

# NMRA BULLETIN

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2023 NMRA National Convention Dates and National Train Show Reservations:  
Dallas, Texas August 20 – 26, 2023 (<https://www.2023texasexpress.com/>)  
Train Show Booth Reservations—Jenny Hendricks Registrar - P.O. Box 1328, Soddy Daisy, TN 37384-1328  
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• 2024—Long Beach, California

rev 10/22/2022

# ACHIEVEMENT PROGRAM

**NMRA AP CERTIFICATE REPORT**  
**SEPTEMBER 2022**  
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**Mid-Eastern Region**  
Robert Price, Collingswood, New Jersey

**MASTER BUILDER - CARS**  
**Mid-Eastern Region**  
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Robert Rodriguez, Dumfries, Virginia  
Richard Steinmann, Reston, Virginia

**Pacific Northwest Region**  
Dave Clune, MMR®, Eugene, Oregon  
Timothy Horton, North Vancouver,  
British Columbia, Canada

**Rocky Mountain Region**  
Martin Pirnat, Durango, Colorado

**Sunshine Region**  
Carl Smeigh, Wesley Chapel, Florida

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**Australasia Region**  
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Australia, Australia

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Keith Stamper, Port Colborn, Ontario,  
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**Northeastern Region**  
James Fairbanks, Canandaigua, New York

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Keith Stamper, Port Colborn, Ontario,  
Canada

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Keith Hayes, Denver, Colorado

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Charles Treft, Layton, Utah

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Richard Paul, Jacksonville, Florida

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Gary Reynolds, East Amherst, New York

**Northeastern Region**  
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**Pacific Northwest Region**  
Jeffrie Herrmann, Rathdrum, Idaho

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**Sunshine Region**  
Robert Feuerstein, Tallahassee, Florida

**MASTER MODEL RAILROADER®**  
MMR® #715 Paul Brennecke, Golden,  
Colorado  
MMR® #716 Pete LaGuardia, Haymarket,  
Virginia  
MMR® #717 Robert Price, Collingswood,  
New Jersey  
MMR® #718 Robert Rodriguez, Dumfries,  
Virginia

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  
fjkocho@hotmail.com.

## PAUL BRENNECKE

EARNs

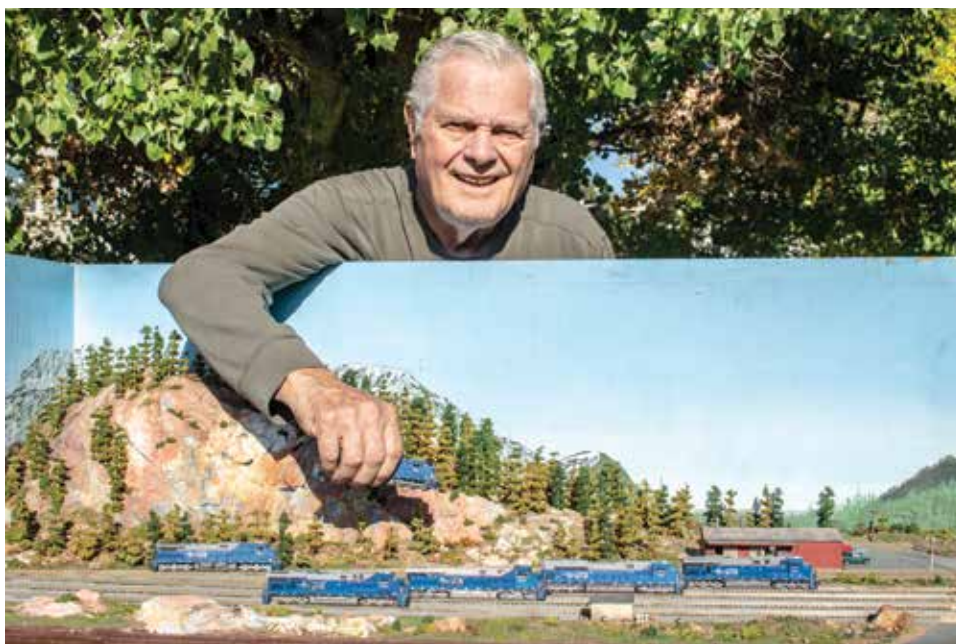
MASTER MODEL RAILROADER® #715

Like many in our great hobby, my parents bought me a Lionel 027 train set for Christmas when I was about 11 or 12 years old. I ran it around and around a loop of track at various speeds — thank heavens for “Magnetraction.” As I grew older, I added cars, track, and turnouts. In high school, I started reading *Model Railroader* and *Railroad Model Craftsman*. John Allen was becoming a noted model railroader and photographer. As I studied his work and other articles in these magazines, I realized Lionel was not “scale” model railroading. I sold my Lionel equipment and moved to HO scale.

