

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
(304) 296-6303
e-mail: educate@nmra.org

Howell Day Museum Committee Chair —
John Stevens
Tyrone, GA 30290
H: (770) 632-0753
e-mail: museum@nmra.org

Information Technology Department
Manager —
Gert "Speed" Muller
Murphy, TX 75094-3524
(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
VACANT
e-mail: marketing@nmra.org

Meetings & Trade Show Department
Manager — VACANT
e-mail: conv@nmra.org

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

Standards & Conformance Department
Manager — Andy Zimmerman
Tallahassee, FL 32309
C: 850-524-4399
e-mail: tech-chair@nmra.org

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

Notify NMRA 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—Duncan Cabassi
Sinnamon Park, QLD, Australia
M: +61 0424 844 807
e-mail president@nmra.org

British Region—Peter Borcherds
Cookham Dean
United Kingdom
e-mail: brprez@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—Scott Unger
115 S 22nd Street
Allentown, PA 18104-6400
C: (610) 462-0756
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—Gerald Arends
165 Eighth Ave
Kitchener, ON, N2C1S5, Canada
(226) 476-1801 e-mail: nfrprez@nmra.org

North Central Region—Richard (Rich)
Mahaney; 316 Arnstrom Drive
PO Box 265, Gobles, MI 49055
H: (269) 214-4221 e-mail: ncrprez@nmra.org

Northeastern Region—Ed O'Rourke, MMR®
5193 Pointe East Drive
Jamesville, NY 13078
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—Gary Myers
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—Andy Zimmerman
Tallahassee, FL 32309
C: 850-524-4399
e-mail: ssrprez@nmra.org

Thousand Lakes Region— Art Suel
14500 Alabama Ave
Savage, MN 55378
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

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
423-892-2846 • ntsreg@nmra.org
• 2025 Novi, Michigan

