

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

ACHIEVEMENT PROGRAM

NMRA AP CERTIFICATE REPORT

JUNE 2015

GOLDEN SPIKE

Australasian Region

Graeme Goodsell, Gordon, NSW

Mid-Eastern Region

Dale Ridgeway, Bishopville, Maryland

Southeastern Region

Peter Mader, Greer, South Carolina
Gerald Meyers, Pickens, South Carolina

Sunshine Region

E. Paul Reid, Valrico, Florida
Allen Scott, Lake City, Florida

MASTER BUILDER — MOTIVE POWER

Australasian Region

Graeme Goodsell, Gordon, NSW

MASTER BUILDER — CARS

Australasian Region

Graeme Goodsell, Gordon, NSW
Robert McLear, Kingaroy, Queensland

Pacific Northwest Region

Charles Ricketts, Olympia, Washington

MASTER BUILDER — STRUCTURES

Australasian Region

Graeme Goodsell, Gordon, NSW
Robert McLear, Kingaroy, Queensland

Southeastern Region

George Gilbert, Nashville, Tennessee

MASTER BUILDER — SCENERY

Australasian Region

Ron Solly, Evanston Gardens, SA

MASTER BUILDER — PROTOTYPE MODELS

Mid-Continent Region

Donald Wetmore, Papillion, Nebraska

MODEL RAILROAD ENGINEER — CIVIL

Australasian Region

Mike Bartlett, Rainbow Flat, NSW
Chris Minahan, Hallidays Point, NSW

Mid-Continent Region

Donald Wetmore, Papillion, Nebraska

MODEL RAILROAD ENGINEER — ELECTRICAL

Mid-Continent Region

Donald Wetmore, Papillion, Nebraska

Midwest Region

Bill Drzal, West Chicago, Illinois

CHIEF DISPATCHER

Australasian Region

Max Wright, Blackwood, South Australia

Mid-Central Region

James Peters, Sagamore Hills, Ohio

Sunshine Region

Kenneth Farnham, West Melbourne, Florida

ASSOCIATION OFFICIAL

Australasian Region

Graham Young, Buderim, Queensland

Midwest Region

Joe Russ, New Berlin, Wisconsin

North Central Region

Scott Kremer, Northville, Michigan

ASSOCIATION VOLUNTEER

Australasian Region

Erik Bennett, Bayview, New South Wales
Rev. Dr. Vern Cracknell, Lower Mitcham, South Australia
Peter Jackson, Aldgate, South Australia

Mid-Central Region

Eric Zimmerman, Dayton, Ohio

Mid-Continent Region

Brad Sloan, Dixon, Missouri

Northeastern Region

Andy Reynolds, Brewster, Massachusetts

MODEL RAILROAD AUTHOR

Australasian Region

Graeme Goodsell, Gordon, NSW

MASTER MODEL RAILROADER

William Piercy, Fort Wayne, Indiana MMR 560

George Gilbert, Nashville, Tennessee MMR 561

Charles Ricketts, Olympia, Washington MMR 562

Peter Jackson, Aldgate, South Australia MMR 563

MMR EARNED

THOMAS OXNARD, MD EARNS MMR # 565

My journey to becoming an MMR started very late in my hobby career. In 2000, my friend Neil Fitch showed me his basement layout and told me that he just had an article about it published in *Railroad Model Craftsman*. I thought that was very impressive. I then began thinking about writing the story of my railroad's creation, and that led to the discovery of the Achievement Program.

Like many, I have memories of the Lionel train under the Christmas tree when I was three. However, I would say the major influence in my loving the hobby was not the train but my father. My father was a doctor, a woodworker, and a talented craftsman



who in the 1950s built a brass rail, S gauge shelf layout that snaked around our stone basement high above my head. I was in awe of those trains, as I was of my father. He never finished the layout before we moved to a new house, and that phase in his life ended.

That move in the late 1950s was a start for my younger brother and me — we now had a large open basement. We accumulated HO trains somehow (I had a newspaper delivery route) and built a “large” layout on two 4x8 sheets of plywood separated by 18 inches and joined by Erector Set bridges. We built plastic structures and plaster mountains and tunnels, learning all the basics. More importantly, I learned how to scratchbuild many structures from balsa wood and to paint and weather them. Many of those came with me and were used on my first layout with my children.

Fast-forward two decades after college, medical school, and the Air Force, and suddenly I had four children. In the 1980s, I started my first family layout after a local merchant at Kimball’s Store in Exeter offered model railroad construction classes. With his instructions, I built a 4x8-foot layout made of Styrofoam on a frame, which was light enough to hang on the wall or be placed on the Ping-Pong table. For the wall-hanging phase, I built a framed Plexiglas cover for protection from some active kids. My pediatric practice was quite busy, but I seemed to find time to build structures and scenery. We had years of fun on that DC layout; it gradually grew to 6x9 feet.

