

NMRA BULLETIN

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**Have you changed your address or
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Notify NMRA Headquarters

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2023 NMRA National Convention Dates and National Train Show Reservations:
Dallas, Texas August 20 – 26, 2023 (<https://www.2023texasexpress.com/>)
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• 2024—Long Beach, California

rev 1/31/2023

ACHIEVEMENT PROGRAM

NMRA AP CERTIFICATE REPORT DECEMBER 2022 GOLDEN SPIKE

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Mid-Eastern Region
Mike Byle, Richboro, Pennsylvania

Northeastern Region
James Fairbanks, Canandaigua, New York

Southeastern Region
Jan Novack, Crossville, Tennessee

Sunshine Region
Jeff DeVido, Coral Springs, Florida

**MASTER BUILDER - MOTIVE POWER
Australasia Region**
Raymond Sullivan, Parkes, New South
Wales, Australia

Northeastern Region
Andrew Castle, Enfield, Nova Scotia,
Canada

**MASTER BUILDER - CARS
Lone Star Region**
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Mid-Continent Region
James Hogben, Cherryvale, Kansas

Midwest Region
Connie Coy, Avon, Indiana
John Coy, Avon, Indiana

Rocky Mountain Region
Lowell Didas, Taylorsville, Utah

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Steve Salotti, Collegeville, Pennsylvania
Ed Smith, Taylorsville, North Carolina

Sunshine Region
John Crellin, Bradenton, Florida

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North Central Region
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Northeastern Region
Douglas Margison, Fredericton, New
Brunswick, Canada

Sunshine Region
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**MASTER BUILDER - PROTOTYPE MODELS
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Carl Smeigh, Jr., Wesley Chapel, Florida

**MODEL RAILROAD ENGINEER - CIVIL
Mid-Eastern Region**
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**MODEL RAILROAD ENGINEER -
ELECTRICAL
Mid-Eastern Region**
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Northeastern Region
Jeff Hanke, Cheshire, Connecticut
Heath Hurwitz, New York, New York

Pacific Northwest Region
Dennis Dreher, Edmonton, Alberta,
Canada

**CHIEF DISPATCHER
British Region**
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Mid-Central Region
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ASSOCIATION VOLUNTEER Mid-Central Region

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Jim Heary, St. Marys, Pennsylvania
Stan White, Louisville, Kentucky

Mid-Continent Region
Cinthia Priest, Parkville, Missouri

Mid-Eastern Region
Mathew Thompson, Gainesville, Virginia

Pacific Northwest Region
Evan Comben, Kennewick, Washington

**MODEL RAILROAD AUTHOR
British Region**
Benoit Evellin, Dol-de-Bretagne, France

Mid-Continent Region
Cinthia Priest, Parkville, Missouri

MASTER MODEL RAILROADER®
MMR® #726 Carl Smeigh, Jr., Wesley
Chapel, Florida
MMR® #727 Jeff Hanke, Cheshire,
Connecticut
MMR® #728 Harold Helland, Rancho
Mission Viejo, California

AP QUESTIONS: If you have questions
about the AP program or requirements,
start with your local or Region AP man-
ager.

If you still have questions, contact Frank
Koch at achiev@nmra.org.

Did you know?

The NMRA's A.C. Kalmbach Library book collection is on loan to the California Railroad Museum in Sacramento, California, and their services are available to NMRA members. The website for the Library can be found at www.californiarailroadmuseum.library and there is a listing of their collections (books, maps, drawings, photos, timetables, and more), services provided, and fee schedules. You will need to register with them to make purchases in the online store.



Check out some great reads online or in person.

CHRISTOPHER CONAWAY EARNS MASTER MODEL RAILROADER® #724

Like many model railroaders, my journey started with an American Flyer train around the Christmas tree. Most years, it was my dad's plan to build a Christmas garden so Mom could put a Christmas tree in the middle. That idea graduated into a 4x8 model railroad that usually took up a third of my bedroom since our house in Maryland did not have a basement. Over the years, my dad and I lost interest in model trains, and everything was packed up and put in the attic for another day. Then, in my junior year in college, my dad and mom went on a railfan trip behind the *Royal Hudson*, lighting a fire under him to get both of us back into model trains. We picked up an old ping-pong table and started work on our new adventure.

