

NMRA BULLETIN

DEPARTMENT & PROGRAM MANAGERS

Chief Administrative Officer —
Jenny Hendricks
P.O. Box 1328
Soddy Daisy, TN 37384-1328
O: 423-892-2846 Fax: 423-899-4869
e-mail: hq@nmra.org

Library -
423-892-2846 or nmraops@nmra.org

Education Department Manager —
Michael Hohn, MMR®
Morgantown, WV 26501-4535
+1 (304) 296-6303
e-mail: educate@nmra.org

Howell Day Museum Committee Chair —
Allen Pollock
Jefferson City, MO 65102-0243
H: 573-619-8532
e-mail: museum@nmra.org

Information Technology Department —
Gert 'Speed' Muller
Murphy, TX 75094-3524
+1 (469) 345-0022
e-mail: itmanager@nmra.org

Development & Fund Raising Department
Manager — Alan Anderson
West Jordan, UT 84088 H: 801-613-0801
e-mail: fund@nmra.org

Marketing Consultant
Christina Ganzer Zambri
Somerset, NJ 08873 H: 732-609-5221
e-mail: marketing@nmra.org

Meetings & Trade Show Department
Manager — Bob Amsler
Saint Louis, MO 63111-2338
H: 314-606-6118
Fax: 314-754-2688
e-mail: conv@nmra.org

Publications Department Manager —
Riley Triggs
Austin, TX 78704
(512) 636-3521
e-mail: pubs@nmra.org

Standards and Conformance Department
Manager—Pete Steinmetz
Carlsbad, CA 92008
+1 (760) 943-0590
e-mail: tech-chair@nmra.org

**Have you changed your address or
other membership information?
Notify Headquarters**

**e-mail: hq@nmra.org
Phone: 423-892-2846 (8am–4pm ET)
Mail: P.O. Box 1328
Soddy Daisy TN 37384-1328**

REGION PRESIDENTS

Australasian Region—Graham Young
12 Hickory Court, Buderim QLD 4556
H: 61 7 5479 0339 M: 61 418 364 375
e-mail president@nmra.org

British Region—Jonathan Small, MMR®
Millfield, Vyner Road North, Bidston Hill
Prenton, Merseyside, CH43 7PZ
United Kingdom +44 7976 636592
e-mail: brprez@nmra.org

European Region—Alain Kap, MMR®
Kammerforststrasse 3a
D-54439 SAARBURG, Germany
Phone: +49 6581-603045
Mobile: +352 691-325089
e-mail: erprez@nmra.org

Lone Star Region—Donna Orr
2625 Rolling Meadows Dr.
Rockwall, TX 75087
e-mail: lsrprez@nmra.org
H: (972) 342-8598

Mid-Central Region—David Neff
5479 Chestnut Hill Dr., Willoughby, OH 44094
H: (440) 269-1229 e-mail: mcrprez@nmra.org

Mid-Continent Region — Brad Slone MMR®
PO Box 313, Dixon, MO 65459.
H: 573 308 7144
e-mail: mcorprez@nmra.org

Mid-Eastern Region—Kurt Thompson, MMR®
350 Ternwing Drive, Arnold, MD 21012
410-507-3671 (cell)
e-mail: merprez@nmra.org

Midwest Region—Bob McGeever
309 W Randolph St., Stoughton WI. 53589
H: (608) 873-4529 e-mail: mwrprez@nmra.org

Niagara Frontier Region—Richard Hatton
205 Country Lane, Stayner ON L0M 1S0
705-428-9997 e-mail: nfrprez@nmra.org

North Central Region—David Capron, MMR®
12201 Podunk Ave NE, Greenville, MI 48838
H: (231) 944-8576 e-mail: ncrprez@nmra.org

Northeastern Region—Ed O'Rourke, MMR®
36 Nursery Ln, Syracuse NY 13210
H: (315) 247-0494 e-mail: nerprez@nmra.org

Pacific Coast Region—Frank Markovich, MMR®
1904 Chula Vista Dr., Belmont, CA 94002-3622
H: (408) 505-2727 e-mail: pcrprez@nmra.org

Pacific Northwest Region—Jeff Herrmann
PO Box 1012, Rathdrum, ID 83858
H: (714) 651-3903 e-mail: pnrprez@nmra.org

Pacific Southwest Region—Pat Raymer
2655 El Caminito, La Crescenta, CA 91214
H: (818) 957-7351 e-mail: psrprez@nmra.org

