

NMRA BULLETIN

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**Region Secretaries: send all
changes in Region officer infor-
mation to the NMRA Secretary:
secy@nmra.org**

2022 NMRA National Convention Dates and National Train Show Reservations:
St. Louis, Missouri August 7 – 14, 2022
Train Show Booth Reservations—Jenny Hendricks Registrar - P.O. Box 1328, Soddy Daisy, TN 37384-1328
423-892-2846 • ntsreg@nmra.org
• 2023—Dallas, Texas

rev 10/23/21

2022 BOARD OF DIRECTORS ELECTIONS

Mike Cummings
Secretary, National Model Railroad Association

In February, we will be holding our 2022 Board of Directors Elections.
The following positions are up for election:

AT-LARGE WORLD-WIDE DIRECTOR ATLANTIC DISTRICT DIRECTOR WESTERN DISTRICT DIRECTOR

All voting-eligible members worldwide will vote for the At-Large World-Wide Director.

Some voting-eligible members will also vote for the Director for their district.

Ballot packages are designed specifically for your district. Your ballot package will include candidate statements, the No Campaigning Policy, and the ballot. As we have for the last few years, the ballot will not be published in the magazine. Candidate statements are posted in the members-only section of the website.

All voting-eligible members worldwide with an email address on file will be invited to vote electronically through Electionbuddy, a secure online voting system. Your election invitation should arrive around

February 1 and the election will close on March 1. All voting-eligible members worldwide who do not have an email address on file will receive a paper ballot via postal mail. Your ballot should arrive in late January. Completed paper ballots must be postmarked no later than March 1.

Do not be alarmed if you learn that one of your friends has received their ballot when you have not. Since the ballots are being distributed from different locations and in different manners, the ballots will most certainly arrive at their destinations at different times. Please take the time to vote, and thank you for being a member of the NMRA.

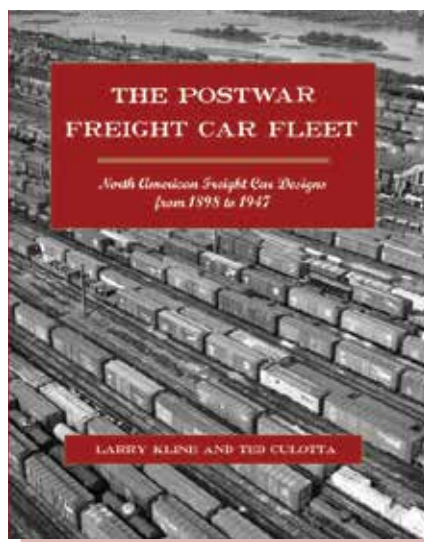
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ACHIEVEMENT PROGRAM

NMRA AP CERTIFICATE REPORT

OCTOBER 2021

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Michael Wolf, Irvine, California

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Mid-Continent Region

Dean Smith, Rolla, Missouri

Midwest Region

Steve Miazga, Waukesha, Wisconsin

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Fred Soward, Louisville, Kentucky

Midwest Region

Richard Hanke, Manitowoc, Wisconsin

Pacific Northwest Region

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Mid-Central Region

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Thousand Lakes Region

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Thomas Gay, Fargo, North Dakota

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MASTER MODEL RAILROADER®

MMR® #692 Steve Miazga, Waukesha, Wisconsin

AP QUESTIONS: If you have questions about the Achievement Program or requirements, start with your local or Region AP manager. If you still have questions, contact Frank Koch at fjkoch@hotmail.com. If you prefer to write, contact Frank at 4769 Silverwood Drive, Batavia, OH 45103.

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STEVE MIAZGA

EARNs

MASTER MODEL RAILROADER® #692

If anyone had asked me about chasing the certification of Master Model Railroader®, even five years ago, I would have told them they were crazy. But here I am with the completed requirements and at the end of the journey.

Trains have always interested me. I grew up in Rhinelander, Wisconsin, a Northern Wisconsin community served by Soo Line and Chicago & North Western. The SOO main line was half a block from our house, and as kids, walking those tracks was a common routine. I can still remember the end of steam on the SOO, seeing a “funeral” train of old steamers passing through town. C&NW still ran passenger trains into the early 1960s, and a big local event was always the arrival of the long special passenger trains in the summer, bringing the Chicago teens to the local summer camps. Those trains would stretch the entire length of the local switch yard, blocking every street crossing until the passengers would transfer to school buses waiting along the tracks.

