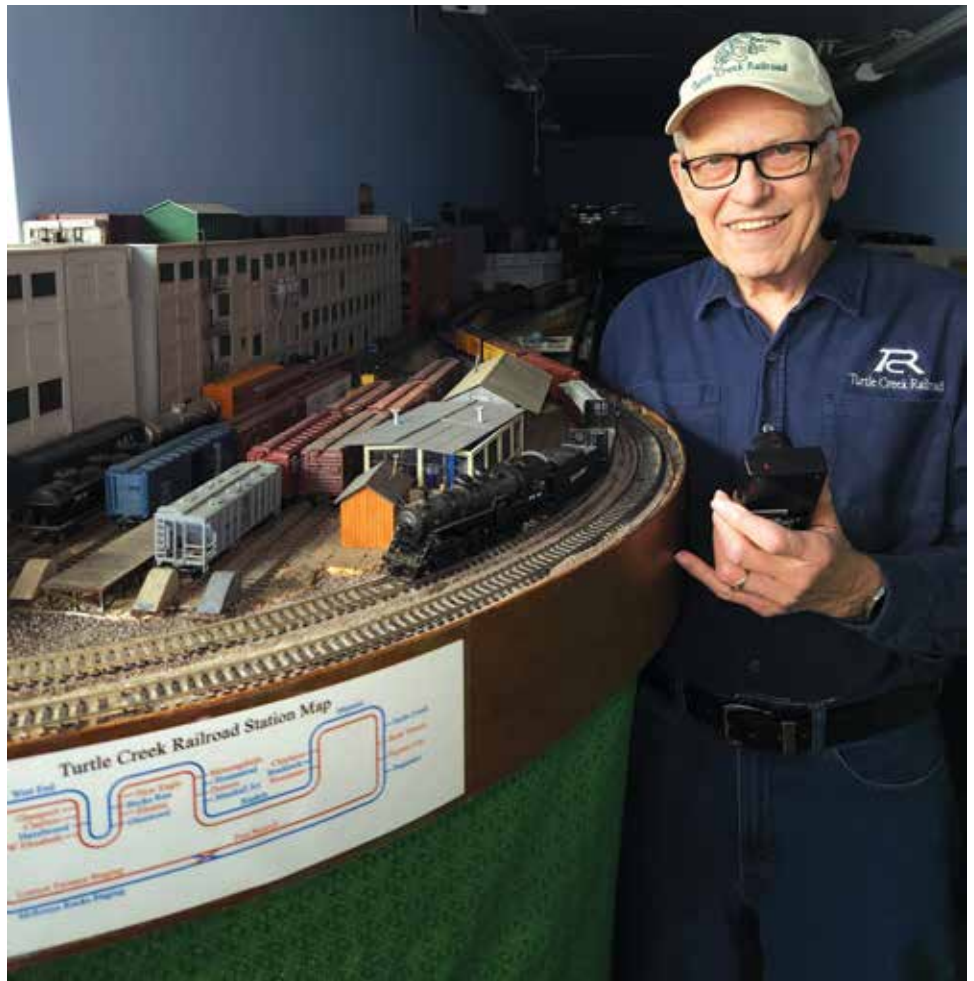
I grew up in Altoona, Pennsylvania, and became interested in model railroading at an early age. My mother told me that before I could walk, my great-grandmother would push me in a stroller to the back of her property to watch Pennsylvania Railroad steam engines on their way to the Horseshoe Curve. Every year at Christmas, my great-grandfather and grand-uncle would build a large layout in the dining room and allow me to operate a throttle and blow the whistle. I have one of those trains, a standard gauge Ives that is 124 years old.

When I was about 10 years old, our neighbor George Burkett had a garage business around the corner from my parents' house. He helped maintain all the neighbors' autos and their kids' bikes. I was in his shop one day and noticed an HO-scale PRR sloped-back tender 0-4-0 steamer on his desk.

When I asked about it, he became my model railroad mentor and helped me into the hobby. He gave me my first model railroad magazine and guided me to build my first model (which is still on my layout — a small elevated crossing shanty). Many of the early magazines in my collection have my name written on them — written by the woman who ran a corner store nearby and each month made sure to save one of the magazines for each of us.