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DREW JAMES

EARNs

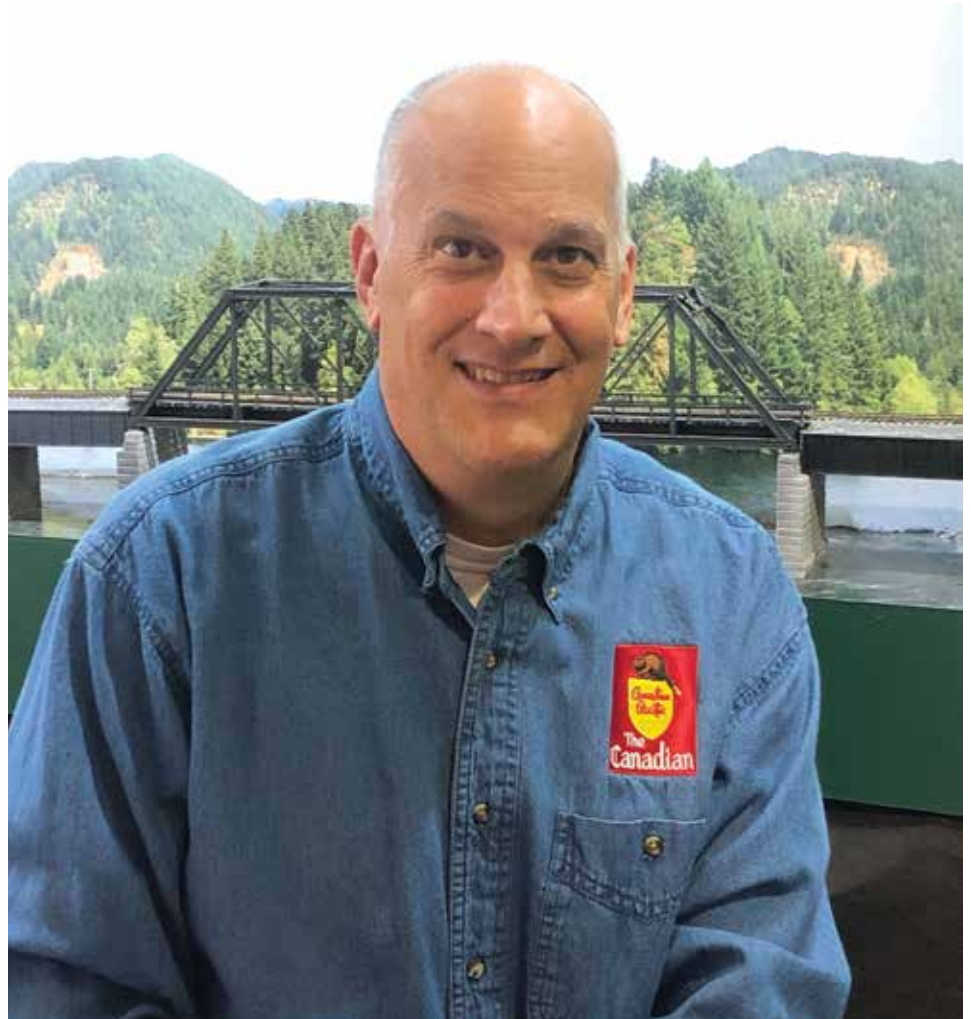
MASTER MODEL RAILROADER® #762

I started in the hobby as an 11-year-old when I received an HO-scale AHM train set for Christmas. I loved that train set and added to it year after year. My parents were supportive and gave me space in the basement. When I left home, my train “setups” on the floor with Lego buildings had grown into something resembling a model railroad with DC block control, a yard, and multiple elevations.

I devoured all the model railroading books and magazines I could find and wore out “The Complete Book of Model Railroading” by David Sutton. “The V&O Story” in *Railroad Model Craftsman* significantly impacted me. I soon found myself trying simple car-forwarding systems, and my future layout designs all tried to go somewhere rather than just around in circles. As I went to college, I continued reading magazines and started to travel by rail. A family Amtrak trip to the West Coast and back and subsequent trips across Canada cemented my love for train travel and passenger trains.

After graduating from college, starting a new career, and marrying my wonderful wife, Karel, we moved to Syracuse, New York, and purchased our first home, which had space allocated for a train room in the basement. My dad helped me finish the train room, and I built two different layouts while we lived there, but most of my time was focused on our new family and other responsibilities. These layouts were learning experiences.

In 2000, we moved to a new house with a new train room in the basement. I built a modest layout, which I ran alone. However, that all started to change after Bob Vickery got me an invitation to an operating session at the late Dick Martini’s wonderful layout of Central New York. I was blown away by attending my first “real” operating session. More importantly, I started to meet a group of friendly guys who were all Central New York Division members, so I also became a member. I got invitations to operate on other members’ layouts, such as Dave Martini’s CSX Northeast and Bill Brown’s Leadville & Red Cliff.



As a result of these operating sessions and seeing many beautiful layouts at NMRA meetings, I almost completely rebuilt my layout. I installed DCC, changed the track layout for smoother operations, and upgraded the scenery. I started hosting some of my new NMRA friends for op sessions, and they provided encouragement and motivation. At some point, Dave Martini mentioned that I should start tracking my operating hours to earn the Chief Dispatchers AP certificate. In 2014, I had enough hours, did the required paperwork, and earned my first certificate.

In the next year or so, I earned the Scenery and Electrical Engineer certificates. With a working layout and completed scenery, it was mostly a matter of doing the paperwork and getting the scenery evaluated for merit. At that point, I had three certificates and started to think that maybe I could get the seven required for MMR in my lifetime.

As my children, Brad and Nate, grew up and moved on to college, I became more active in the NMRA. I hosted meetings, participated in our Division’s operations weekend, and helped when we hosted the Region conventions. After a few years, I had enough hours for the Volunteer certificate. I enjoy writing articles and was published in the *NMRA Magazine* and *OpSIG’s Dispatcher’s Office*, as well as submitting articles to our Division and Region newsletters, which earned the Author certificate.