Rocky Mountain Region—Lowell Didas
4894 S. Forest Circle, Taylorsville, UT 84129
801-759-7829. e-mail: rnrprez@nmra.org

Southeastern Region—Roy Masterson
3502 Glendon Dr., Chattanooga, TN 37411-4114
H: (423) 227-0334 e-mail: serprez@nmra.org

Sunshine Region—Jeff Guzowski
4658 N Candlewood Dr.
Beverly Hills, FL 34465
e-mail: ssrprez@nmra.org

Thousand Lakes Region— Jay Manning
7100 Stoney Creek St., Sioux Falls, SD 57106
e-mail: tlrprez@nmra.org

NMRA Canada President—Ed Molenkamp
Edmonton Alberta T5M 2M9
e-mail: presca@nmra.org

**Region Secretaries: send all
changes in Region officer infor-
mation to the NMRA Secretary:
secy@nmra.org**

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NMRA AP CERTIFICATE REPORT DECEMBER 2021 GOLDEN SPIKE

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MASTER MODEL RAILROADER®

MMR® #696 Malcolm H. Houck, Maynard, Massachusetts

AP QUESTIONS: If you have questions about the AP program or requirements, start with your local or Region. If you still have questions, contact Frank Koch at fjkoch@hotmail.com

If you prefer to write, contact Frank at 4769 Silverwood Drive, Batavia, OH 45103.

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MICK MOIGNARD

EARNs

MASTER MODEL RAILROADER® #693

My start in this great hobby was utterly conventional. Apparently, though I was too young to recall, my interest in railways started at a very early age when I was paging through a copy of my mother's *Amateur Photographer* magazine, saw a head-on shot of a steam locomotive at work, and I was hooked.

Hornby O-gauge tinsplate soon followed, then Tri-ang OO gauge, and initially faltering starts making my own models. Holidays in my teens in Wales introduced me to the delights of narrow gauge, with more family holidays in the west of Scotland, including rides on the West Highland line to Mallaig raising interest in railways operating in rugged terrain serving sparse and isolated communities.

I started an OO-gauge model based on Highland Railway lines in LMS days, which got as far as scratchbuilding some track, a couple of locomotives, and a few items of rolling stock before I got diverted into narrow gauge with the rise in availability of 009 and HOn30 models in the late 1960s and early 1970s. I was never completely satisfied with these, partly because they didn't run very well and partly because the largely industrial prototypes didn't really attract me. One of my then local hobby shops in the south side of Birmingham — Bob's Models — had a specialty of models of U.S. prototypes. Because of the interest of one of the staff, Brian Coldicott, they stocked U.S. prototype structure and HOn3 kits and the then-new *Narrow Gauge and Short Line Gazette* magazine. Now I'd found a modeling home: narrow gauge main line railway operations with big locomotives and sizeable trains in interesting scenic locations, yet in a scale already somewhat familiar to me. All I had to do was start learning about Colorado narrow gauge and the whole U.S. modeling scene. That was about 1977 or so.

Fast-forward, maybe 20 years. By then, I was married, had two small children, and a growing collection of Denver & Rio Grande Western and Rio Grande Southern locomotives and rolling stock, but no layout. Modeling was done on the



Nikki Moignard photo

dining table in the evenings, with painting sessions taking place outdoors. A career progression around 1995 into software consulting and sales got me attending conferences, making presentations, and taking me to North America on a fairly regular basis. I made a habit of visiting model shops and local clubs whenever I got the chance. By then, I was aware of the NMRA and the Achievement Program.

Around that time, I joined the NMRA's British Region, my local club, the Risborough & District MRC, and the Slim Gauge Circle — a UK group specializing in North American narrow gauge modeling. We moved in the early 1990s to the house we still live in, where we converted an integral garage into a room intended to be a workshop and railway room. At that time, I wrote a set of articles on my rolling stock and locomotives, which were published in *Continental Modeller* magazine. Then, in 2000, I bought a DCC system from Ted Smale at Sunningwell Command Control, with the intention it would kick-start the building of an HOn3 layout. Friendship with Ted meant I started attending operating sessions on Ted's home layout,

the HO Pacific & North Eastern, which models a fictitious standard gauge route from the Alturas area to Sacramento, California, based on Western Pacific. I became my club's DCC bore, though not for long, as other members started to see the attraction of DCC. Things were picking up.

