



ROBERT ROBBINS EARNS MMR #527

As I stood watching that wonderful steam engine pull into Haverstraw, New York, station with all that steam pouring out, I knew grandmother had arrived for her visit. I could not get enough of that large steam engine with all its whistles and steam. Right there, I was hooked on trains, and for Christmas a Lionel set arrived with its own whistle and steam. Dad helped with my first layout, a mere 4x8-foot sheet of plywood that was completely detailed and refined over the next few Christmases. Then my friend, Alan, next door received an HO train that was about half the size of my Lionel set, so off I went to trade in my Lionel set for a new HO set, and as they say, *the rest is history.*

School, girls, marriage, and kids came along and my trains took a back seat for several years until we bought our first home with a basement. A new layout was only a few steps away. My first son helped build this one that used brass track and was a devil to keep running. A career change came about, and the basement was needed for my business, so trains had to go. As the business grew, more space was needed, so we moved to a larger home, where I built a shop and garage with a room above it for you know what. My learning curve took a sharp turn when my 17x25-foot Pennsylvania layout was found buckled up because I soldered the track together not allowing for expansion. In my anger, it went out the window, and we started over with a new plan for a railroad

in half the space. My two friends, George Marshall and Matt Karius, built their layout in the other half of the room.

This arrangement lasted years until they each bought their own homes and wanted to build a layout in their respective homes. We formed a round robin that helped everyone's layout progress along with great friendships that last to this day. As I aged and my eyesight diminished, a larger scale was in order, and along came On30 — a perfect fit for the time. I started this layout about nine years ago and completed it in about four years. (I'm retired and worked on it full time.) My friend George brought over a friend, Robert, one night and he urged me to attend a NMRA meeting in another division than the one I lived in. With the layout almost completed, I agreed and had a great time meeting many new people interested in the hobby. At the meeting, someone received a plaque for their AP Certificate in Scenery, and I said to myself, *why don't I try for these awards?* I have belonged to the NMRA several times over the years and was seeing the need for an organization to basically hold this hobby together over time.

I sought out the division in my area and started attending meetings. Things started to fall in place for me to achieve my goals and help the organization at the same time. I became the Superintendent and editor of the newsletter in 2012. The job of managing a Division and writing a monthly newsletter is time consuming but also rewarding when you see new members progressing in the

hobby using some ideas that clinic presenters demonstrated at our meetings.

In 2012, I received the AP certificates for Scenery, Structures, Electrical, and Civil Engineering and had to tackle Cars. I had many kit-built cars that scored well from the judges but needed the scratchbuilt ones that took about four months to complete. These varied experiences were challenging and fun and for no other reason one should consider the Achievement Program. I received the AP Certificate for Author by writing the newsletter and being published in three magazines, I earned the AP Volunteering Certificate by being involved in Divisional and Regional activities.

Now that the journey through the AP is completed, I decided to sell my On30 layout to someone in California and start a new layout based in Colorado. I do hope that my tales of the Achievement Program will help others to get involved and venture into new adventures that the AP has to offer.

I would like to thank my wife Marian for being so understanding during this period of time, and maybe someday I will slow down and smell the roses.

Support

nmra
magazine

Advertisers...

They support the NMRA!

Call Cinthia Priest (888) 740-6733 to advertise