In 2015, Karel and I moved into a new house with the large empty basement every modeler dreams of having someday. With my NMRA friends’ help, I aimed to build a large layout focused on operations. Dave Martini and I developed the track plan over several months, and construction started in August 2015. Many of our Division members helped with the construction: Bill Brown, Ed O’Rourke, Angel Bernard, Ken Cameron,

Ed Olszewski, Dick Hehir, Bob Vickery, Dave Martini, Rick Mneice, and others. This collaboration quickly moved the new Canada, Spokane & Pacific along; the first operating session was held in February 2017.

During the pandemic, I decided to work toward the Civil Engineering certificate. I met most of the requirements in building the new layout, but I needed to scratchbuild the required track components. This was daunting for me, but our Division had purchased for loan a set of Fast Tracks jigs and tools. It took a couple of months and multiple attempts, but before long I was down to needing just one more certificate.

I decided to attempt the Cars certificate. I knew this would be a major challenge as I had no experience with scratchbuilding or super-detailing cars. I started by optimistically believing I could scratchbuild four cars in parallel and knock them out in a couple of months. Six months later, I had completed only one car while the other three were abandoned along the way. I had a couple of cars that met the super-detailed requirements. At this point, I almost gave up on the AP and MMR as it felt like work rather than fun. However, a turning point came when I attended a clinic by John McHugh at the 2022 NER Convention on scratchbuilding a gondola for merit. I came home motivated to restart my effort, and over the next six months, I successfully built two gondolas, which achieved a merit score, and less than a year later, I completed all the AP requirements.

Many people have helped me along the way. Still, I am particularly indebted to MMR Bill Brown, Dave Martini, MMR Ed O'Rourke, Ed Olszewski, and Bob Verkuyl for their encouragement, support, and suggestions, which kept me on the path to success.

Certificates Earned
Drew James, MMR® #762

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



Finding Members Only Content on the NMRA Website

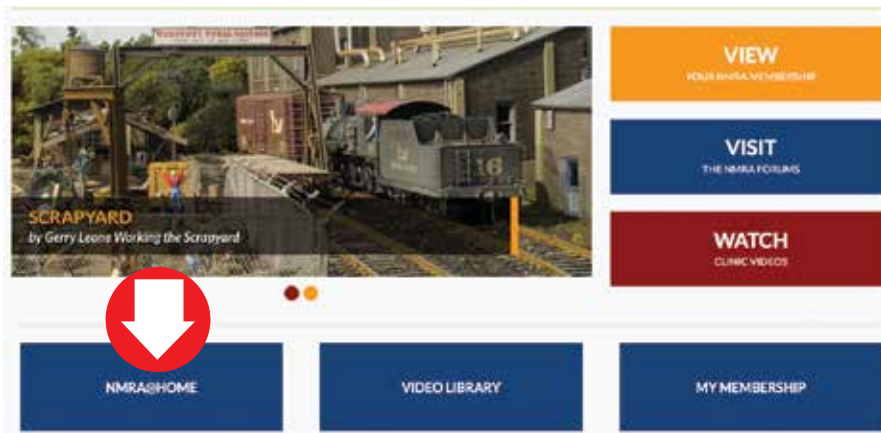
Looking for some great how-to modeling videos? Like to watch clinics from past NMRA conventions presented by some of the best modelers in the world? Maybe you'd like to watch some professional model railroad videos, or read the archive of modeling articles featured in the Division Business Car Column under the NMRA@HOME icon. (See the second screen grab below). All this and more is waiting for you in the Members Only section of the NMRA website at NMRA.org.



The first thing to do is register. It only takes a few minutes.

First, click on the words “Member Log-In/Registration” on the right side of the red bar at the top of the page, which will open a new page. Next, click on the blue bar that says, “Need a username? Register now.” You will be taken to a page called “User Account.” Enter a username and your email address, then click on the blue bar that says “Create New Account.” You’ll see a message that says an email confirmation has been sent to your inbox. Follow the instructions in the email to set your new password. That’s it!