After college, I got married. Beth and I moved into a two-bedroom apartment that overlooked the former Baltimore & Ohio main line in Laurel, Maryland. The second bedroom served as a workshop so I could build a fleet of engines and cars for a future model railroad. After a year, we bought our first house, and I finished the basement to construct my first real layout. Beth came home in the middle of me putting up the benchwork and said, "Oh my, I had no idea that it was going to be so big!" We compromised (and still do today) to make the room a little more user-friendly. We moved into a larger house several years later, and the railroad came with us, and it grew.

In 1996, we moved to Moorestown, New Jersey. After a couple of years of working on the basement of our 1916 home, I was ready to start a new model railroad. I built and rebuilt the model railroad several times. In 2008, I decided to participate in the annual "Model Railroad Open House." It was then that I met the "South Jersey Operators" led by PJ Mattson,



MMR®, Bruce Barrett, Mark Frysztacki, Bob Price, and Rick Bickmore. "Are you an NMRA member?" I was asked. "No, I haven't ever taken the time to join." "Well, I see a lot of things here that you could get awards for," said PJ, and I joined shortly thereafter.

My first certificate was a Golden Spike in 2010. I received my certificate for Electrical in 2012, Chief Dispatcher in 2013, Scenery in 2014, and Volunteer in 2017 for serving as the Archivist for the Mideastern Region for five years. Those were the easier certificates for me to earn, but I had to challenge myself to achieve my last three certificates. To me, that is really what the program is all about. We are all good at something in the hobby, but to be a more well-rounded modeler, we need to push ourselves out of our comfort zone. I earned my AP Certificate for Master Builder—Cars in 2020 after a couple of tries. I earned my Master Builder—Motive Power and finally my Civil Engineering in October 2022.

I am still operating with the "South Jersey Operators." We meet most Friday nights and operate on various model railroads, which keeps things fresh. My talented friends are always there to lend their technical knowledge if any of us needs a hand or encouragement. My model railroad is the Columbus and Newark Division, which simulates the Penn Central and B&O rail lines in Eastern and Central Ohio in the 1970s.

It has been an interesting journey to become a Master Model Railroader. I never dreamed 45 years ago the hobby would take me this far. I look forward to many more years of building and operating. Challenges are always there; sometimes, just getting started on a project is the hardest part. I hope, in some small way, I can provide some inspiration to other model railroaders. As I often say to my associates at work, "If I can do it, anyone can!"

**Certificates Earned
Christopher Conaway, MMR®
#724**

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

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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>

HAROLD HELLAND

EARNs

MASTER MODEL RAILROADER® #728

I certainly fall into the classic model railroader group since I started with a Lionel train when I was five years old. Thank you, Dad! The Lionel train was a simple circle running under the Christmas tree. That simple circle later grew into a larger 4x8-foot oval with a couple of sidings. Today, that original Lionel is displayed in my train room along with several other newer Lionel freight cars and engines. However, at Christmas, that Lionel still takes its place under the Christmas tree. In high school, my father started me with HO, which allowed for more structures and scenery construction on a standard sheet of plywood. Due to my increased interest in model railroading, the ping-pong table was no longer needed and was added to form an “L”-shaped model railroad.

Model railroading took a break while I attended the University of Illinois. After college, I married a wonderful woman, Joyce, who has supported my model railroading for more than 53 years. Every home we have lived in has had space for a model railroad. Joyce and I lived most of our lives in the Chicago suburbs. Since homes in the Chicago area have basements, many local model railroaders have model railroads in their basements.

Although I had a few model railroads in our homes, my model railroading began in earnest when we moved to Libertyville, Illinois. Ron’s Mundelein Hobbies was in the adjacent suburb, and Ron Price held regular classes on building scenery, structures, and other model railroad activities. Over the years, Ron provided me with numerous tips and ideas to improve my model railroad. I joined the NMRA in 2007 and became active with the Midwest Region. They introduced me to the NMRA Achievement Program and started my interest by visiting my home and awarding me the Golden Spike Award. Following a move to Hawthorn Woods, Illinois, I built a 25x30-foot model railroad in my basement. There, I earned my first two Achievement Certificates: Master Builder – Scenery and Model Railroad Engineer – Electrical.

Following my retirement from Abbott Laboratories in 2010, we moved to

Southern California. Much to my disappointment, there are no basements in Southern California homes. Fortunately, I found a model railroad club in Oceanside, North County Model Railroad Society (NCMRS), and became their President in 2014. Except for one year off, I am still President of the North County Model Railroad Society. I also found Arnie’s Model Trains in Westminster, which has provided materials, structures, engines, and rolling stock for my current model railroad and the club layout. Kevin Honda and Greg Arnold have supported NCMRS and the NMRA with

donations and helped me with technical support, especially with their knowledge of decoders. I joined the NMRA Pacific Southwest Region, Cajon Division, and continued with the Achievement Program, earning Chief Dispatcher and Master Builder – Structures with support and guidance from Don Fowler, MMR®.

