

NMRA BULLETIN

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2025 NMRA National Convention Dates and National Train Show Reservations:
July 14-19, 2025 – Novi, Michigan <https://nmra2025.com/>
Train Show Booth Reservations—Jenny Hendricks Registrar - P.O. Box 1328, Soddy Daisy, TN 37384-1328
423-892-2846 • ntsreg@nmra.org
• 2026 Chattanooga, Tennessee

rev 10/31/2024

ACHIEVEMENT PROGRAM

NMRA AP CERTIFICATE REPORT SEPTEMBER 2024

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Sunshine Region

Kevin Paige, Ponte Vedra, Florida

Thousand Lakes Region

Bill Craig, St Michael, Minnesota

Northeastern Region

John Doehring, Pepperell, Massachusetts

Mid-Central Region

Prentiss Hallenbeck, Cincinnati, Ohio
Terry Herweh, Cincinnati, Ohio

MASTER BUILDER - MOTIVE POWER

Southeastern Region

Stephen Floyd, Macon, Georgia

MASTER BUILDER - CARS

Northeastern Region

Victor Hand, Bar Harbor, Maine

Pacific Northwest Region

Bill Smienk, Lethbridge, Alberta

MASTER BUILDER - STRUCTURES

Northeastern Region

Victor Hand, Bar Harbor, Maine

MASTER BUILDER - SCENERY

Mid-Eastern Region

Alan Balma, Williamsburg, Virginia

Pacific Northwest Region

Dennis Todaro, Colbert, Washington

MASTER BUILDER - PROTOTYPE MODELS

Northeastern Region

Victor Hand, Bar Harbor, Maine

Pacific Northwest Region

Clyde Queen, Jr, Nampa, Idaho

MODEL RAILROAD ENGINEER - CIVIL

Pacific Northwest Region

Bert Cripe, Port Orchard, Washington

Mid-Eastern Region

Alan Balma, Williamsburg, Virginia

Mid-Central Region

Robert Kress, Covington, Kentucky

MODEL RAILROAD ENGINEER - ELECTRICAL

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Alan Balma, Williamsburg, Virginia

CHIEF DISPATCHER

Mid-Eastern Region

Robert Gamble, Cary, North Carolina

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Northeastern Region

David Insley, Townsend, Massachusetts
Ciro Compagno, Staten Island, New York

Midwestern Region

Patrick Golden, Lagrange Park, Illinois

Southeastern Region

Perry Lamb, Kennesaw, Georgia

ASSOCIATION VOLUNTEER

Rocky Mountain Region

Robert Connolly, Harrisville, Utah

Northeastern Region

Benjamin Maggi, Loudonville, New York

MODEL RAILROAD AUTHOR

Mid-Continent Region

Dan Wiltshire, Lee's Summit, Missouri

MASTER MODEL RAILROADER®

MMR® #774 Victor Hand, Bar Harbor, Maine

MMR® #775 David C. Lowell, Crestwood, Missouri

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 Ray Persing at achiev@nmra.org.



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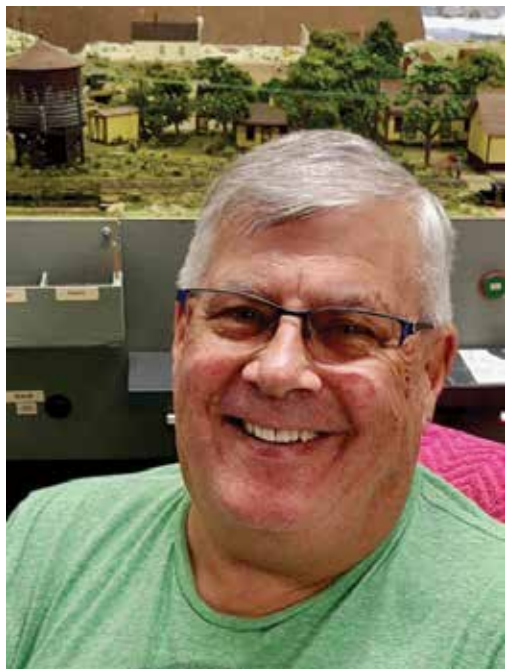
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PAUL D. BUHRKE