Once there was some working track on my layout, I started installing sound decoders in a few locomotives. SoundTraxx launched the original Tsunami range in 2004, which prompted the installation of these in my HOn3 fleet and the construction with a club member, Richard Turner, of an On30 layout based around Bachmann's then-new On30 offerings and SoundTraxx decoders. Camp 93, as the layout was named, was immediately successful on the UK show circuit. In 2005, this was one of the first layouts seen that was not just DCC operated, but also featured sound in every locomotive. We had great fun with this layout, learned a lot about building and exhibiting show layouts with it, and made a lot of friends until it was retired in 2013. In that period, I wrote a long series of articles on DCC for *ScaleFour News* and realized along the way that I'd have enough material with

this series and earlier pieces to apply for Model Railroad Author. So I did that in June 2007 with much encouragement from Steve Park, who was BR's AP Chair at the time.

The first British Region Convention I attended was in 1997, where I gave a clinic on building styrene rolling stock. I enjoyed the whole convention experience very much. However, work commitments and travel, plus family, meant that I didn't attend another for some years. I took some HOn3 models to the next one I attended, entered them in the contest, and was rather surprised to end up with a small pile of Merit Awards, as well as the Best-in-Show award. After that, I took some more to the convention and gained some more merit awards. Steve Park and Terry Wynne, BR Contest chair at the time, were very encouraging, so I submitted an SOQ for Master Builder Cars.

I took over from Terry Wynne as the BR Contest Chair and held the role for four years. I'd also started giving more clinics at BR conventions, the 2013 Narrow Gauge convention, and the Portland NMRA National Convention in 2015. I like giving clinics. They're a great way to learn a subject properly because you need to be convincing to the audience as well as yourself when giving a clinic. You never know whether a questioner in the audience really knows more than you do! It's also one of the best ways

to give something back to the hobby and to help other people along the way to avoid the pitfalls you've found. As Tony Koester famously said, "only make new mistakes." Giving clinics counts toward the Association Volunteer certificate, which I was awarded in 2016 — and I'm still giving clinics today.

The 2020/21 pandemic changed how we all spent our time, and for many, that meant more modeling time at home and fewer operating sessions and socializing events with friends. It made us value our contacts even more and stimulated us to reach out to them virtually. I'd become a member of the BR's AP team, and with guidance from Frank Koch, we quickly learned how to make the best of the new situation. Making assessments became harder since we had to do them remotely, but at the same time, we had more of them to try and assess and do them fairly and honestly. I found that a very welcoming thing to be doing because it gave a reason to communicate with BR members that otherwise we'd have had much fewer dealings.

We had a spate of Golden Spikes in the first half of 2021, followed by three MMR[®]s. Being part of assessing these was very encouraging and inspiring and spurred me into completing more awards myself. In summer 2021, I did all the documentation for Civil and Electrical Engineering and Scenery — all

based on my home layout. Fortunately, Keith Webb, who had taken over from Steve Park as AP chair for BR, lives quite close to me, which made dealing with the verifications reasonably straightforward. Lastly, at the British Region's 2021 convention in Derby, I took a scratch-built Fairmont speeder along for assessment and obtained enough points for the last Merit Award I needed to complete: Master Builder – Motive Power.

I know some people say the whole AP is bureaucratic and tedious, but I strongly refute that opinion. The real work of your AP journey is the model building, the layout construction and operation, and sharing what you've done and what you've learned with others. That's the fun bit, and doing it is why we're in the hobby in the first place. All you are doing for the AP is putting it on record that you've done these things, done them as best you can, and used the process and any knock-backs as spurs to improve your modeling. That's the real achievement and is something of which to be proud. I know I am.

**Certificates Earned
Mick Moignard, MMR[®] #693**

- Model Railroad Author**
- Master Builder - Cars**
- Association Volunteer**
- Model Railroad Engineer – Civil**
- Model Railroad Engineer – Electrical**
- Master Builder – Scenery**
- Master Builder – Motive Power**

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National Model Railroad Association

BOB GINGER

EARNs

MASTER MODEL RAILROADER® #695

As a small boy, I remember watching the steady stream of Chicago & North Western commuter trains while sitting on the windowsills of old German storefronts in downtown Arlington Heights, Illinois. I experienced real excitement when the infrequent freight trains passed through. Thus began my love of trains.

I was an incredibly surprised second-grader when I found an American Flyer O-gauge train running under the Christmas tree in 1965. It was even more surprising to learn it was the set my dad and his older brothers played with as kids in the 1930s and 1940s. I listened to Dad's stories and envisioned how they ran trains up in the attic. Dad recreated a couple of different layout plans from drawings he drew as a kid. I built those same layouts.