Then there was that first train set, courtesy of Christmas. An American Flyer Santa Fe freight train led by three Alco PAs on the typical 4x8. That single sheet of plywood provided a lot of entertainment in my younger years. School and other interests consumed my free time as I got older. While I still had an interest in railroading, modeling was not part of my routine. I was focused on heading to college and getting an engineering degree.

I graduated from the University of Wisconsin–Madison in 1972. My degree in Civil and Environmental Engineering took me to Chicago, working for an international consulting firm specializing in transportation and land planning. My focus was in the areas of traffic and parking planning and design. After a couple of years in Chicago, I transferred to Toronto as part of a startup team for a new company office. That is where modeling came on the scene. The job was great but came with its normal level of stress and expectations. My future wife, who also worked in the office, asked me



if I had any hobbies. I needed an escape from the day job routine. I mentioned I had a train when I was younger, and just like that, a small N-scale train showed up to tease me. A little saddle tank engine and a circle of track were all it took to get the blood flowing again.

The manager of our Toronto office was very involved in trains and modeling. He primarily collected tinsplate and Lionel, but he knew where the hobby shops were located in Toronto, and he pointed me in the right direction. George’s Trains was one of the top shops in town and only about a 15-minute drive from our office. So, I started the weekly stops to browse the shelves and ask questions. I can remember the advice of one owner on my first visit. He told me to buy nothing for six months, just read and figure out what I wanted to do. It was 1974, and N-scale was just starting to develop. It seemed like everything being produced in rolling stock was Santa Fe, so I started with my first 4x6 layout. It was a simple design from an Atlas track plan book. N-scale was a nice solution to apartment living. Later that year, I transferred back to Chicago, and the first layout went in the dumpster. I would have to start over.

Not wanting to throw out another layout, I built the next one to be moved. I built it on top of a storage cabinet to justify the space in the apartment. Within

months, I had identified the hobby shops that stocked ample inventories of N-scale rolling stock and kits. The layout neared completion when it was time to move once again. Married now, and with our first child on the way, we moved back to Rhinelander and bought my father’s business — a printing and office supply store. My wife and I had both grown up in smaller towns, and the thought of raising a family in that environment appealed to us. I had my Professional Engineer’s license, so I set up a side business doing consulting. We successfully moved the layout, and I was given a small 10x10 area in our basement to use for the hobby. All was good.

One drawback to living in a rural community is the lack of a hobby shop. So, the only time I had a chance to dig into the pocketbook was on a trip away from town. I had met a few area modelers, and we would get together now and then. The highlight might be a trip together to Trainfest in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, or the Mad City Show in Madison, Wisconsin. For most of those first 10 years or so in Rhinelander, I just plugged along on an eventual two-level layout. There was a lot of local train action, especially after the Wisconsin Central Ltd. was formed from the old Soo Line Lake States Division, so railfanning filled the modeling gap.

Things would change about 1990. A local railfan, Chuck Pierson, approached me about helping him save the former Soo Line depot in Rhinelander. Wisconsin Central was planning to tear it down unless it was moved. Chuck and I became a team and got the depot moved with a lot of contributions and hard work. A full basement was put under the moved building, and the plans were to develop an HO-scale historic model depicting the tracks of Rhinelander around 1950. We founded the railroad museum and started a local club to run the museum and build the layout. That is where I got my first taste of Cadrail, which we used to do the design. (I would use it in the future for all my layout design work.) We completed the project in two-and-a-half years — the community was happy!

Until this time, my only contact with the NMRA was what I saw in a hobby magazine. Chuck was the one who said that our railroad museum should join the NMRA to get exposure. We did that around 1995, and I joined the NMRA in April of the following year. Then he suggested hosting a convention for the Soo Line Historical & Technical Society in 1996. We did that as well, and I ended

up joining the group (I currently am on their Board). So, our little group grew, and we attended train shows and met at the depot each month. My layout was complete, and with the local rail history as a background, I had switched to modeling northwestern Wisconsin, with the Soo Line as the primary carrier.

In 2001, we sold our business in Rhinelander, and in 2002 we relocated to the Milwaukee area, where I took a business development position with an engineering firm. I took down the old layout, salvaging all the track and buildings. I started the new job in September that year, and I had six weeks of commuting until we could move into our new home. I had measured the basement space in our new house, and I began designing what would become the Missabe Junction Railway in the evenings while in the hotel. It would be moveable, so I would not have to reinvent the wheel if life changes came along again. In November of that year, after our move, I attended Trainfest in Milwaukee. I met some of the local members of the NMRA WISE Division, who operated the show. I needed to meet some of the local modelers, so I attended their events and became a volunteer for

the annual Trainfest show. I was actually becoming involved in the NMRA.