I talked my dad into allowing me to build a small layout in a corner of his shop. I started a point-to-point layout. Back in those days, we used dried coffee grounds for ground cover and green dyed sawdust for grass/weeds. I hand-laid brass track using balsa ties and commercial turnouts. The layout never got finished as I was off to college and obtained my degree in metallurgical engineering from the Colorado School of Mines.

Work and a family halted any hobby activities until a job change brought me back to my hometown of Golden, Colorado. At some point, I realized I was spending way too much time watching football on TV and needed a hobby. Luckily, I went with my wife and kids to a local shopping mall, which was hosting a train show. One of the layouts was the Denver area Ntrak group, and one of the corner modules belonged to my Colorado School of Mines chemistry professor, Dean Dickerhoff. We started talking about Ntrak (I had never seen N scale before), and soon he introduced me to Kent Charles, who also had some modules in the layout. Kent and I talked for a while. He noted he had an unscenicked module for sale. I bought it and joined Ntrak. Almost 40 years later, I still have it and regularly operate it at train shows. It is the one shown in my photo.

I started studying N scale in magazines and visiting hobby shops in the Denver area. The time frame was early in the emergence of N scale, and some hobby shop personnel were not encouraging. We lived in a small house, and the only unutilized room was a storage room in the attic. There was no



way an HO layout would fit, so I spent a fortune of \$100 to buy some N-scale track, an engine, and some cars. I built a layout and learned an amazing amount.

I started scenery using hardshell techniques. I had no scenery plan and realized I had built a valley with no exit. A valley with no exit is a lake, which I drained through a railroad tunnel. *Brother*: A layout in an attic has to have pop-ups to reach derailments, etc. Lesson: If you get under the layout and lift out the pop-up, where do you put it down? I learned about scenery, rock castings, and coloring. Finally, after three years, the layout almost completely stopped running. Careful inspection showed almost all soldered track joints had failed due to thermal expansion/contraction. A layout in an attic in Colorado will experience 100-degree temperatures in the summer and freezing temperatures in the winter.

So, I talked my wife out of her 9x13-foot sewing room in the basement. Much effort was expended in finding a track plan and building benchwork for an around-the-wall layout. The layout concept is a railfan layout, not operations-oriented. After the trackwork was completed, I ran the layout for about two years with no scenery to get all the kinks out and the trackwork just right. I painted the backdrop by projecting slides of Colorado mountains on the backdrop before scenery on the layout was started. Next, the layout came to life using old-school hard shell and following an article in *Model Railroader* titled “Jerome and Southwestern” by John Olsen. The layout

was “completed” in 1991 (note: a layout is never completed, as I continue to add details and improve equipment and scenery).

My railroad is the Grand Road and represents about two miles of main line on the western slope of the Rocky Mountains. One of the skills I acquired is photography and have been lucky to get some photos of the Grand Road in the NMRA calendar, as well as articles of the layout in *Model Railroader* (June 1995), *Railroad Model Craftsman* (Dec 2016), *N-Scale Railroading* (May/June 2016 & July/Aug 2017), *Rail Model Journal* (May 1991), and others.

All the layout building led me to write magazine articles, give clinics, become the Superintendent of the Front Range Division (FRD), build cars, and engines, and operate on friends’ layouts. My good friend Patrick Lana (MMR® #208) encouraged me when I felt lost. Past FRD AP Chairman Kris Blackmarr and current FRD AP Chairman Rich Gibson worked so hard to line up judges and review AP and Merit Award submissions. Thank you all so much.

### Certificates Earned Paul Brennecke, MMR® #715

**Model Railroad Author**  
**Association Volunteer**  
**Association Official**  
**Master Builder – Scenery**  
**Master Builder – Cars**  
**Master Builder – Motive Power**  
**Chief Dispatcher**

