

Author Certificate

article and photographs by Stephen M. Priest, MMR

Introduction



I have always had an interest in sharing what I know. Similarly, I have always had a passion for preservation and education. With my first copy of *Model Railroad Craftsman*, which I received at age six, I realized that the written word was powerful in both presentation and longevity. If I could learn to write, then I could learn to communicate while preserving my thoughts indefinitely. That appealed to me and still does today. The act of putting your thoughts down on paper is what the NMRA Author Certificate is all about.

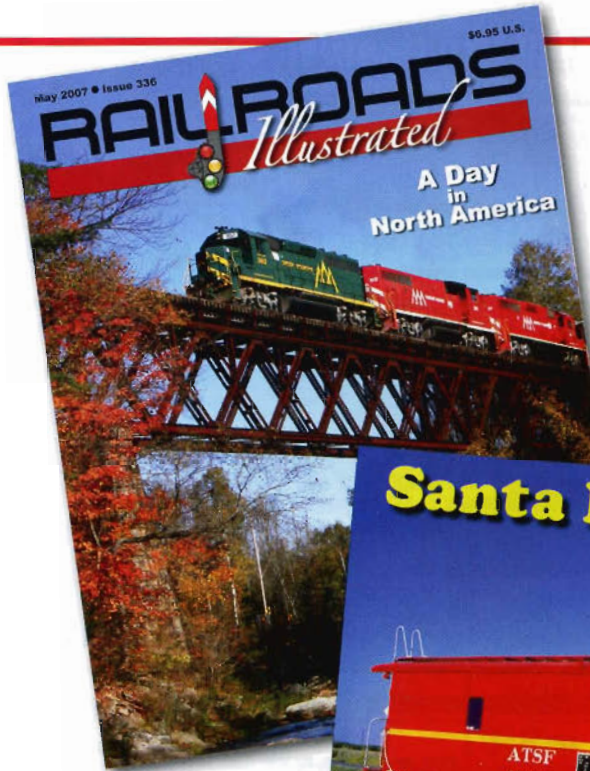
Overcoming fear

Some people are fearful of writing, but speaking is actually more difficult because your thoughts must be created and delivered on the fly. When you write you can take time to rework each sentence. You can tweak its meaning and assign it a specific purpose. You can search through the thesaurus and find words that will aid you in making a particular point in a bold or colorful way. Speaking is a one-shot deal. What you say is what others immediately hear. Don't let your fears of writing overcome your ability to share what you know with others.

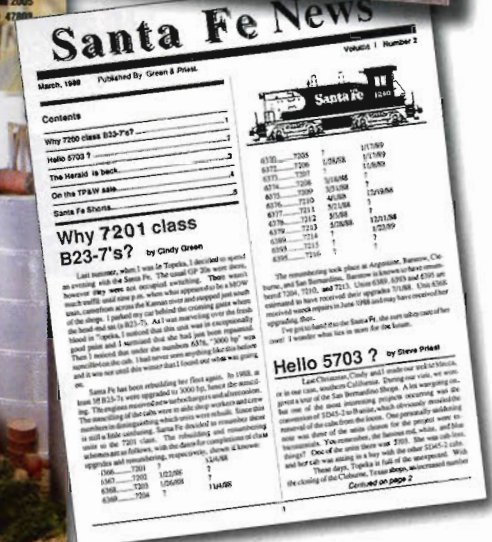
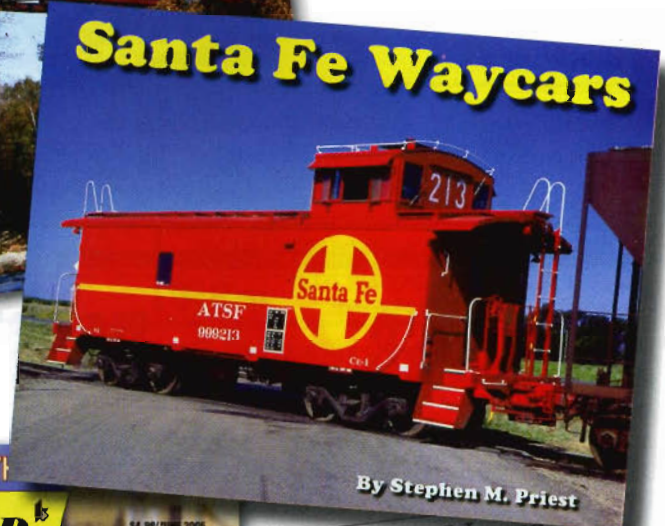
Learning to write

My wife, Cinthia, and I started a small home-based newsletter while in college. We had many friends who worked for the Santa Fe and we felt that there was a lack of good current news on our favorite railroad. So, armed with our sources and a basic knowledge of writing, we headed down the publishing road. We have never looked back. That small newsletter turned into a column with *CTC Board* magazine, and now, my wife is the editor of *Railroads Illustrated*, the successor of *CTC Board*. We have written and/or edited and published 15 railroad books, and are currently working on at least three other books as I type this.

Overall, I think the single most helpful change that has made writing more achiev-



Left and below: Writing manifests itself in many forms from books to magazines to simple articles or newsletters. Each form has its own unique challenges that may include photography, graphics, captioning, and the basic article. Writing is an easy way to capture your thoughts, particularly when attempting to create a "how-to" feature on a project, like these construction of a model. It also preserves those thoughts in an orderly reproducible form. Writing also allows the author to add to his written thoughts later as additional information or research is discovered. With so many advantages, my question is: Why would anyone choose *not* to write?