In 1991, I started subscribing to *Model Railroader* and saw what home railroads could become. Finally in 1996, with three of my children safely off to college, I began planning, designing, and building the next layout. I had read enough to know that I should finish the ceiling, floors, and walls after taking out the storage closets and cold cellar and moving the freezer. I decided on a freelanced version of the New Hampshire Division of the Boston & Maine — that is where I lived and spent summers growing up. The construction steadily progressed since woodworking is my hobby, too, and the family knew if I was missing, I was in the basement.

I designed the layout for operations from the start but had never operated on anyone’s layout. I discovered DCC and never would have built a larger railroad without it. The help from my hobby store (Bob Jeffers) was invaluable with everything, including installing receivers.

I finally joined the NMRA in 1998 when my friend Neil talked about how much fun he had attending the National Conventions. I still did not participate in any conventions or groups and continued to work alone on my layout. I joined the B&M RR Historical Society and learned about the prototype.

In 2002, I had my first open house and participated in our Regional layout tour, Tour de Chooch, started by Bruce Robinson. In 2003, I attended my first operating session at Bruce’s Valley Junction RR. Those two events finally made me aware of other hobbyists and groups in the area, and I have continued to be open on the Tour and for other events and conventions. It is great fun inspiring others and having kids run trains. I thank Rich Bretton for his advice, introducing me to our Seacoast Division, and getting me involved over the past decade. I am always impressed by the wide variety of talents, interests, and knowledge the members have.

After continued refinements and improvements, I wrote my first article about the railroad’s creation, and it appeared in *Model Railroader* in December 2009. I enjoy photographing the progress of projects and have had three more articles published in *MR* and several in our Seacoast Division *Switch Tower*.

An important moment in my journey came when I attended the 2009 NMRA National Convention in Hartford, Connecticut, where I learned how to scratchbuild Fast Tracks turnouts in a hands-on clinic. After that challenge, I have continued to scratchbuild many more parts of my railroad with turnouts, hand laid track, and structures.

When retirement came in 2011, I launched into bigger projects and expansions that became the source of more published articles. I changed my railroad from an interesting oval to a larger point-to-loop design and closer to a prototypically operated railroad. By that time, Bruce was urging me to work on the Achievement Program as he was doing. I started with the Golden Spike that year. An important decision was to enter some of my structures to be judged for the first time at the NER convention in Syracuse, New York, in 2012. I learned the evaluation process with my first two Merit Awards and continued to scratchbuild more structures, one of which won First Place at the 2013 Laconia, New Hampshire, convention.

With much of the work already done over the past 15 years, I started the paper-

work and received my first AP Certificate — Model Railroad Author — in June 2013. I had judges come to my home for a day and received Structures and Scenery Certificates in July 2013. After scratchbuilding more turnouts for an expansion, I received Civil and Electrical. With the help of articles sent to me by Don Howd, MMR, and taken from the *NMRA MAGAZINE* (2008) I completed Cars in April 2014. Once I figured out how to build the car frame with a jig, I constructed some highly detailed cars.

Over the decade, I had been accumulating hours and learning to operate at layouts in my area and conventions. Participating in operations has helped transform my layout into a railroad. It has created a railroad with not just new structures and scenery, but with more purpose and more “story.” Before finishing my Chief Dispatcher, I successfully held the first operating session on my railroad. For me, that was a big accomplishment. These and so many other things in the hobby would not have been done without the challenge of the Achievement Program.

I now spend a lot of time photographing and scratchbuilding structures and complex factories, which no longer seems so difficult. Most of the skills and techniques that we learn over the years in the hobby and AP result in a great railroad and are never judged. However, learning to scratchbuild and wanting to be judged were key positive milestones in my hobby career.

I owe much to Bruce Robinson, Rich Bretton, Erich Whitney, and other members of the Seacoast Division for urging me on in the process, as well as to Doug Hartwell for stimulating continued ideas for expansions. Of course, I owe a lot to my wife Sally for all those times I “went missing” in the basement. The Division has given me the opportunity to help others as New Hampshire AP Chairman and Secretary. Above all, I dedicate this achievement to my father, who got to enjoy the early years of this journey. Now, I pass it on to my grandson, who lights up the basement and is becoming my best operator.

AP Certificates - Tom Oxnard

Model Railroad Author
Master Builder- Structures
Master Builder- Scenery
Model Railroad Engineer- Civil
Model Railroad Engineer- Electrical
Master Builder- Cars
Chief Dispatcher