When the COVID-19 pandemic hit, I started doing 1,000-piece puzzles. Joyce encouraged me to find something else to do that was more rewarding and would allow her to have the kitchen table back. Joyce suggested I work toward achieving my MMR® Certificate rather than completing puzzles. With her encouragement, I began working on the remaining achievement certificates. I often wondered why anyone would build their own turnouts (required for the Civil Certificate) when many manufacturers have excellent turnouts. I discovered there is true satisfaction in building a turnout and having it work when it is completed for use.

I have always enjoyed building structures and scenery from scratch. Now I realize there is the same satisfaction from building freight cars and turnouts from



scratch. Building from scratch is much more rewarding than buying off a shelf from a model railroad hobby shop. Thanks to Joyce’s encouragement and the guidance and support from Gary Butts, MMR®, and Carl Heimberger, PSR Achievement Program Chair, I continued to complete my remaining Achievement Program Certificates: Model Railroad Engineer – Civil, Master Builder – Cars, and Master Builder - Prototype Models. I am now very proud to be considered a Master Model Railroader®.

Certificates Earned Harold Helland, MMR® #728

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

JEFF HANKE

EARNs

MASTER MODEL RAILROADER® #727

Like many before me, I have taken a long and twisting path to finish the Achievement Program. I hope those who read this are encouraged to continue their journey. If I can do it, so can you. The Achievement Program is meant to make us better model railroaders; for me, it definitely has.

My journey into the hobby started in the late 1970s at around seven years old, with three shoeboxes full of pass-down HO-scale trains from my father. They were 1950s vintage from his childhood, which started my interest in the hobby. We would run trains periodically throughout the years, but only on temporary setups. We never had a permanent layout. We used brass sectional track, and I made a different setup each time. It was a humble start, but two Baltimore & Ohio F-units in those boxes cemented my interest in the road. I've been a fan of the Capitol Dome ever since.

Trains took a back seat during my teen years, as aircraft and armor models took up my hobby time. Starting college and then Navy flight training, my hobby time all but vanished. In 1997, a chance trip into my new father-in-law's basement led to a discovery of a mostly finished 4x8 layout propped up on its side in his storage area. The candle of model railroading was relit! I set up the layout and dove into finishing and updating it with him and my brother-in-law. We named the freelanced layout, the Wiley, Erickson and Hanke (WE&H), and over the next several years expanded it twice, more than doubling its size. This first layout allowed me to work on the basic skills of creating benchwork, laying track, making scenery and painting rolling stock.

To learn more about the hobby, I picked up the latest issues of *Model Railroader*. I was awestruck by the covers of my first two issues: January 1998's *Virginian & Ohio* and February 1998's *Utah Belt* were unbelievable. They remain my two favorite model railroads to this day, and they are the standard I strive to attain.

It was at that same time I started to think of building a layout of my own. Though the V&O and Utah Belt are freelanced, I was attracted to the prototype side



of the hobby. My B&O research quickly led to learning more about the Chessie System. Second to my interest in the B&O was the Western Maryland. I was sold when I discovered they were parts of the Chessie System. The fact that modeling merged railroads meant locomotives, freight cars, and cabooses came in a wide variety of paint schemes also attracted me. I could still run the Capitol Dome and speed-lettered WM cars, as well as the bright yellow, blue, and vermilion of the Chessie System. Finding out the Chessie Era ran from 1972-86, my first 14 years, was the icing on the cake. I also joined the Chessie System Historical Society (CSHS) and have been the modeling editor for almost 20 years.

A move to Connecticut in 2003 brought me to connect with a local CSHS member, Dave Ware, and eventually join his club: the Torrington Area Model Railroaders (TAMR). I had always been a lone wolf modeler, but the club gave me an outlet to practice my skills and introduced me to sectional layout building. Best of all, it gave me the opportunity to run trains on a large layout with my two young sons. It also introduced me to fellow club member Dave Owens, who ran the Northeast Prototype Meet. One year

Dave asked me to do a clinic for the Proto Meet, and it became an annual affair. In 2008, someone in the NMRA approached me to do my Proto Meet clinic at the 2009 NMRA National Convention in Hartford, Connecticut, the following year. I agreed and decided I should join the organization if I was giving a clinic. I've been a member of the NMRA ever since.

