



MIKE CHANDLER EARNS MMR #489

To state that a transcontinental train trip I made at the age of 14 was an enjoyable vacation would be an understatement. It influenced my entire life from that point onward. I became fascinated with all aspects of railroading in general and trains in particular. Therefore, it was hardly surprising that a few weeks later, when a school friend introduced me to HO scale, I became hooked on model railroading and have remained so to the present time. Additionally, I have remained in HO throughout.

My interest in railroading also resulted in pursuing a career in the railroad industry with Canadian National — a circumstance that kept me close to prototype railroading, but unfortunately distanced me from model railroading due to frequent moves that prevented any serious attempt to construct a layout. Although I joined the railroad as a machinist apprentice, I rose quickly through the ranks to occupy several management positions in CN's motive power department. While most of my career was spent in Western Canada, my longest posting was as Senior Technical Officer Motive Power at CN's system headquarters in Montreal. As you might expect, one of my MMR Achievement Program Certificates is for motive power.

Although I've had the pleasure of attending 11 NMRA National Conventions, they've been widely spread over time with

my first convention being at Vancouver, British Columbia, in 1965. At that time, a fan trip was a standard part of the convention schedule, and with registration then usually around 1,000, it was possible for an all-coach train to accommodate everyone. During the 1965 convention, we ran over CN's Yale Subdivision from Vancouver to Boston Bar and return. Because of that trip so long ago, I can claim to have been on a train trip with John Allen, who was sitting in the same coach a few rows behind me. Of course, John Allen was a model railroad celebrity by that time and consequently everyone in our coach recognized him. Celebrities back then were no different than today, and even though our coach was crowded, John made the entire trip to Boston Bar seated by himself. We were all just too intimidated by his presence to sit next to him. I did not see John on the return trip, and I assume he linked up with some of his friends during the brief layover at Boston Bar and had some company for the ride back to Vancouver.

You will, no doubt, be shocked to read that it's taken me 43 years to earn my MMR! However, although true, that statement is also misleading. I can make that claim because two of the freight cars I used to qualify for my cars Certificate were scratchbuilt in 1969, and while I did some scratchbuilding of structures in the years that followed, I was mostly an armchair model railroader for the next two and a half decades due to frequent moves with CN. By 1996, it appeared that I wouldn't have to relocate again, so we purchased a house with a basement well suited for a model railroad. After all those years of armchair model railroading, I knew exactly what kind of layout I was going to build, even down to the industries and structures it would serve. Due to my years of experience with Canadian National, I also wanted a layout that could be operated in a prototypical manner, and I believe I have achieved that as well. My love of scratchbuilding and hand-laying track initially delayed construction of the layout, but with retirement, progress became more noticeable. Although the layout is still not complete, it has become fully operational with scenery covering more than half of it.

The Achievement Program had been around for a few years by the time I joined the NMRA, and while I was aware of it, the program seemed so far beyond my

reach at that time that I just put it out of my mind. However, as my layout began to progress following retirement, I decided to have another look at it. To my surprise, I discovered that I had accomplished most, if not all, the requirements needed for seven Certificates. With this in mind, I began the necessary paperwork in late 2011; by May 2012, I earned my Car and Motive Power Certificates, which were the last of the seven required. I had already earned Author, Volunteer, Engineer — Electrical, Engineer — Civil, and Structures.

My wife and daughter have been most supportive of my hobby over the years, and my wife even played an unexpected but significant role in developing the operating system for my layout. During a visit to our local church's fall fair sale a few years ago, she discovered a 1929 CN operating rules book. Because the era of my freelanced railroad, the Western Midland, is set in 1938, the book was a good fit, and since that time, we've had many successful operating sessions based on that book.

Old Town
by
Alpine Division Scale Models, L.L.C.
at Your Hobby Dealer or direct from
www.alpinemodels.com

SP - UP - C & NW
TREASURE ISLAND SPECIAL

HO Scale

-Robert Darwin Collection

The Coach Yard
Committed to Excellence
www.thecoachyard.com