



NMRA BULLETIN

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HEADQUARTERS

WHO DO I CONTACT...?

Members needing to make address changes, request back issues, or replacement issues of *SCALE RAILS* should contact the staff at the national headquarters office in Chattanooga, Tennessee, at (423) 892-2846 or by email at nmrahq@aol.com.

IT'S TIME TO DUST OFF THE PASS EXCHANGE PROGRAM

By Brad Morneau, Program Coordinator

Among the many member programs the NMRA had instituted over the years, the Pass program was, at one time, one of the more popular. Those of you with a little "snow on the roof" probably know what Rail Passes are, but for those who don't: Rail Passes were cards issued to employees and customers of the railroads that allowed for free travel and/or access to railroad property. It entitled the bearer to ride trains, often with limitations stated on the back of the pass itself. And because we modelers tend to emulate "all things railroad," we, too, developed our own Passes, lettered for our miniature transportation systems, and began exchanging them with other modelers.

In its day the NMRA Bulletin facilitated the exchange of passes between members by publishing a "Pass of the Month," along with names and addresses of members wishing to exchange passes. It wasn't unusual for modelers to have large collections of passes from model pikes all over the world. Originally modelers exchanged passes by standard mail, but in later years passes were emailed as bitmaps or other graphic files. Passes are even judged and given awards at the National convention.

Why all the history? The NMRA would like to rekindle interest in the Pass program, and we're looking for your help. I would like

to hear from members about the program — let me know if you'd be interested in participating. Also, tell me what you liked about the old program (if you're familiar with it) and what would you like to see changed.

Please email me at bmorneau@kc.rr.com (this is a change from the earlier email address which was incorrect).

ACHIEVEMENT PROGRAM

NMRA AP UPDATE 2006-2007

by G. Patrick Harriman, MMR
AP General Manager

The NMRA's Achievement Program continues to be one of the most exciting and rewarding programs sponsored by the NMRA and it remains extremely healthy in 2007. There are approximately 4,000 participants in the AP database. The numbers increase from three or four to as many as 12 each month. Achievement Program participation also seems to grow each year. Just as an example, in 2003–2004, there were seven new MMRs and in 2006–2007 nearly three times as many MMRs were earned.

In 2006–2007, there were 102 Golden Spike Awards earned, 248 Certificates of Achievement earned, and 19 individuals were recognized as Master Model Railroaders. The category with the greatest number of Certificates of Achievement was Association Volunteer followed by Scenery, Structures, and Author. AP Certificates were earned in every category over the course of the year. The most active month for the Achievement Program seems to be May with more Golden Spikes and more AP Certificates being earned than any other month. What may not be readily apparent, and should be, is the high esteem that his or her fellow NMRA members hold for the recipient at the time an AP Certificate is presented.

Good work should be recognized and the Achievement Program makes that possible. As time goes by, modeling skills improve and greater participation in the hobby and the organization occurs. Isn't it rewarding to be recognized for that effort, whatever your interest in the hobby? Participation in the AP is a challenge, albeit a personal one. It is not, nor has it ever been, a contest or a competition.

Each year, the AP has recognized region AP managers, usually at the NMRA National Convention, whose region was the "Most Improved Region" and the "Best Performing Region." The selection is based on AP activity the year of the recognition compared to the previous year's activity tak-

ing in consideration the total number of NMRA members in that region. Plaques are presented to the AP managers individually and to the region. For the year 2006–2007, North Central Region AP Manager Larry Wolohon, MMR, was presented a special plaque for "Most Improved Region" and Mid Continent Region AP Manager Marty Vaughn, MMR, was presented a special plaque for "Best Performing Region." Larry, Marty, the North Central Region, and the Mid Continent Region should be congratulated for their immediate past efforts in the Achievement Program.

If you are not involved in the AP, contact your Division or Region AP manager and have them tell you a little about the program. If you want to get more out of your NMRA membership, much more than you can imagine, look at the AP requirements and you will find that you are already probably qualified, or close to qualification, in one or two of the 11 categories. The "dreaded paperwork" is absolutely painless, and there are many people in the program willing to assist you over that small hurdle. Your involvement in the Achievement Program will make the greatest hobby in the world even more fun. After all, that is what model railroading is all about — having fun. 🚂

