



GREGORY WRIGHT EARNS MMR #520

Getting my MMR has been a journey. Dad and Grandpa were both railroaders so the die was cast. I started out like so many with a Lionel train set about 50 years ago. I liked trains. At first, I loved building model cars, but I quickly found out that there was nothing I could do with them after they were built. Then I flew model airplanes. That way, I got to build things and do something with my models. However, I found myself too often rebuilding the models after the inevitable crash. Finally, at about 15, I got started with model trains.

I was fortunate to work in a hobby shop and meet some model railroaders. They helped me connect with the local club and learn skills that have stayed with me for years. Hobby shop owner and club member Jim Taylor and his modeling friend, John Decker, took me to club meetings, nurtured my modeling skills, and remain close model railroad friends even though they live hours away. I would never have developed my modeling skills, gotten involved with the NMRA, and had my work reviewed for the MMR without the help and encouragement of my local model railroader friends and club members Brian Ferris, Scott Buckley, Scott Gibson, Chuck Ricketts, Jim Sabol, and Jim Younkins. Finally, I could never

have spent the time building models if it hadn't been for my understanding wife, Susan, and family. I never convinced them to share my love for trains, but they have always supported me.

Choices I made as a young modeler really helped me achieve the MMR. I built only one small bedroom-sized HO standard gauge railroad as a teenager. By high school, I was a dedicated narrow gauge. I was able to stay with the narrow gauge, even in college. After college, I was still working in HOn3.

Because funds were limited, I hand-laid turnouts and built models from scratch. With full-time employment and a little room, I started on a bedroom-sized HOn3 layout. I found myself building a

Colorado-style narrow gauge railroad when what I really liked were small industrial lines. In about 1984, while playing with a scale rule and some HO gauge trucks, I happened upon HO gauge in 1:32 scale as 20-inch track. I knew some small mining lines had such a gauge. I built a couple of wood ore cars, I liked the size, and as before, I really liked to build things, especially from scratch. Then, I happened upon some Lindberg 1:32 scale models of cars from the 1930s.

Finally, my scale gauge, era, and theme were set. The scale necessitates lots of scratchbuilding, and that was fine with me. The mining theme allows me to use my background in geology and opens the door to freelancing, which allows me to build whatever I want. I am the company mechanic and put together parts from wherever I can scrounge them, from just about any scale, to make something that fills an operational need.

As my fleet of models and buildings developed, I became interested in operations. I had been exposed to operations way back in the late 1970s as a young modeler, and several local modelers had operational layouts. I wanted to join in, but with a decidedly different emphasis. No 20-car trains for my layout, I wanted trains of four to five cars pulled by geared steam engines up

steep grades and around tight turns. Could I make my concept work for four or five operators for three to four hours? It turns out I could, with DCC and sound—making it both possible and enjoyable.

These decisions — to scratchbuild, to freelance specific equipment to meet specific operational needs, a desire to get my railroad operational so I could host guests, and my preference to finish a scene before moving along to the next layout area — have guided my model railroading efforts for more than 30 years. Because of this direction, my current layout (my third) is fully operational, fully scenicked, and composed of mostly scratchbuilt or heavily modified models. The buildings are large and the scenery even larger. My layout space is the size of a one-car garage, so being constrained to build a highly detailed industrial branch line turned out to be just what I wanted to do.

When it came time to evaluate my models for MMR status, I was able to present my layout and a few items from my HOn3 days to the evaluators. I have also enjoyed sharing my unique combination of scale and gauge. I have hosted many open houses and have given clinics for local and regional NMRA meetings. I have had a number of articles printed on model building in the national press.

My goal in model building was not to be an MMR, but to enjoy model railroading. I am glad that my choices along the way have provided both great enjoyment and my MMR.

Greg received the following Certificates: Model Railroad Engineer—Electrical, Association Volunteer, Model Railroad Author, Master Builder—Structures, Master Builder—Scenery, Master Builder—Motive Power, and Master Builder—Cars.

HELP WANTED

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National NMRA Marketing is looking for a member to volunteer as a Social Media Manager. The candidate would work with the Director of Marketing and maintain all social media platforms (Facebook, Twitter, Pinterest, LinkedIn, Etc.) If you are interested in this position, please send a one-page qualification letter to: Marketing@HQ.NMRA.org.