I kept progressing on the layout and hosted several layout tours. At one of the Trainfest shows, I purchased historical plan books for the Soo Line. I had built a lot of kits, but had never scratch-built anything. I was in need of a depot at a rail junction on the layout, so the first scratchbuilt building was a two-story combination depot from the Soo plans. Visitors to the layout suggested I enter some of my work in our monthly Division Meets, so the game continued. I realized building from scratch was not that bad; in fact, it was pretty satisfying. In 2013, the National N-scale Convention was held in Milwaukee, and my layout was on tour. Once again, more encouraging words came from the group. I was developing a network within the hobby, and the NMRA was becoming a bigger part of that.

In 2014, it was once again time to move. We had decided to move to single-level living (our current two-story home was more than we needed) and moved into a new ranch home with a very large basement. Now came the test for that modular construction. I deconstructed

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the old layout and reconstructed it in the new home. The early layout tours at the old house and some operating sessions at fellow modelers' layouts had pointed out several things that needed to be corrected after the move. The main yards had to be extended several feet, and I needed to expand the layout to allow for some "logical" operations. I also would be doing all new wiring for solid DCC operations. The expanded layout would need buildings and bridges, so the solution once again was scratchbuilding and kitbashing. More contest entries won awards, and I looked forward to the local NMRA Division meets.

About this time, I began looking at the requirements for the NMRA AP certificates. I realized I had completed a lot of the work required. I started with the Golden Spike, receiving that in March 2014. I looked at all the other requirements and began charting a plan to earn a couple of other certificates. While I had done a lot of the work, I still did not know how to complete the documentation. Over the next couple of years, I attended clinics at NMRA train shows and began to close the gap on what I had to do. I was getting close, but still not there.

In 2017, I retired from my day job. I had been elected to our local board for our NMRA Division and was beginning to see how things came together. I also got elected to the board of the Soo Line Historical & Technical Society shortly after that. Both were great for the retirement years, but I was still not making any progress on the Achievement Program. After retirement, I was invited to operate with a regular group of modelers every Thursday at a different location. One layout, constructed by Jim Osborn of the Fox Valley Division in Illinois, really impressed me — from the standpoint of the construction quality and how it was set for operations. Jim was nearly done earning all his AP Certificates for the MMR[®], and we would chat about putting together the submittals. The path to obtaining the MMR[®] became clearer, and Jim and I became very good friends in the process. We exchanged ideas to help each other, even though he modeled in HO and I in N scale.

My involvement in the NMRA Division meets also broadened my friendships with other N-scale modelers and helped me develop a plan for operations on my layout. Two N-scale modelers,

Jim Kelly and Carl Priepke, were very encouraging and gave me more ideas to come up with a smooth operating plan. In 2018, I began regular monthly operating sessions. At operating sessions, I focused on the requirements for the Dispatcher Certificate. I offered clinics at meets and conventions and wrote articles for publications. These activities, combined with my Division position as editor of our newsletter, led to the Author Certificate. So, I was making progress toward the MMR[®].

By 2020, I had obtained six of the required seven AP Certificates. The last one, Master Builder—Cars, proved to be the most difficult, but in the end, probably the most rewarding. I had scratchbuilt many buildings and bridges up to this point, but not rolling stock. I started with a kitbash of an N-scale Burro crane. The kit was designed as a static model, so I would have to scratchbuild the entire underframe. I did it using Z-scale components and received my first Merit Award.

I had also spent time researching some old Soo Line equipment. Emory Luebke, who was in charge of the Archives at the Soo Line Historical & Technical Society, was a great help in finding scale plans and photos. The prototypes for two of my cars destined for scratchbuilding were at the Rhinelander Railroad Museum that I had helped found, so a field trip was in order to create good plans (I used Cadrail for the projects). The remainder of the cars would be built in HO and HO_{n3}

scales to allow for more detailing. Each of these projects would take about three months to complete, so I planned out the process and kept completing the models. Judging became an issue with COVID in the air, but we coordinated this responsibly. Finally, in September 2021, I completed the last car and was awarded my last Certificate.

Throughout my career, I have always pursued that extra challenge. Within the hobby, this challenge was obtaining the MMR[®]. I can honestly say that I would not have succeeded in this effort without the friendships and guidance that came from my NMRA activities. The only disappointment was that I had waited so long.

Working on the AP requirements enhanced my skills within the hobby, which would have helped me be a better modeler earlier in my years. I encourage anyone who has the MMR[®] as a goal to start early. Plan out how you will attain it, and enjoy each step of the way.

Certificates Earned Steve Miazga, MMR[®] #692

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