EARNs

MASTER MODEL RAILROADER® #721

It all started with my Lionel train set and layout way back in 1955 or '56, maybe. I do have a picture of me dressed up, of course, working with the trains. The seeds were sown early, as for most of us who were “seeded.” Over the years and several moves later, the Lionel layout was repurposed as an HO-scale layout. That was my first venture into scale model railroading. I had received a Tyco Denver & Rio Grande Western passenger train. You remember the F9A, combine, coach, and observation car, right? Yes, I still remember all those pitfalls: brass sectional track, DC wiring, horn hook couplers, egad.

Well, that morphed into not too much as time, energy, and money were scarce for me at those ages. When I went to college, I started to awaken my miserable skills; HOn3 and HO standard gauge piqued my interest. Neither were honed that well, as time and money were tight again. It wasn't until I moved to an apartment and joined a club in the area that things improved skill-wise. I did have quite a collection of Delaware, Lackawanna & Western equipment, as that was my scope of interest for that period. I also had a 4-8-4 Pocono that, as my first attempt at bashing brass, received

all sorts of details and parts. I used a picture for the blueprints, and when I finished, I was happy. I painted lots of AHM passenger cars in gray and maroon, lettered them, and swapped the horn hooks for Kadee replacement sets and scale wheels. I was starting to get a roll on now.

Slowly moving forward, I bought a house and acquired a roommate. We were club members, single, and railfans, so why not have the best of all three worlds? Somehow, we managed to get bitten by the Sn3 bug. Gosh those Tomalco kits were nice to build. I was now honing my skills and building those kits in threes. For the grand prize, I acquired three PFM Sn3 C-16s, which I shopped to match prototypes (somewhat). Unfortunately, those days slowly faded as moving, marriage, and being a lone ranger took their toll on the Sn3. HO became the default scale to model for a long time.

A move to New York State led to my first serious HO-scale layout in the basement. This layout lasted for several years; then, I found On2. Oh-oh; this was trouble, wood kits that one could see details with hand-laid track? I was hooked, and the saga began as the layout was repurposed into a double-deck layout in On2. Lots of equipment was built from Cranberry Junction SR&RL kits, and I even had two articles published in the On2 Quarterly about my passenger cars. Brass locomotives were acquired, and my crowning achievement was converting a 2-6-2 No. 16 to No. 15. I removed everything from the boiler, including the boiler bands, and reworked the shell to model No. 15. Well, all good things must come to an end, and so did the marriage. The result was the abandonment of the railroad and layout.

My final years before retirement were spent planning for the HO layout we all dream about. In fact, I was almost finished collecting all the equipment and motive power needed. Then reality set in, that dreaded time/space equation. There would not be enough time, space, or (most importantly) money to do what I wanted. So, I reverted to my roots and went with HOn3. I have always loved to build wood kits; I guess there is something about wood looking like wood.

This is where I came of age (pun intended): retirement. The room I had precluded almost anything but HOn3 so that was an easy decision. Now, ten years in, the layout is about 75 percent finished. Along with building the layout, I joined the NMRA in the Arizona Division. I read an article in the *NMRA MAGAZINE* that said “You built a layout, didn't you? Why not get your MMR?” Well, I did, and with some gentle prodding (thanks, Bruce), I achieved MMR #721. It was not as difficult as I had thought fulfilling the requirements. However, as an MMR, my skill set and attention to detail have increased significantly. Then again, if I can become an MMR, so can you; believe me when I say this.

I had the usual mish-mash of jobs before the important date of August 11, 1980. That was my seniority date when I was hired as a Trainman on the Seaboard Coast Line Railroad. Two years later, I was promoted to Conductor and worked in Virginia, North Carolina, and South Carolina. Amtrak called me to go to work in 1989, so off I went. That led me from the South to New York State, where I worked from Albany to Montreal, New York City, Cleveland, and Niagara Falls. I will not dredge things up, but California called, which was my last posting, working from Oakland, California, to Reno, Nevada, daily. Yes, that meant I crossed Donner Summit every day I worked. That alone was a real treat and just plain awesome. Eventually, though, all train trips must end. It was time to step off and hang up the uniform. Tucson, Arizona, called, and it was time to punch my own ticket.