NMRA AP CERTIFICATE REPORT

*Indicates first Certificate of Achievement

AUGUST 2007

GOLDEN SPIKE

Mid-Central Region

Karl Emler, Wooster, Ohio

MASTER BUILDER - CARS

Mid-Continent Region

Charles Stapleton, Kansas City, Kansas

Northeastern Region

Andrew Wasowicz, Ridgewood, New York

MASTER BUILDER — STRUCTURES

Midwest Region

David Leider, Prospect Heights, Illinois

Thousand Lakes Region

John Hotvet, MMR, Minneapolis, Minnesota

MASTER BUILDER — SCENERY

Mid-Central Region

Charles Buschman, Crestwood, Kentucky

Mid-Central Region

Robert Widman,* Crestwood, Kentucky

Midwest Region

David Leider, Prospect Heights, Illinois

Pacific Coast Region

Edward Schaezner, Coquille, Oregon

MASTER BUILDER — PROTOTYPE MODELER

Midwest Region

David Leider, Prospect Heights, Illinois

MODEL RAILROAD ENGINEER — CIVIL

Lone Star Region

Tom Crosthwait, San Antonio, Texas

Mid-Continent Region

Charles Heying, Overland Park, Kansas

MODEL RAILROAD ENGINEER — ELECTRICAL

Mid-Central Region

Robert Kuchler, Louisville, Kentucky

Pacific Coast Region

Edward Schaezner, Coquille, Oregon

CHIEF DISPATCHER

Lone Star Region

Kelly Russell, Houston, Texas

Mid-Continent Region

Charles Heying, Overland Park, Kansas

ASSOCIATION OFFICIAL

Northeastern Region

Kevin Feeney, New Canaan, Connecticut

Pacific Northwest Region

Dirk Kruysman,* Roseburg, Oregon

Pacific Northwest Region

Kevin Oleson, Walla Walla, Washington

ASSOCIATION VOLUNTEER

Mid-Central Region

Robert Weinheimerm Charleston, West Virginia

Niagara Frontier Region

Walter Reid,* Mississauga, Ontario

Northeastern Region

Donald Straub,* Riverside, Connecticut

MODEL RAILROAD AUTHOR

Pacific Coast Region

Byron Henderson, San Jose, California



MMRS EARNED

JIM ZINSER, MMR #397

Photo by Andi Zinser

My journey to become a Master Model Railroader both began and ended with an NMRA National Convention in Detroit... just not the same one. It all started when I volunteered to help put on the 1978 Dearborn (Detroit) convention, although I didn't really know it at the time. When it was all over, I got a letter from the convention chairman, thanking me for volunteering and informing me that my service made me eligible for points that could be used toward the Volunteer Certificate in something called the NMRA Achievement Program... whatever that was. I filed the letter away (fortunately) where it lay forgotten for 10 years.

At the time of the 1978 convention, I was relatively new to the hobby. In 1976, I began construction of my first layout, the Copper Valley Railway, a freelanced line serving the copper mining district of Michigan's Upper Peninsula. I soon realized that going it alone based only on what I read in books and magazines wasn't enough. I needed to see real-live model railroads and learn from real-live model railroaders. So in the same year, I joined the Redford Model Railroad Club and the NMRA. My first layout benefited greatly from both. But, there was only so much I could do with a 4x8-foot railroad built in the attic of the

upstairs flat where my wife, Andrea (Andi), and I began our married life.

A move to our first home allowed me to begin a new and larger version of the Copper Valley. Around the same time, I started attending regional conventions. As my skills increased, Larry Wolohon, a friend from the Redford Club and, at the time, the North Central Region's contest chairman, decided I had become good enough to be a contest judge. I always turned down his invitations, saying I'd rather go on layout tours. Besides, I'd never even entered a model into a contest, so how could I possibly qualify as a judge? Larry's assurance that one need not be a contestant before becoming a judge went unheeded. His arguments that being a judge would teach me to be a better contest entrant someday fell on deaf ears.

Then one day something as simple as the common cold changed all that. I was attending a regional convention when I felt the symptoms coming on. By Saturday, I realized that I didn't feel well enough to go out on a drizzly, windy, chilly Michigan afternoon to see layouts. I'd be better off staying inside. I didn't just want to sit in the hotel room doing nothing. Again, Larry suggested that I try being a contest judge. This time I accepted. Trying hard not to breathe on my fellow judges, I made it through the afternoon. Despite how I felt, I found that I enjoyed the experience immensely. Larry was right, I learned a lot about how models were judged and it gave me the courage to enter my first contest model at the next regional

convention. Scoring 100 points with that first model also gave me courage to keep entering models and to learn a lot more about the Achievement Program to earn some of those coveted modeling certificates.

However, it was the Volunteer Certificate that was first to go on my wall in 1988, the result of those points received for working on the 1978 Detroit convention, plus a lot more judging and other volunteering over the years. While my contest-entering "career" began with a structure, ironically enough, the Master Builder—Structures certificate was the last one I earned, even though structure building is one of my favorite aspects of the hobby! Between those two would come others for Motive Power, Electrical, Scenery, Author, and Association Official. Along the way I learned a lot and, I feel, became a better modeler for it. And thanks to the AP Program, I've had the opportunity to share what I've learned with others. It's also afforded me the privilege of giving back something to the organization that's given so much to me. Perhaps best of all, it's allowed me to form cherished friendships with fellow modelers literally around the world.

The journey that started quite unintentionally 29 years ago at the 1978 NMRA Detroit convention finally came to an end just in time for this year's NMRA National Convention in Detroit. The circle is now complete.

