



CHARLIE CRAWFORD EARNS MMR 466

Like so many others, my model railroad experience began with an expensive toy train set purchased by a parent to go around a Christmas tree. The only problem was that my wife, Karen, was the parent making the purchase and it was for our children. My son, Tim, being interested in ever longer trains, wanted to visit the local hobby shop for more cars. My daughter, Kristen, was interested in building some small structures. My wife had *me* take them to the hobby shop.

At about that time, we vacationed in the Adirondack Mountains in upstate New York. After a visit to the Adirondack Museum, I was inspired by the railroad history of the area and knew the prototype I would like to model. At the hobby shop, I picked up an open platform passenger car kit similar to one I had seen in a book on the Adirondacks.

In 1997, after a move due to a job transfer, we came to Georgia. Shortly thereafter, I saw modular layouts at train shows for the first time. Later, I wandered into a meeting of the NMRA's Piedmont Division. I was amazed at the number of members who came to the monthly meetings and the varied, interesting programs being presented. Bob McIntyre signed me up as a member. The Piedmont Division also arranges monthly open house layout tours.

The very first one I visited was Charlie Millar's (MMR 471) Grand River Railway. As always, visiting a layout is a learning experience, and Charlie's opened my eyes to what could be accomplished.

Early in my participation in the hobby, I was impressed that it was possible to construct and decorate rolling stock to match a prototype. I began entering the Division's model contests. Thanks to instructive comments from judges like Drs. Nichols and Scott Perry, and with hard work, I earned my first Achievement Program certificate.

At about that time, I became a founding member of the Atlanta Interlocking Model Railroad modular club along with Norm Wizner, Randy Schaefer, Dave Butts, and Barry Schumacher. It's always fun to operate trains on large layouts that are different each time our club gets together. I've been a modular railroader ever since. I really enjoy bringing our hobby to the public.

My involvement in Division activities also increased as I became the video librarian. Rick Coble, the fine editor of our Division newsletter, *The Timetable*, asked me to write a column on the hobby. Usually, I just shared my experiences. It was rewarding when I would get an e-mail or other response from someone touched by what I had written.

The Piedmont Division encouraged the formation of operating groups. Howard Goodwin, our Superintendent at that time, began the North Atlanta Rail Barons operating group. With Jim Travis, Larry Smith, Walt Liles, Perry Lamb, and others, I spent many enjoyable Tuesday evenings working and operating on members' layouts.

By 2006, I had built enough modules to exhibit a 14x14-foot layout depicting the Adirondack Division. That same year, the Garden State Division was hosting a Northeastern Regional Convention

in Parsippany, New Jersey, right between where I grew up and later lived as an adult. I still have lots of family in the area. I asked to exhibit my layout at their convention and was accepted. At the convention, I met Bob Tumielwicz, Norman Frowley, Paul Allard, and many other fine folks from the Northeastern Region. It was also great that my family and friends in New Jersey were able to share in my hobby.

In 2009, my traveling layout had grown to 14x16 feet. The National Train Show was in Hartford, Connecticut, that year. I applied for a space, was accepted, loaded my minivan, and Karen and I traveled to Hartford. The show was a great experience because I met modelers from all over the country. Two MMR's in particular, Jack Hamilton and Leslie Eaton, encouraged my continued participation in the Achievement Program. I entered several modules in the module contest and three earned Honorable Mention awards!

Since 2005, I have been constructing structures and entering Division and Regional contests. I'm always proud to represent my Division in the Regional contests. Finally, in May 2011, at the SER Convention Contest, I earned my sixth Merit Award.

Peter Youngblood, MMR 433, the Piedmont Division's previous MMR (before me) had been urging me to fill out the paperwork for my final AP certificate. Finally, with the Structures certificate out of the way, I took the time to draw the electrical schematics of my layout. Peter and Bill Zawacki (the Piedmont Division's next MMRs) judged my electrical work and documentation worthy of the Electrical AP Certificate.

It may seem that I have mentioned many fellow modelers who helped or encouraged me in my journey to MMR. I do so because I strongly feel that achieving MMR is something you cannot do alone. Many good people were positive influences to me along the way, and I do want to thank them for their aid and encouragement. Now I'll start working on the AP Certificates I'm missing and encourage others to earn their MMR.

Besides AP Certificates for Rolling Stock, Structures and Electrical, Charlie has earned certificates for Volunteer, Chief Dispatcher, Scenery, and Author.