Now whenever you go to the NMRA webpage, you can access all the Members Only content you want. Just click the “Member Log-In/Registration” heading on the red bar, enter your username and password, Click “Log In” and you’re there! For Division Business Car readers there’s even a shortcut. Just click on the link you’ll find in the NMRA Turntable, the e-publication that arrives every month in your inbox.



Now go ahead and access all the special content from the NMRA website only members can enjoy. It’s all waiting for you at NMRA.org.

Not getting the bi-monthly NMRA eBULLETIN?

The new **NMRA eBulletin** comes out every other month near the 1st of the month. Either your SPAM filter is blocking it, or you need to update your email address with us. Have HQ update your address at: <http://www.nmra.org/customer-service-request>

KEL SHERSON

EARNs

MASTER MODEL RAILROADER® #764

I'm a retired professional engineer who lives in Wellington, New Zealand, with my wife, Ruth. We have three children and five grandchildren. All the grandchildren like running grandad's trains.

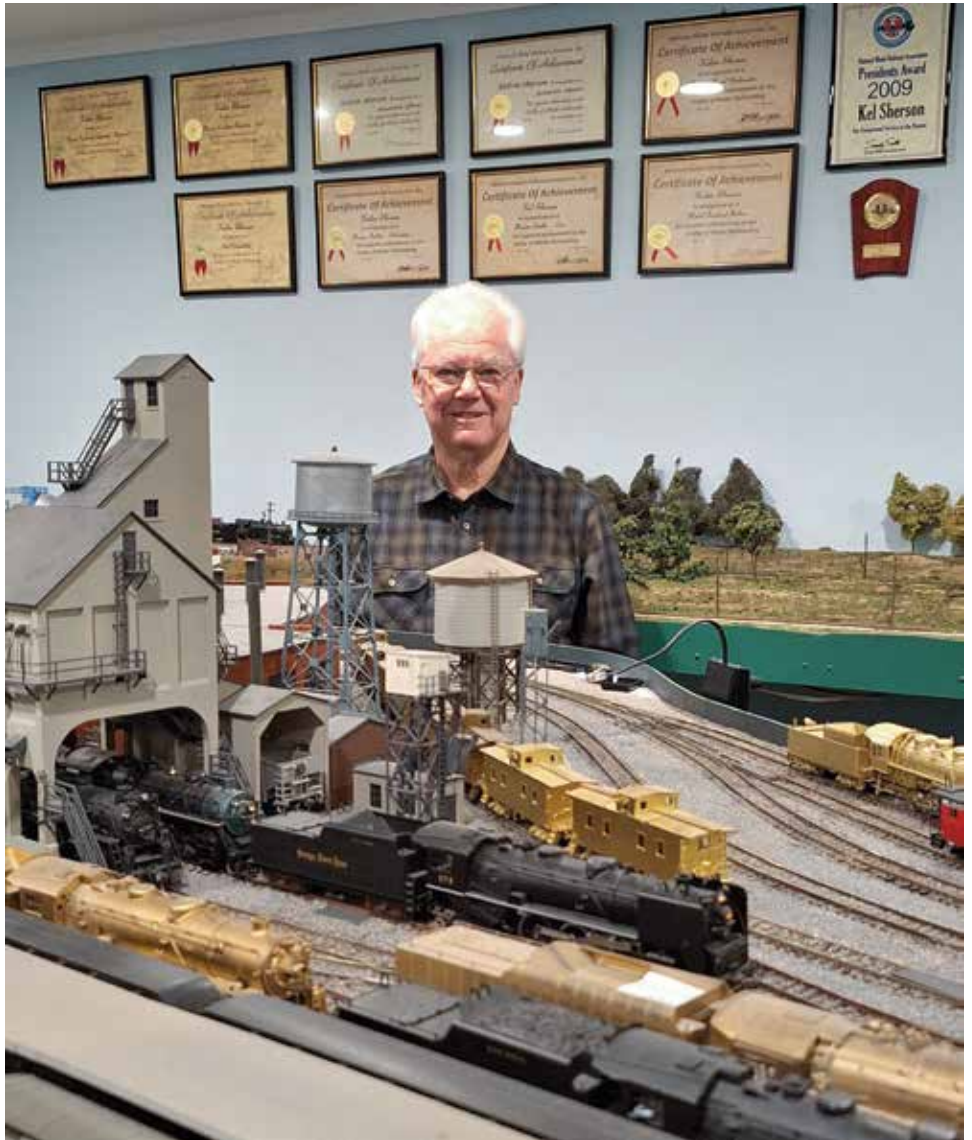
Like many railroaders, I was five years old when my dad built our first layout. Fast-forward to my early teen years, and I built my own 10x5-foot layout. Then came surfing, surf lifesaving, cars, and girlfriends.