Certificates Earned

Paul D. Buhrke, MMR® #721

Chief Dispatcher
Model Railroad Engineer – Electrical
Model Railroad Engineer – Civil
Master Builder – Scenery
Master Builder – Prototype Models
Master Builder – Cars
Model Railroad Author

GREG GRAMLICH

EARNs

MASTER MODEL RAILROADER® #773

Like many other model railroaders, I started with a Lionel layout at Christmastime. This layout was special. It was not a Christmas tree train but a small 4x8-foot figure-eight track plan built on plywood with 2x4-inch wooden legs, displayed in the breakfast room. It would stay up until mom had enough and said it was time to put it away. In 1954, at the age of six, this layout was my world. However, the layout took a hit as time passed and the family grew to six brothers and sisters. It was put away for a bigger table and more chairs in the breakfast room to accommodate my siblings. The layout and model railroading were shelved for years. Then my father discovered HO gauge. By this time, at the age of ten, I was already modeling airplanes, automobiles, and boats, so modeling railroad cars was an easy transition. Dad bought wood, metal, and wire kits, which took more patience and time. I remember modeling a fleet of Pacific Fruit Express (PFEs), Southern Pacific cars, and some boxcars.

My dad worked at a warehouse that received materials from railcars and got to know some crew members on the switchers. With this hands-on knowledge and experience, he decided to build a large HO layout on the third floor of our house in South City of St. Louis, Missouri.

Not having much money to put toward model railroading, Dad stockpiled boards from crates and built a dogbone layout. It took a year to just build the framework. The roadbed was made of Homasote with hand-laid ties and track. Our building of the layout went on through high school, but progress slowed due to sports, girls, and other activities. I graduated high school in 1968, started junior college, but then I pulled a lottery number of 13 and decided to join the U.S. Navy for four years. That paused my passion for model railroading for a while. Still, the time spent with my father building the layout was memorable.

I was serving a tour in the Philippines when I was honorably discharged from the U.S. Navy in June 1974. My high



school sweetheart, Bernadette, became my wife, and I went back to college to pursue a degree in business.

Sadly, the old layout in South City was gone, having been removed to free up space for my brothers and sisters to have their own rooms. There was no time for me for model railroading. It was time to start a career, build a family, and purchase a home. I would be a hard worker and climb the corporate ladder for the next 15 years, though the model railroad bug never disappeared. I started going to train shows, talked to people about building a layout, and attended clinics. In 1995, I joined the NMRA and attended all the meetings. The following year, I joined a railroad club in Columbia, Illinois, whose members were building a layout on the second floor of an old building. I learned a lot from that experience and started a layout in the basement of the home that I thought would be the last place we would live. I fell in love with Southern Pacific and its colorful *Daylight* paint scheme of red, orange, and black roofs during this time. I started buying up SP engines, passenger cars, and rolling stock at train shows for my layout. The layout was looking good with the dogbone-style track work, similar to what my dad had designed at the house in

South City. Then came the time to downsize to a smaller home, and we moved to Wentzville, Missouri, where the layout would need to be modified to fit into a smaller basement.

As I continued to work on the 25x25-foot double-decker with a helix in our new home, my company got an opportunity to work with Walmart for their store holiday displays and packaging. I headed to Bentonville, Arkansas. In my free time, I visited the Cotton Belt Museum in Pine Bluff, Arkansas, and learned more about the St. Louis Southwest (SSW) Railroad.

The experience at that museum inspired me to base my layout on the SP and SSW in the mid-1950s from Texarkana to Pine Bluff, Arkansas. My layout now shows that southwest part of Arkansas with the SP and the SSW running through it, with lumber, cotton, tobacco, and produce being shipped.

A critical period for my work on the layout was during the NMRA National Convention in St. Louis in August 2022. I wanted to be on the layout tour and operation sessions. I had two years to get the layout up to museum quality and prepare for operations. I spent countless hours in the basement during the COVID pandemic. Thanks to the Cotton Belt Museum, I received old postcards

showing scenes of the towns, industries, buildings, railroad cars, Cotton Belt engines, and, most helpful of all, the landscape that I would emulate for my layout.