When I was a little older, in those days of one-car families and distrust of banks, I walked downtown to turn in the collection money from my paper route, deliver my parents' cash to pay their utility bills, and do light shopping for my mom. I always took detours to watch the trains switching cars in the alleys behind businesses and to stand on the pedestrian bridge over the station and yard tracks, to let the steam engines run underneath me and envelop me in their smoke. Although I could ride my bike up to Horseshoe Curve and count the cars behind the trains, the local switcher in town focused my interest.

So my first layouts in my parents' basement were built on a narrow table, sometimes based on bits from magazine



layouts or puzzles, but always designed for switching complexity. I would put down track and operate the layout for a few months, then save the design in a notebook and replace the design with another.

As with most modelers, model railroading had to wait in my college years, first years of marriage, new jobs, and space restrictions. But when I had the room and funds, my layout was built almost entirely as a collection of my old, saved switching puzzles.

I became an NMRA member in 1963 and began to find friends in MCR Division 2. I built some Div2 modules and participated in shows at shopping centers and other spaces. Eventually, I was the Chief Clerk, *Flyer* Editor, Assistant Superintendent, and then Superintendent. I built several switching contest modules for local conventions and gave them to folks just starting. One of my NMRA friends was Carl Volkwein (RIP) who owned a local music store and

needed help with wiring and electronics. Together, we built a large collection of NTRAK modules in a layout that wound through his living and dining room. Carl followed me as Superintendent, and we worked together with a talented group of Div2 members to put on the National Convention in 1990. The NTRAK modules and the start of my Turtle Creek Railroad (TCR) were on the layout tours, and an operating session was provided on the TCR. Currently, I meet twice a week with NMRA member Tom Frommeyer, who helps me with maintenance, operating sessions, and new layout features. My usual advice to folks starting on layouts is to include a friend who will meet regularly and help you keep the project going.

Throughout my career in model railroading, I have tried to pay back the friendship and support I received from George Burkett by helping other members and non-members, particularly youngsters, get started in modeling, electronics, computer programming, 3D

printing, and other interests like music performance. And there is no doubt I have benefited personally from the effort.

I am writing this the day after an operating session in my basement where two of the operators were just a little older than my grandchildren. Last week, four youngsters were here with their parents for an operating session with six of my regular operators to help them. Two days a week, a 10-year-old neighbor (who was pictured in a magazine article about the TCR) stops by to participate in and learn about modeling. A FreeMo module in my basement entryway, with a full car-card operating system, was built several years ago as a joint project with another neighbor, now 14. My newest recruit is a very enthusiastic 9-year-old who fits right in with adult operators and who already can manage to switch with car cards.

The National Achievement Program Chairman told me after the 1990 convention that I had met most of the requirements and that I should submit the paperwork for MMR certificates. I declined because I did not see how the program

met my primary interest in helping new model railroaders and current members. However, the current Div2 Achievement Chairman, Dennis Vaccaro, convinced me that my participation in the program would encourage other members to participate more fully in the hobby. Dennis was right; I have enjoyed the extra effort, shown others my new models, and learned some new things for myself as well.

Certificates Earned
Ken Hanawalt, MMR® #790

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

The NMRA now accepts

PayPal™

Use it for new memberships, membership renewals,
books, donations, the National convention...
anything and everything in our online store!

THREE BIG BENEFITS OF NMRA MEMBERSHIP:



Those are the discounts that manufacturers and hobby shops in our Partnership Program are giving us right now. Partners like Micro-Mark®, Model Rectifier Corporation®, Badger Airbrush®, Unreal Details®, Hot Wire Foam Factory®, Logic Rail™ Technologies. And over 30 more companies. It's savings that can actually pay for your membership!

And are you taking advantage of our other big benefits? Like 150+ national convention clinic videos. Or over 15 hours of "how-to" videos produced by the biggest names in model railroading videos. Or our directory of model railroad layouts all over the world that you can visit. The list goes on and on.

If you haven't visited www.nmra.org lately, you're missing out on some really great stuff. Starting with a boatload of discounts!



We make it more fun.