Each Christmas, I received additional pieces of the American Flyer collection, some of which dated back to the late 1920s. After my grandma died, Dad and I pored through a closet and packed the rest of the train collection to take home.

It was Christmas 1967 when I found yet another train set under the Christmas tree. This time it was a small Arnold Rapido N-scale train set consisting of a simple oval, 0-6-0 tank steam engine, boxcar, gondola, and caboose. Atlas track and various freight cars started showing up on birthdays and Christmas. I learned about saving and budgeting to purchase equipment and supplies from our local hobby shop. Orthodontist appointments were tempered by visits to the hobby shop while riding home on my bicycle.

I set up larger and larger N-scale track patterns on my bedroom floor. I had to tape the track to the tile floor with friction tape to hold track together. Only slip-style rail joiners existed at that time since it was long before the locking track products from Kato, Bachmann, and others.

Finally, Mom and Dad green-lighted my desire to plan an N-scale layout that could slide out from under our bunk bed. I fell in love with a complex track plan in the 1968 Arnold Rapido Track Plan book. That book was always a challenge to read since it was written in German.



Thankfully, a companion English translation booklet accompanied the book.

At the start of Easter break in fifth grade, I began doing a scale drawing of the Rapido plan, trying to fit my available space. I quickly grew frustrated, finding there was too much track to fit. Dad recommended I create my own track plan by selecting specific elements from the Arnold plan to incorporate into a simpler design. Once I created a rough sketch of the plan, I taped together sheets of brown paper and started transferring the sketch to a full-size plan.

Trains were a significant interest in my early years. My fifth grade English theme was "Railroading 1869–1969," commemorating the 100th Anniversary of the transcontinental railroad. My sixth grade theme was "An Introduction to Model Railroading." I received A's on both papers. Who knows if my sixth grade English teacher — a model railroad fan — had anything to do with it?

My seventh-grade English teacher worked at the Chicago & North Western Proviso yards during the summers. I was most fortunate when he took me and another friend on a tour of the yards one Saturday morning. We wandered all over the complex with our teacher. That incredible experience could never happen today.

I authored an article about my layout for the Student Fare section of the

November 1972 issue of *Model Railroader*. Little did I know that article would become part of my NMRA AP Author Certificate almost 50 years later. Nor did I realize then that one of the N-scale passenger cars I scratchbuilt at 12 years old would merit as part of my future AP Cars certificate. Maybe there could be a way to engage younger modelers to begin working on their NMRA AP Certificates.

I moved from the Chicago suburbs to attend Arizona State University and join KAET-TV as a broadcast engineer. During that time, I started building a small N-scale layout. From there, I moved to Houston and continued building the layout.

While living in Houston, I had the opportunity to visit some impressive layouts once I started doing freelance engineering for Ben Pearlman's video production company. He had a layout and hosted the local San Jacinto club meetings at his company's studio. Ben took me to visit some layouts, including Gil Freitag's amazing Stony Creek & Western. I never finished my small layout and ended up disassembling it in 1983, a year after moving back to Phoenix.

My wife Gail and I stumbled across the funky RSVP Pizza while visiting Waitsfield, Vermont, in October 1992. Over dinner, she strongly suggested I get back into model railroading. It had been almost 10 years since building my

last layout due to business, building a house, moving, dating, and marriage. We sketched an N-scale diorama on a napkin while eating our interesting pizza. It would be a few years before that sketch grew into a design for a 2x4-foot layout we built together.

A few years later, I heard about the Arizona Model Railroading Society (AMRS) and eventually became a member in 2004. AMRS was just moving into a new building built by club members. The building houses an HO- and an N-scale layout. I spent many late nights with guys like Dennis Day and Richard Oberholz, laying track and building scenery. Eventually, I was selected as the N-scale superintendent and then chairman of the board of AMRS. We started bringing model railroading to the community through Starlight Christmas and other local events.

In the mid-1990s, we built an addition onto the house. The addition included a large office with extra space. Gail and I agreed it was time to build an N-scale layout in part of the office space. I designed an 8x8-foot L-shaped layout using AutoCAD. The layout, known as the Pepper Valley Division, is set in October 1954.