After we married, model railroading was put aside until a work transfer took Ruth and me to Melbourne, Australia. I joined the Melbourne MRC, and my interest in U.S. prototypes was accelerated. Following our return to New Zealand, I had to decide whether to model a Western railroad, like many of my friends here, or an Eastern railroad. I was always going to model the steam era, just to be different from the diesel-era modelers around me.

Returning home from a business trip to the USA, I was in San Francisco (the same weekend as the first Star Wars film premiered) wandering around hobby shops when I came across John Rehor's book, "The Nickel Plate Story" — end-game for me. Steam, Berkshires, "High-Speed Service," great safety record, customer-focused; I've modeled the NKP ever since.

I'm a firm believer in the "It's your railroad" philosophy, so do what pleases you. My HO layout at home is "proto-style;" obviously, NKP-themed, but not precisely prototypical. I'm on my fourth iteration of the NKP - Whitby Division. The third lasted 20 years, and iteration 4 uses that layout but extended in a longer room; that layout is now 23 years old. The layout era is 1949; Berkshires, Mikados, and Consolidations rule. There are some Alco PAs on passenger assignments. I also have an O-scale modular layout that can be used for public shows and summer operating sessions when we put that layout up in the garage.

I'm a founding member of an operating group, the American Central Model Railroaders, which has been meeting for over 40 years. We meet every second Friday night to operate our layouts



on a round-robin basis. This group has provided life-long friendships, a lot of fun, and continuous inspiration to keep improving my layout.

My getting to MMR took a while. I was influenced and encouraged by my fellow ACMR modelers, the wider fraternity of U.S. prototype modelers in New Zealand, and other NMRA Members. These include NMRA Australasian Region members John Saxon MMR FNMRA HLM (Dec); Gerry Hopkins MMR FNMRA; Sowerby Smith MMR FNMRA; and David O'Hearn MMR. Just as influential on me were members of the Nickel Plate Road Historical and Technical Society, Tony Koester, and David Vaughn, among many others. Over time, visits from other NMRA members to my layout, such as Ralph and Nathan

Oxhandler and Gerry Leone, provided further encouragement. I'd also like to acknowledge the work the JMRI folk do to enhance our hobby and support users.

Participation in the hobby and associated interest in the prototype has incentivized Ruth and me to attend conventions and visit layouts and railroad-related locations we otherwise would never have considered. We are grateful for the welcome and friendship extended on those visits.

I've always been happy to promote the hobby in general and the NMRA specifically. So, it is no surprise that my first Certificates were Association Volunteer (in 2007) and Association Official (in 2013). Someone forgot to tell me that Division Superintendents are only meant to hold that role for two years. Some 22

years after the appointment, I recently got to hand the role over. Full momentum on my AP Certificate journey got underway in 2020. Building my layout provided Civil and Electrical. Operating the layout provided Chief Dispatcher. Submitting articles for and editing our ACMR e-Mag, *Highball*, got me the Author. Cars followed this, as I needed a set of O-scale NKP cabooses. Finally, I completed the Structures Certificate to complete the

requirements across the four categories to attain MMR.