I quickly learned about the Achievement Program and filled out the paperwork for Author based on my CSHS model editor work, earning my first certificate in December 2009.

I attended the 2010 NMRA National Convention in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, giving clinics and entering scratchbuilt structures in the contest. I came away with my first four merit awards and the last *SCALE RAILS* award for "most photogenic model." After that experience, the Achievement Program seemed "achievable." I realized it was just going to take some time.

Primarily due to a year-long deployment to Afghanistan in the Naval Reserve, I was able to finish my second certificate. Before I left, I shipped myself a few small boxes of scratchbuilding supplies. During my free time, I scratchbuilt two snow flangers and a baggage car to finish off the Cars

requirements. Amazingly they survived the postal service back to the States undamaged and were judged in 2014. I also continued to give clinics since the Hartford National and, by 2015, had done enough to qualify for Volunteer.

It would be another six years before any other certificates were finished. The silver lining of the 2020 pandemic was that it stopped my travel for work and directly increased my hobby time. I had started scratchbuilding three copies of Chessie's unique battery-powered shop switcher locomotive in Afghanistan but set them aside for five years. I finally got inspired to finish them in 2021, earning the Motive Power certificate. I also hit the three-year mark of serving as a voting member of the NMRA's Northeast Region Board, earning the Official certificate that same year. I am currently finishing up my term-limited time as the Superintendent of the Nutmeg Division, which has included hosting the 2022 NER Regional Convention. Giving back to the hobby through service has been very rewarding.

I finally completed three other certificates in 2022. I scratchbuilt the last two

buildings for the Structures certificate and those two models completed the scene for the Scenery certificate for my rendition of Martinsburg, West Virginia. Those two certificates brought my total to seven, but since I had not completed any certificates in the Engineering and Operation category, I had not satisfied the requirements for MMR. I have never been driven to work on a hobby project for the sole purpose of finishing an achievement certificate. Instead, I worked on my layout with an eye toward completing a particular scene or trying a new technique. I just let the completing of the requirements for the certificates fall into place as I went.

I looked at the Electrical certificate requirements and realized I already had most of the work done or in process. I did have to add a three-way turnout in my staging yard to complete the certificate. This addition is the only thing I did to finish MMR that was not really needed on my layout, but I now have a nice helper pocket for a couple of engines. This work completed my eighth certificate, with at least one in all four categories, satisfying the program requirements for MMR®.

I want to thank CSHS members Dave Ware, John Whitmore, Matt Niehaus, Mike Shylanski, Joe Walder, Randy Broadwater, and Greg Stevens for all their help in my early days of modeling Chessie. I'd also like to thank Ken May, our Nutmeg Division AP chair, for his guidance and willingness to travel to my house to judge several of my models and certificates. Finally, I would like to thank my loving wife, Tracy; without her support and tolerance of my train hobby, I'd never have finished. It's a special woman who actually encourages her husband to go into the basement to "do trains." Thanks, love.

Certificates Earned Jeff Hanke, MMR® #727

Model Railroad Author
Master Builder - Cars
Association Volunteer
Master Builder - Motive Power
Association Official
Master Builder - Structures
Master Builder - Scenery
Model Railroad Engineer - Electrical

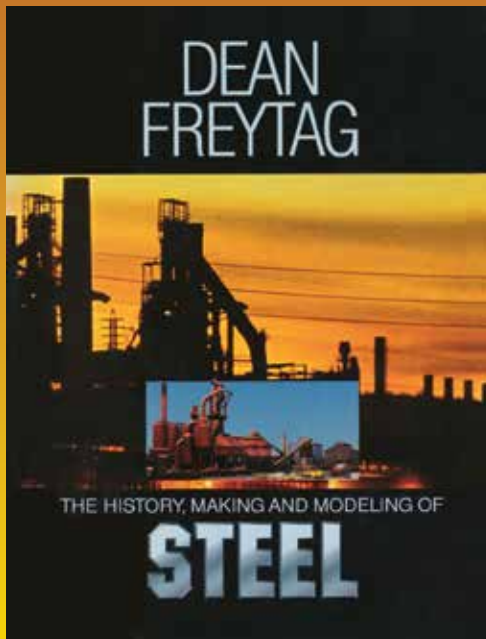
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