The layout contains every major town, from Texarkana to Pine Bluff, and includes the pine forests, the cotton fields, the hills, rivers, and creeks that comprise the terrain. The hundreds of photographs I took documenting the Cotton Belt Route were used as reference material.

It was time to show the NMRA what I had been working on all this time and be assessed for the Golden Spike Award. I received my certificate on June 30, 2022. That award sparked me, and with the help and encouragement of the Gateway Division AP Chair Dave Ackmann, I received the Model Railroad Engineer – Electrical certificate in July 2022. I completed most of the wiring

requirements over the last year, except for the reverse loop.

Dave arranged to have the evaluators come and look at the kits and scratchbuilt models I had constructed, as well as the layout scenery and the photographic documentation and postcards of the southwest area of Arkansas on the Cotton Belt Route. I received more certificates in 2023 for Master Builder–Structures and Master Builder–Scenery.

It was now time to get serious about Master Builder–Cars Certificates. I bought some of the oldest wood and metal kits from train shows that I thought could give me the 87.5 points to qualify. I made seven kits, each one more complex and difficult. For the scratchbuilt cars, I did a stock car that took over a month to model and a tank car made from a solid square piece of basswood. I had logging on my layout, so a skeleton logging car

was challenging but fit the logging mill site. I had all of these evaluated at our NMRA 2023 train meet and got enough points to receive my Cars Certificate on January 21, 2024.

During all this time, enough points added up for me to qualify for Association Volunteer. I became the chair for setting up operations sessions for three years. I volunteered at the registration desk, worked the contest room, and helped with day-trip registrations at the NMRA National Convention in St. Louis. I also welcomed fellow enthusiasts to my home. The Gateway Operations Special Interest Group ran ops on my layout, known as the Bear Creek Model Railroad. My home was used for many AP meetings. I entered a scratchbuilt display of Yellowstone's South Entrance that I worked on with the Wentzville train club, which factored into points for my Association Volunteer cer-

We're looking for a few good layouts...

...12 to be exact!

You're proud of your model railroad. Why not share it by submitting a photo or two (up to four) for the 2026 edition of the NMRA Model Railroad Calendar?

The calendar is distributed to every U.S. member as a fundraiser every November.

It's easy to submit your photos. Just visit www.nmra.org/printed-calendar and you'll find answers to all your questions, along with a detailed explanation of the photo requirements and how to submit. *Photo tips videos too!*

More questions?

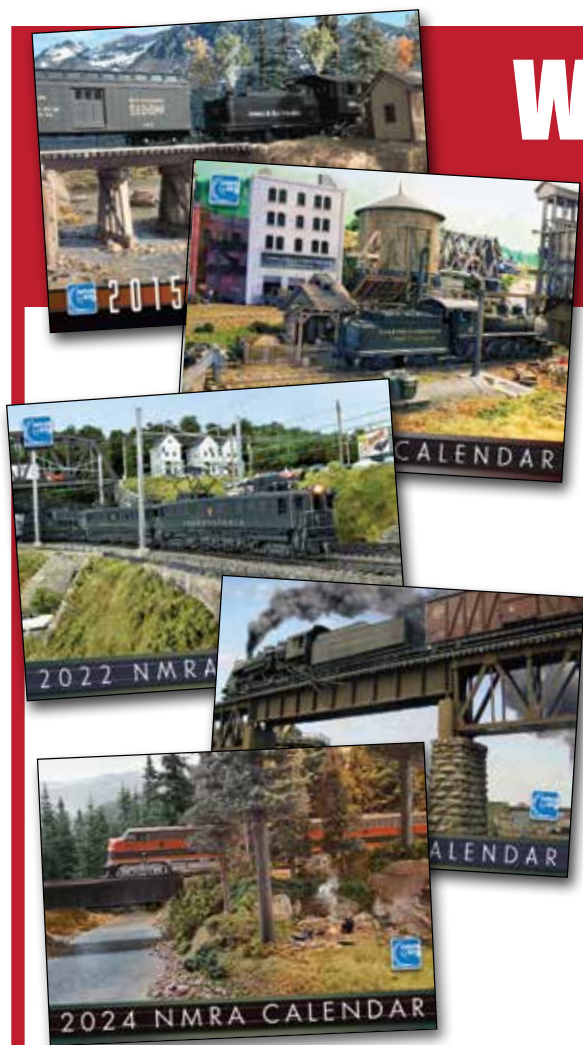
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printed-calendar web page