I'll continue to promote the hobby, encourage others to obtain their Achievement Program goals, and get on with completing the multitude of projects I have to finish on my layout. That's the neat thing about our hobby: there's always something to do, even if it's just relaxing and running a train.

Model railroading is indeed fun.

Certificates Earned Kel Sherson, MMR® #764

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

ACHIEVEMENT PROGRAM

NMRA AP CERTIFICATE REPORT MAY 2024

GOLDEN SPIKE

Mid-Eastern Region

James Leighty, Milford, Pennsylvania

Northeastern Region

William Arm, Jr., Carmel, New York

Pacific Northwest Region

Malcolm Anderson, Regina, Saskatchewan, Canada

MASTER BUILDER - MOTIVE POWER

Pacific Northwest Region

Clyde R. Queen, Jr., MMR®, Nampa, Idaho

MASTER BUILDER - CARS

Lone Star Region

Robert Ashcraft, Pearland, Texas

Midwest Region

Jim Allen, Lake Villa, Illinois
Ray Meyer, Port Washington, Wisconsin

MASTER BUILDER - STRUCTURES

Australasian Region

Kelvin Sherson, Whitby, Porirua, Wellington, New Zealand

Midwest Region

Ray Meyer, Port Washington, Wisconsin

MASTER BUILDER - SCENERY

Midwest Region

Jim Allen, Lake Villa, Illinois
Ray Meyer, Port Washington, Wisconsin

Pacific Northwest Region

Doug Airey, Edmonton, Alberta, Canada

MASTER BUILDER - PROTOTYPE MODELS

Mid-Central Region

Randall Allio, Elkview, West Virginia

MODEL RAILROAD ENGINEER - CIVIL

Mid-Central Region

Douglas Sandmeyer, Lakewood, New York

Rocky Mountain Region

Lowell Didas, Taylorsville, Utah

MODEL RAILROAD ENGINEER - ELECTRICAL

Mid-Continent Region

David Lowell, Crestwood, Missouri

Niagara Frontier Region

Keith Stamper, Port Colborne, Ontario, Canada

Pacific Northwest Region

Ronald Hillis, Ferintosh, Alberta, Canada

Rocky Mountain Region

Lowell Didas, Taylorsville, Utah

CHIEF DISPATCHER

Australasia Region

David Orr, Modbury North, South Australia, Australia

Pacific Northwest Region

Dennis Dreher, Edmonton, Alberta, Canada
George Fuchs, Hermiston, Oregon

Sunshine Region

Robert Raymond, Orlando, Florida

ASSOCIATION OFFICIAL

Australasia Region

Peter Kendall, Essendon, Victoria, Australia
David Orr, Modbury North, South Australia, Australia