## PETER LAGUARDIA

EARNs

MASTER MODEL RAILROADER #716

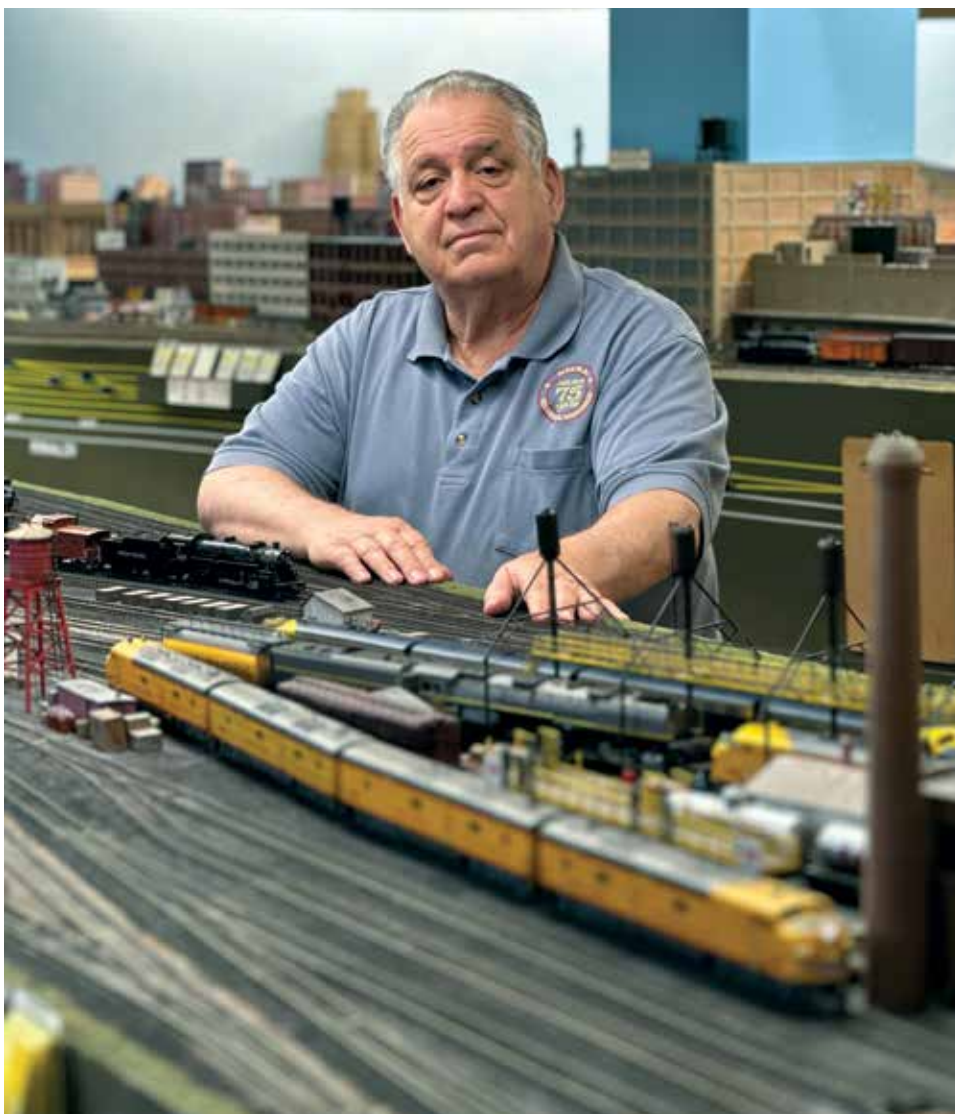
I was born in New York City in 1947. I resided in a one-bedroom apartment with my parents. All around the neighborhood, I would hear the L-train (elevated subway) rattle above, and it would spark my interest in trains. Santa helped further spark my love. At age 5, I found my first train set, a Lionel 027, under the Christmas tree. It was a steam engine with five cars. It used pellets in the smokestack to create smoke. I would be mesmerized by that oval track and the stream of smoke for hours.

While living in the Bronx, I recall walking out of Alexander's (a large department store) with my dad. He was carrying a shopping bag. Glancing into the bag, to my surprise, I saw a Lionel ZW transformer! I immediately knew Santa Claus was my dad. Every future Christmas, I had a train or some components on my list, which holds true even today!

At age 12, we moved to a larger two-bedroom apartment. I immediately capitalized on the larger area. During the Christmas holiday, I would set my trains up on a 4x8 plywood layout that sat on a folding table. I followed a design from one of Lionel's track plans. Each year, I expanded the layout by adding rolling stock and buildings. Model railroading grew from an interest to a passion.

In my teenage years, life started to become busy. I ventured into playing sports and working. Unfortunately, I was not able to devote time to this pastime. It was not until after I got married that I could return to the hobby. Living in Seattle with a wife and three children, I decided to pursue HO scale because of space and cost. I also wanted my children to enjoy the experience of trains. My job caused me to move nine times within the United States. When hunting for a home, top on the list was always, "what space can I use for my model railroad layout?" As the layout grew, a basement became a must. Fun fact: I even had my layout go through steps and a brick fireplace in one house.

When I retired in Northern Virginia in 1998, I had no intentions of moving.



I decided to take over most of the basement for my permanent layout. While building the infrastructure for the layout, I fell and broke my wrist in several spots. The triage nurse at the emergency room asked what had happened, and I told her I was playing with my trains. When the doctor came in, he wanted to know why I was playing near the railroad tracks and how this happened. I had to explain that they were my HO-scale tracks. Everyone had a good laugh while I was in pain.