The Pepper Valley Division occupies a unique space where the locales of central Vermont and northern California reside near each other. October mornings around the Pepper Valley Division bustle with activity, and winter is just around the corner. Great Northern and Santa Fe operate freight and passenger trains in the shadow of the Big Rock Mountains. Steam along the Pepper, as the locals call it, is already an endangered species with both roads running a colorful mix of steam and diesel.

The original 8x8 footprint has been expanded a couple of times to add more rail-served industries and a staging yard. Operating sessions are typically staffed by three to four people running through switch lists. Full sessions usually last about two hours and are capped off with snacks and desserts Gail sets out for us to enjoy. Gail and I also do sessions with just the two of us. She enjoys being the engineer with yours truly as the brakeman by her side.

I authored an article about the PVD for *Model Railroader* magazine in 2007. I watched for the article's publication for

months, but it never appeared, so I forgot about it. Then one late night in June 2019, while curled up in bed reading the June issue of *MR*, I turned the page to a full centerfold photo that looked very familiar. Glancing at the lower left of the page, I saw "by: Bob Ginger." I suddenly realized the photo was of the Pepper Valley Division from 12 years before. My 2007 article was finally published. "Oh, wow!" I yelled. Gail woke up from a sound sleep, wondering what my excitement was all about.

I knew about the NMRA for years but never felt inspired to join. I don't remember how I learned about the Rail Pass program, but I signed up. I attended my first Arizona Division meeting in March 2019. In September, I attended the Phoenix Convention of the Pacific Southwest Region. At the convention, I met a number of PSR folks. I also visited and operated several great layouts in the Phoenix metro area.

Occasionally, I read the Master Model Railroader® profiles in the *NMRA MAGAZINE*. I figured MMR® certifications were for those modelers who walked on water or some other such feats and thus did not pay much attention. In August 2020, I received an email from Bruce Petrarca of the Arizona Division describing the Golden Spike Certificate. I looked through the Golden Spike requirements, and it appeared I might qualify.

I contacted Bruce, and he and Mike Oyaski stopped by for a visit a couple of days later. Bruce confirmed I earned the Golden Spike and asked if I thought about going for my MMR®. I replied that I had not considered it for the reasons cited above. Bruce then suggested I was well on my way to my MMR® from what he saw on my layout. He said if I was interested, he could come back with a team to evaluate my efforts the following week. I agreed with some trepidation. Bruce also recommended I incorporate some additional drainage details in preparation for the Civil certificate.

On the following Friday, Bruce, Frank Baker, and Richard Petrina arrived, and by the end of their visit, I had earned four certificates: Electrical, Structures, Scenery, and Author. Bruce provided guidance and support in navigating the documentation necessary for Civil and Dispatcher. A couple of months later, I completed both the Civil and Dispatcher

certificates. I had been fearful of tackling the hand-laid trackwork requirement. However, I found that five decades of soldering experience really came in handy to assemble the turnouts and a crossing quickly.

That left only the Cars certificate to complete. Some guys questioned my sanity for wanting to build N-scale cars. I started work on a rotary plow kit and a couple of MoW car kits in early 2021. I also scratchbuilt a flatcar with pipe load, a wood-sided gondola, and a wood-sided stock car. I was really concerned about achieving the four necessary merit awards. Much to my surprise, all eight cars, including the 52-year-old N-scale passenger car I built as a kid, earned merit awards.

In early 2021, I served on the evaluation team for Paul Buhrke's Prototype Model certificate. It was the first time I had the opportunity to participate in an evaluation, and it was by Zoom. I found it remarkably interesting to learn the nuances of AP evaluation and see Paul's great modeling. On that same Zoom call, the team then evaluated my trackwork for my Civil. I visited Paul and saw his layout a couple of months later on a trip to Tucson. At the Arizona Division's 2021 summer meet in Prescott Valley, I had the opportunity to help evaluate Michael Starkey's cars. Not only were his models amazing, but his detailed write-ups inspired me to write my Cars documentation.

I look forward to meeting more NMRA folks. We are slowly restarting operating sessions on the PVD, which should provide more meeting opportunities. A year or so ago, I was invited to join in on a Tuesday night Zoom call with guys from the Lone Star, PSR, and Australian Regions. Out of new relationships from those calls, Gail and I have visited Mike Mackey and Speed Muller while on business trips in the Dallas area. Who knows what's next?

Certificates Earned
Bob Ginger, MMR® #695
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Master Builder – Scenery
Model Railroad Author
Model Railroad Engineer – Civil
Chief Dispatcher
Master Builder - Cars