Midwest Region

Connie Jones Coy, Avon, Indiana

ASSOCIATION VOLUNTEER

Northeastern Region

D.K. Paul, Warwick, Rhode Island

Pacific Northwest Region

Dennis Dreher, Edmonton, Alberta, Canada

Southeastern Region

Steven Flowers, Southaven, Mississippi

MODEL RAILROAD AUTHOR

Australasia Region

Ken House, Greenwith, South Australia, Australia

Peter Kendall, Essendon, Victoria, Australia

Mid-Central Region

Randall Allio, Elkview, West Virginia
Michael Hauk, Fairview, Pennsylvania

Niagara Frontier Region

Bob Korthals, Hamburg, New York

Pacific Northwest Region

Doug Burton, Camrose, Alberta, Canada

MASTER MODEL RAILROADER®

MMR® #763, Connie Jones Coy, Avon, Indiana

MMR® #764 Kelvin Sherson, Whitby, Porirua, Wellington, New Zealand

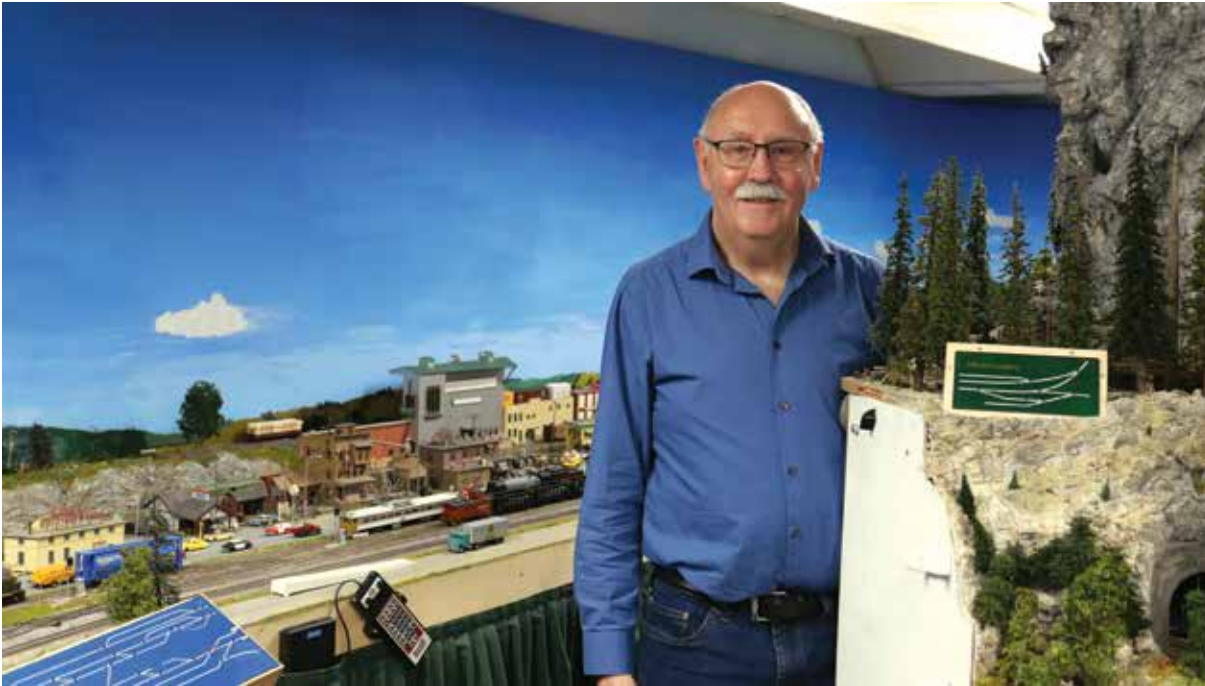
MMR® #765, Jim Allen, Lake Villa, Illinois
MMR® #766, Dennis Dreher, Edmonton, Alberta, Canada

MMR® #767, Keith Stamper, Port Colborne, Newfoundland, Canada

MMR® #768, 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.



DENNIS DREHER

EARNs

MASTER MODEL RAILROADER® #766

My journey to model railroading had many twists and turns. Unlike many railroaders, I started this journey late in life, in my mid-40s. Family and career had left very little time for a hobby. It all started when I attended a Hobby Mecca show in Edmonton, Alberta. There were airplanes, racing cars, train layouts, and locomotives with sounds. That was it; I had to find out who, when, and where I could get more information on this hobby. A group of guys told me they were in transition at this show and weren't sure where and when they would be set up. They said to check with the local train stores in Edmonton, and they could advise me of any changes in the near future.

In November 1993, I located an HO layout in Londonderry Mall, and their store was open on Tuesday evenings and weekends. After three months' probation, I became a member of the LaBaJa HO model train group, which was part of the Edmonton Society of Model Railroad Engineers (ESMRE). The ESMRE had Yellowhead HO, Edmonton N-scale, and the LaBaJa HO group — a real train family.