Above: My first regular monthly publication was a home- (college dorm room) based newsletter featuring current Santa Fe news. This was published by Cinthia Green (now my wife) and me. We had a blast gathering information, sifting through it, and putting it onto paper for others to read.



able for all of us is the introduction of good computers and great writing software. This allows anyone to spell check and proof their grammar prior to sending their writing off to be published. It also allows images and drawings to be quickly added to your manuscript without the hassles of the past.

Qualifying for your certificate:

Earning your Author Certificate is very straight forward. You must create, log, and submit materials on model railroading, prototype railroading (applicable to model railroading), or NMRA administration, reports, and/or web sites. The ultimate goal is to earn 42 points from a combination of your articles, drawings, clinics, and/or electronic publications. Although it should go without saying, all of these creative works should be the work of the individual submitting them for approval. This would include: the text, drawings, photographs, art, or any other part of your submission. You can use the photographs of others in your submissions, but they will not be counted as yours. For example, if you are doing an article on Erie Lackawanna SD45-2s and you use images taken by Larry DeYoung, only your text will be counted toward your certificate. The images are the work of another author included in your article.

Below is a listing of the types of materials you can count toward your certificate. Any or all fields may be used to earn points.

Published articles

Published articles encompass a large variety of things including, but not limited to: your text, photography, CAD and hand drawings or sketches. This material can appear in books, magazines, newsletters, and any other form of printed material. This material must be submitted as proof of publication. Points are then awarded regardless of the size or number of features, drawings, and the like in a particular book or magazine issue. The type of publication will also affect the number of points issued. Simply put, the larger the magazine, book, or newsletter circulation, the more points

issued. Points are earned on a per page basis with credit being offered for writing down to a quarter page in length. A full page is approximately 1,200 words. Check the statement of qualifications for a representative point spread chart.

Live clinics

Although this is somewhat self-explanatory, live clinics are presentations given at conventions or other gatherings. To be eligible for credit, the clinic must be both created and presented by the individual seeking the author certificate. The presentation must be at least 30 minutes in length and must include a handout. A copy of this handout must be included with the certificate application. The point spread is also contingent on where the presentation is given. More points are given for clinics presented at a national convention than at a division level meeting. Check the statement of qualifications for a representative point spread chart. A live clinic can only be counted once, even if the clinic is presented more than once. However, additional presentations of the same clinic can be counted toward the Association Volunteer certificate.

Instructional media and multimedia

This category encompasses presentations that are specifically created by the member applying for the certificate using multimedia. This process encompasses script preparation, storyboard work, and shooting. Simply recording a clinic will not count toward the certificate. For the work to be counted, it must be submitted to the Kalmbach Memorial Library or directly to the Achievement Program Executive Manager for evaluation. Check the statement of qualifications for more information on multimedia work.

Electronic publications

This classification focuses on materials published in an electronic form such as the Internet or PDF publications. This material earns the same points as published articles

**ACHIEVEMENT PROGRAM
MODEL RAILROAD AUTHOR
STATEMENT OF QUALIFICATIONS FORM**
 May 2006 page 1 of 3

Member's Name: _____ NMRA #: _____ EXP: _____

State: _____ City: _____ State Prov: _____

ZIP/PC: _____ Country: _____ NMRA Region: _____

File Submitted: _____ E-Mail: _____ Phone: _____

To qualify for this certificate you must:

1. Prepare and submit material on any of the following subjects:

- Model Railroading
- Prototype Railroading, Application/Modeling
- NMRA Administration (i.g. Officers or Committee Reports)

The material being claimed must be the work of the author, photographer, artist, draftsman, etc. applying for the certificate. A total of forty-two (42) points must be earned from a combination of material in the following areas:

A. Published Articles

This is material that appears in printed media, such as magazines or newsletters and may include text, photographs, drawings, etc. Material that has been published or accepted for publication, may be claimed. A copy of the published material or of the acceptance receipt from the publication must be submitted as proof. Points are awarded regardless of size or number of features appearing in any particular issue.

Item	Points Earned Per Full Page			NMRA Division and USCA
	National Publications	NMRA National	NMRA Region	
Articles or Columns	2	3	2	1
Photos or Art Work	3	3	2	1
Books Drawings of Prototype	6	6	4	2
Books Drawings of Trains Plan	3	3	2	1
NMRA Data RP Short-course Subject	-	6	-	-

• A "page" is approximately 1200 words. Credit may be claimed for partial pages down to quarter pages.

• NMRA Publications (including SRJ publications) with a circulation of more than 2000 may be considered National Publications (those with a circulation of more than 1000 may be considered Region Publications).

• Material published in 100% NMRA Club publications earns half the number of points as for an NMRA Division publication.

• No more than half of the total required points (21) may be claimed for Division or 100% NMRA Club publications.

Above: The paperwork for all the certificates can be downloaded in PDF format from the NMRA web site at <http://www.nmra.org/achievement>. A quick search for your category will get you on your way. I found that by downloading and then printing my paperwork first, I could plan my angle of attack for each of the certificates. The paperwork is well done and can act as both a checklist and project scope guide for your certificate. By reading the certificates, I learned about many aspects that I had not even thought of prior to choosing how or what to do toward a particular category.

that are put to press in regional publications. Check the statement of qualifications for a representative point spread chart. Some guidelines are helpful to keep in mind when publishing electronically. First off, material that is both printed and offered electronically can only be counted once. Secondly, the URL address must be included with the certificate application. The material must be presented publicly and not on a private or subscription service such as Trainorders.com. Not more than 50 percent of the points needed to the certificate can come from electronic publications. Finally, the determination of what type of material can be accepted for credit lies with the AP Department Executive Vice Manager. Check the statement of qualifications for more information on electronic publications.

The Achievement Program is not a contest or judgement, it is a documentation of your skills in a growth environment. In many ways, it is like a good education challenging you to do and learn.