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Photos may be submitted between January 1 and the final deadline of **July 15, 2025** for consideration.



From top to bottom: 2015, photo and P:48 modeling by Jim Harper, MMR, Santa Clara, UT. 2019, photo and HO scale modeling by Jerry Lauchle, MMR, State College, PA. 2022, photo and O scale modeling by John Sethian, Exton, PA. 2023, photo and HO scale modeling by Richard Walz, Northampton, MA. 2024, photo and HO scale modeling by Larry Blaylock, Kansas City, MO.

tificate. It received third place and was later donated. I received the Association Volunteer certificate in January 2024.

To this day, the most challenging of all the APs was Master Builder-Prototype Models. Just finding a prototype scene that would qualify seemed impossible. During scenery development, one of the evaluators recalled my completed logging operation, from the cut trees to the shipped lumber. If I could highly detail that with logging scenes, a working mill, working people, logging cars, trucks, and stacks of wood, it may qualify. So it did, and I received that certificate on April 21, 2024.

As operations chair, I had many sessions on my layout and maintained the dispatcher role. A lot of my points were setting up trains on the Bear Creek Model Railroad. I had ops every three months and helped set up engines and cars on other layouts. The Chief Dispatcher certificate took some time to earn, but I achieved it on June 21, 2024. I had now completed the requirements for Master Model Railroader.

I will stay active in the NMRA as Ops Chair and am now the Publicity Chair. I plan to encourage all members of the NMRA to participate in the Achievement Program. I am 75, retired, and have been in the NMRA for 29 years. This hobby is a lifetime of education and enjoyment. I have met great friends in this greatest of hobbies in the world.

I thank my wife Bernadette for her support and encouragement and for allowing me to have the time to work on this hobby. I also owe thanks to the Wentzville Train Club members Fred Wilke, Don Perry, Terry Gilmore, and Robert McNeill. Other NMRA members I can't thank enough are Dave Ackmann, Brad Joseph, Brian Post, Glenn Koproske, Jim Ables, and so many others.

Certificates Earned
Greg Gramlich, MMR® #773

Model Railroad Engineer – Electrical
Master Builder – Structures
Master Builder – Scenery
Master Builder – Cars
Master Builder – Prototype Models
Association Volunteer
Chief Dispatcher



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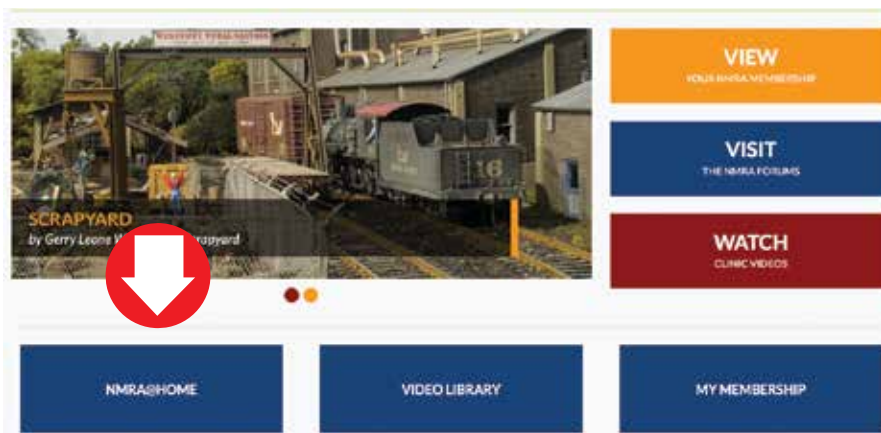
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