After showing up for a few months, I was asked what part of modeling I

wanted to learn and participate in. I foolishly answered, "All of it." I didn't know what I had gotten myself into, but looking back, I was glad because I have gained so much experience and knowledge from this group. LaBaJa model train group attended at least one to three annual train shows for 25 years or more. We participated at the NMRA National Train Show in Sacramento (2011), again in Portland, Oregon (2015), and a Regional in Salmon Arm, British Columbia (2016).

Shortly after my real-work retirement, I took a part-time job at Hobby Wholesale in the train department. Working at the only train store in Edmonton at that time meant I met all the railroad people and club members. At the age of 65, I had enough of working and retired again. Over the years, I made some great friends and contacts.

After more than 25 years of club membership, it was time to break away and attend to my needs. Although I had been working on my layout before, that was when I started seriously working on bridges and the odd scratchbuilt structures. I invited NMRA member Ray Clifford, MMR, over to the layout. After looking at it, he suggested I seriously look into the NMRA's Achievement Program, and he figured I had Scenery, Civil, and Electrical already done. The AP Division manager, Doug Burton, was invited to see the layout, and after a couple of hours,

he gave me some pointers and suggestions for the AP. A couple of months later, a Golden Spike certificate hung on my wall. It took another year sitting on the fence, thinking, and avoiding the real question, "Was I afraid of starting this journey to be a 'Master Model Railroader.?' " The answer was obviously "No!"

COVID was a curse and a blessing; it forced me

to work at AP Structures and Cars. I had most of the materials in my workshop, and occasionally, I visited Ray Clifford for extra support, advice, and books or magazines.

A close railroad friend, Grant Reiersen, opened "The Train Exchange" store in Edmonton and asked me to work and help out when I could. Again, I couldn't say no to that offer. Grant helped me out with items I needed for AP Cars.

Running on home layouts around the Edmonton area gave me dispatch time, plus the opportunity to give Golden Spike awards and allowed me to introduce the Achievement Program to others.

This journey continued when two other close railroad friends, Doug and Jim, visited The Train Exchange store while I was there. After chatting briefly, we noticed a young man pushing a walker and a female assistant behind him. After talking to the young man, Ryan, and life manager Rachel, she indicated that Ryan has had spina bifida from birth and has loved trains since he was small. Ryan visits a train setup in a mall every Saturday. She asked us three if we could build Ryan a train layout in one of the bedrooms in his home. After many meetings and measurements, we came up with a layout plan. This led to many challenges because of cost, his ability to run trains, materials, and track and train-related items. So, a call went out to our railroad community, and

we were overwhelmed by the response of donations we received. While planning his mountain, I wondered if there was an AP Volunteer for helping a physically disabled person. Bill Fassett, the AP Regional Manager, informed me that the Pacific Northwest Region had previously established a Public Service Committee to deal with projects that either create and maintain a long-term public model railroad layout or assist NMRA members with transitions in their modeling careers due to factors such as disability. Projects are approved at the Division level and then at the Region level. Once approved, members who carry out the projects are appointed to the Public Service Committee and earn TUs for membership on a regional committee. Ryan's project was approved, and I subsequently needed to document my time and efforts to receive credit for the committee service toward the Association Volunteer certificate. After two years, Ryan is still adding and making changes but is having fun running DCC trains on his layout.

This journey has helped me escape from day-to-day life and placed me in a "train world" for a few hours. I might be an engineer, contractor, landscaper, designer, electrician, or whatever project I was tackling at that time, but in seven or more years, I'm wearing fewer hats. We are nearing the completion of the Alberta Midland Railroad. Although a layout is never really done, I must thank my great friends who helped me through my journey: AP Division Manager Doug Burton, who kept me on track; Doug M, Jim M, and Bob K, who kept me going; and a special thanks to my lovely wife Marija, who lets me have my time in my train world. Thank you all so much for giving me the opportunity to go on this journey.

Certificates Earned

Dennis Dreher, MMR® #766

Master Builder – Scenery

Model Railroad Engineer – Civil

Model Railroad Engineer – Electrical

Master Builder – Structures

Master Builder – Cars

Chief Dispatcher

Association Volunteer