During this time, I decided to seek out other model railroad enthusiasts. I joined the Prince William Model Railroad Club in 1997. Opportunities were plentiful to expand my layout into a multifaceted system. My eyes were open to the various methods to improve the flexibility in our hobby, allowing us to operate multiple trains on the same track using DCC. While reading *Model*

*Railroader* magazine, I discovered how to add sound to a locomotive. Armed with all this information, I incorporated this into my layout. I was one of the first club members to showcase DCC sound-equipped locomotives.

The club met twice a month, rotating through members' homes, which exposed me to other layouts and showcased members' specialties. At Mat Thompson's home, I was able to see a layout that included fine-scaled building kits, which I incorporated into my layout. One of my good friends, Bob Rodriguez, introduced me to the world of train operations, which opened my eyes to a new way to enjoy this hobby with my friends. Bob kept track of my hours operating his layout in various positions. His documentation allowed me to receive my first certificate: Chief Dispatcher. This accomplishment fueled my enthusiasm

and began my journey of becoming a Master Model Railroader®.

I eventually became the president of the Prince William Model Railroad Club. During this time, we acquired a space in the Quantico, Virginia, train station to build a layout. Committees were assigned during the construction phase. I was appointed chairman of both the Track Laying and DCC Wiring Committees. Along with five of my fellow club members, we documented the layout's wiring. This documentation allowed us to receive the Model Railroad Engineer – Electrical certificate.

My wife and I moved to Haymarket, Virginia, in 2008 to be closer to my children and grandchildren. This home had a 1,500-square-foot basement. This move allowed me to use all my knowledge and skills to build the layout I dreamed about in that one-bedroom apartment.

I am currently a member of an operating group that meets twice a month in Northern Virginia and Maryland. This group travels to a member's home, which includes an operating session for three hours, followed by lunch. During a session at Steve King's home, I was exposed to his layout operating under TT&TO.

Steve developed an operation plan for my layout in 2012 using TT&TO. I documented my journey, which allowed me to complete the remaining certificates to receive my Master Model Railroader.

Details on my current layout are listed below.

**Theme:** New York Central Western Illinois Division (WID) is an HO-scale model railroad set in 1954, operating from points West (Kansas City, Omaha, and Des Moines) and points East (Moberly, Hannibal, Danville, and Indianapolis). Modeled activities include a large yard and an engine facility with an 18-stall roundhouse indexing turntable. This facility can service both steam and diesel. Industries throughout the layout include a meatpacking plant, pulp mill, coal tipple, city scenery, and a port with car float.

**Layout Style:** Walk-around, filling a 36x34-foot room. Track configuration is point-to-point for operations, including a staging yard and an equipment transfer yard. Bench and track work are 99 percent completed. Scenery is 85 percent completed.

**Prototype:** New York Central, set in summer 1954, passenger trains, through

and local freights, extras, and industry switching.

**Control System:** Radio NCE DCC Sound, Steam and Diesel.

**Communication:** Telephone.

**Traffic Control:** TT/TO with car cards and waybills developed by Steve King. Crew size: 3 Yardmasters, 3 Asst. Yardmasters, 1 Engine Facility Yardmaster, 1 Dispatcher, 1 Operator, and 5 crews of 1 or 2 people each – total 10–14.

My journey toward becoming a Master Model Railroader started with receiving my first certificate in 2009. With the support and help of my fellow model railroaders and family, I have accomplished my goal.

### Certificates Earned Peter LaGuardia, MMR #716

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

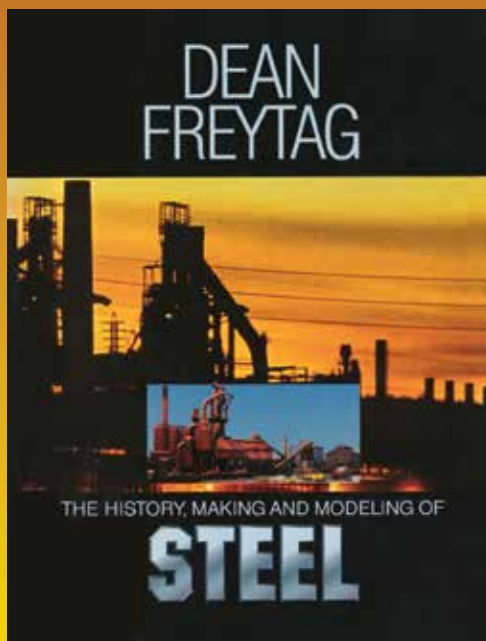
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