There are so many people who helped make the journey possible I couldn't begin to name them all here. However, there are two I must single out. Larry Wolohon, MMR, who is now the NCR's Achievement Program Chairman, deserves my undying gratitude for his encouragement and his nagging in getting me through the process over the last 29 years. My wife Andi also deserves very special thanks. Without her understanding and support I never could have made it. Without her benevolence, the third version of the Copper Valley Railway would not be rapidly eating up nearly all the basement in our present home.

Twenty-nine years is a long time to make any journey, especially one that ends, in a sense, where it began. Yet, it was a journey well worth taking, and I'd do it all again in a heartbeat — maybe just a little bit faster!

Jim has earned certificates for Association Volunteer, Master Builder—Structures, Master Builder—Motive Power, Model Railroad Engineer—Electrical, Master Builder—Scenery, Model Railroad Author, and Association Official.



CHARLES R. HEYING, MMR #399

Professionally, I have degrees in economics and business. I am married to my wonderful wife, Nadine, have six children, 11 grandchildren, and two great grandchildren. Like almost everyone else in my generation, my rail experience began with O gauge. I would purchase old, broken models so I could repair and paint them only to trade them for better equipment. Over time, my skills improved.

Heart by-pass surgery a little over two years ago nearly ended my model-building days. My hand shook to the point that I could not even write my name. Along came three of my dear friends that would not let me give up. With their help and encouragement, together we built models, switches, and everything else needed for the certificates.

I consider earning my MMR an honor equivalent to earning my Eagle Scout badge. I see it as a great moment in my life. And as such, I solemnly promise that I will try to assist others in furthering their skills in the hobby as these three friends helped me.

Charles has earned certificates for Master Builder—Cars, Master Builder—Structures, Master Builder—Scenery, Model Railroad Engineer—Civil, Model Railroad Engineer—Electrical, Dispatcher, Volunteer, and a Golden Spike.

MEMORIAL

KAREN PIRZCHALSKI 1952–2007

By Tim Blackwell, editor *Cowcatcher Round Up*

Karen Pirzchalski had a pact with her husband, Stan, that they would spend about three evenings each week working on their HO scale MDAK Railroad at the couple's suburban home in Colleyville, Texas.

Together, they built the MDAK into a sprawling 27x67-foot empire that became one of Dallas/Fort Worth's largest model

railroads. Time on the layout was self-prescribed therapy to help the couple forget about the daily stresses of life and ongoing medical problems.

Last December, at the MDAK's annual open house that benefits charity, Karen beamed at the transformation of what once was a "Plywood Central" to a nearly fully scenicked slice of steam-era mountain railroading. She was excited at donations the event generated that day.

"We just really enjoy doing this," she said as a dozen or so friends, neighbors, and guests observed the railroad. "It is so wonderful to see how much the kids enjoy looking at the trains."

Her giving nature, courage, and zest for life largely overshadowed her 22-year fight with cancer, which claimed Karen's life at age 55 on July 15, friends said.

Nearly 350 people attended a mass at Good Shepherd Catholic Community in Colleyville to celebrate a life that included a successful career in the banking business and contributions to many civic organizations and charities.

Karen — born on May 12, 1952, in Fort Worth — was an active member of the NMRA for 16 years and regularly attended national conventions with Stan. She served as treasurer for the Lone Star Region's annual conventions in 2001 and 2005, and was co-registrar along with Stan at the 2005 meet.

Until her health declined in recent months, she attended quarterly division meetings and joined the Layout Design SIG.

The MDAK's annual holiday open houses were an example of Karen's giving

nature and special interest in the hobby, Stan said. "She not only gave to charity, but everyone who visited was impressed with her knowledge of the techniques in the hobby. Obviously, they were impressed with the entire layout. She was an ambassador to the hobby."

Stan remembers early in their marriage when he told Karen that he wanted to build a small layout. "Her face lit up," he said in a September 2004 interview with the *Cowcatcher Round Up*. "She was glad to see that I was interested in that, because she was too."

Most of Karen's contributions to the MDAK were building structures, ballasting track, cleaning rails, and populating the layout. She was the MDAK's "people person," a testimonial to her outgoing lifestyle and love for helping others, Stan said.

When not railroading, the Pirzchalski's trained Eucharistic ministers at their church and hosted singers who performed at the Fort Worth opera.

Despite nine surgeries throughout her lengthy illness, Karen remained optimistic until weeks before her death. Friends said that on the rare occasions when she talked about her struggles, she reminded them about the numerous times she overcame the disease, and that she would persevere.

Friend Doug Watts, who met the Pirzchalski's in 2001 while serving together on the board for the LSR's 50th Anniversary Convention, said Karen often exhibited encouragement, love, enthusiasm, positive thought, and courage to those around her. "She demonstrated her strength daily, always had a smile, and helped others through their own life challenges," he said.

