

NMRA BULLETIN

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**Have you changed your address or
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2024 NMRA National Convention Dates and National Train Show Reservations:
Long Beach, California August 4 - 11, 2024 (<https://surfliner2024.org/>)
Train Show Booth Reservations—Jenny Hendricks Registrar - P.O. Box 1328, Soddy Daisy, TN 37384-1328
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• 2025 Novi, Michigan

rev 10/14/2023

ACHIEVEMENT PROGRAM

NMRA AP CERTIFICATE REPORT
JANUARY 2024
GOLDEN SPIKE

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Pacific Northwest Region
Ken Levine, Steilacoom, Washington

Sunshine Region
James Cameron, Cape Coral, Florida

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Mid-Continent Region
Greg Gramlich, Wentzville, Missouri

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Lone Star Region
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Jack Lutz, Hermon, Maine

MODEL RAILROAD AUTHOR
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William Scheerer, Lees Summit, Missouri

Rocky Mountain Region
Lowell Didas, Taylorsville, Utah

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 Frank Koch at achiev@nmra.org.

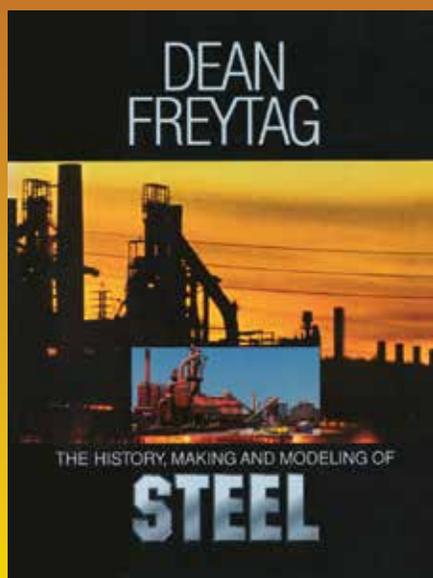
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BRIAN FERRIS

EARNs

MASTER MODEL RAILROADER® #751

Trains have always been part of my life. I grew up on the coast of Washington State, next to a mostly neglected Northern Pacific Railroad branch line. I remember running trackside with the neighborhood kids to greet the three-times-a-week, slow-moving local when it passed. My brother Dean and I were immersed into model railroading practically at birth as our older cousins housed their Lionel layout in our home because they didn't have sufficient room in theirs. As a result, I can't remember a time when I was not around a layout. As we became older, my brother and I began building separate small HO layouts and later combined forces to build a shared layout during our teens. Dean eventually switched to N-scale and has become a very skilled modeler with his Oregon Joint Line.

His layout was a headlined feature at the 2023 NMRA National Convention in Grapevine (Dallas), Texas.

I have continued to model in HO and have built several layouts in adulthood. I have always favored Northwest prototype railroads. My current HO-scale Port Townsend Southern is a modernized version of a historical railroad that existed more than 100 years ago in Thurston County, Washington. My interpretation has it as a 1950s-era Northern Pacific subsidiary featuring Northern Pacific, Union Pacific, Great Northern, and Milwaukee Road trains. The layout occupies a 15x26-foot room with a staging yard and an industrial area located in the adjacent garage.

Years ago, I discovered operations and have greatly enjoyed that part of the hobby. My current layout has regularly participated in the annual OlyOps operations day and biennial SoundRail operations weekend. I find this part of

the hobby to be a lot of fun, and I have learned much about operations over the years. There is nothing better than working with a team of other folks to run trains like the "real thing." Because of my interest in operations, I tended to focus on that aspect of the hobby without putting much effort into detailed modeling.

I joined the NMRA in 2004 and attended several Region and National Conventions. At these events, I was exposed to modeling techniques I applied to my layout over time. In 2014, several NMRA officials, including Jack Hamilton, MMR®, and Ed Liesse, visited my layout as part of a local tour. They announced they were evaluating area layouts for the Achievement Program (AP). At the time, I was unfamiliar with the AP, but several weeks later, I was pleased to receive awards for Master Builder–Scenery, Model Railroad Engineer–Electrical, and Association Volunteer. After further researching, I found I could document my

operations experience along with the other requirements to qualify for Chief Dispatcher. With these certificates accomplished, I contemplated becoming a Master Model Railroader® (MMR®). However, after reviewing the daunting requirements of some of the other categories, I thought there would be little chance I could ever obtain additional certificates, especially while working in a demanding career in Information Technology for county government in Olympia, Washington.

Olympia is fortunate to have a strong local model railroad community with some tremendous modelers and layouts in a small geographic area. For many years, I have assisted with the local Olympia clinics and with scheduling operations events and open houses. Through my involvement in the Olympia clinic, I have developed long-term friendships with other members, including Greg Wright and Jim Younkins. Both of these very skilled modelers achieved their MMRs and inspired me. Greg also encouraged me to pursue some of the other AP categories despite having little experience in those areas.

In 2021, I retired, providing more modeling and volunteering time. I had the capacity to help coordinate operating sessions for the 2022 SoundRail and the 2023 PNR Region Convention and also to volunteer at the Pacific Northwest Railroad Archive (PNRA) in Burien, Washington. In addition, I have had time to tackle other parts of the hobby that would challenge me and hopefully improve my modeling skills. For instance, I tried hand-laying track as part of my “Pandemic Peninsula” layout extension started during the COVID “shut-down.” As a part of this project, I hand-laid some turnouts and a crossing, which, along with previously completed requirements, allowed me to qualify for Model Railroad Engineer–Civil.

In 2022, I decided to pursue the Master Builder–Structures certificate. This certificate was intimidating as I had little experience with scratchbuilding, which is required for this certificate. Based on the research of my specific prototype, I built several custom structures, including five depots, a log loader, and other industries. Completing these structures added a unique flavor to my layout that better tells the story of what

I am modeling. I ended up enjoying this category and learned some new skills.

After completing the Structures certificate, I needed only one more to obtain my MMR®. Of the remaining possibilities, I chose Motive Power. I modified and extensively detailed two steam locomotives to match prototype photos, which met two of the requirements for the certificate. The third requirement was to scratchbuild a locomotive. I was struggling with what I could do to accomplish this task. One night at our local clinic meeting, Jim Younkins offered members some excess materials he had collected over the years. Included in Jim’s collection was a plan for a small Plymouth diesel, which I grabbed. I have always liked small one-off industrial diesels, so I decided to build a model of this “critter.” The project was a bit overwhelming, but I approached it by breaking the build into smaller achievable subassemblies. After several months of effort, I had a complete model. While building my “critter” was the most difficult project I attempted in pursuit of a certificate, the step-by-step approach, along with the skills learned over the years in the AP, allowed me to complete it satisfactorily.

Model railroading is a rewarding hobby with so many areas to pursue, including historical research, model-building, carpentry, electronics, painting, architecture, operations, and scenery-building. The Achievement Program is an excellent way to push modelers to expand their knowledge, skills, and expertise. I would have never explored some of these areas without this program and without the encouragement from Greg Wright, Jim Younkins, and Jack Hamilton, as well as others in our local model railroading community. The NMRA is a great organization for meeting others and improving skills in the various facets of the hobby. I encourage others to get connected in their Division or Region and consider pursuing the MMR® award.

**Certificates Earned
Brian Ferris, MMR® #751**

- Master Builder – Motive Power**
- Master Builder – Structures**
- Master Builder – Scenery**
- Model Railroad Engineer – Civil**
- Model Railroad Engineer – Electrical**
- Chief Dispatcher**
- Association Volunteer**

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