



WILLIAM PAULSELL EARN'S MMR #498

My model railroading career began at age six, when a generous neighbor gave me a Marx New York Central Commodore Vanderbilt passenger train. My dad mounted it on a 3x7 sheet of plywood, and I had great fun with it. Later, I saved up my allowance and bought a Marx freight train. In time, I graduated to Lionel and a layout on the same sheet of plywood. I experimented with scenery and had HO cardboard structures. The fact that they were out of scale didn't bother me in those days. While in junior high school, I moved to HO. I began with a Varney Docksider kit and some Varney paper side boxcars, and the new layout was mounted on the same 3x7 sheet of plywood. Those were the days of Mantua couplers, wooden cars, cardboard structures, and eventually pre-painted metal sides. Plastic did not appear for a while.

During those teenage years, I worked at Bobby Hall's Hobby Shop in Dallas, Texas. The Halls were very good to me, and it was a great experience. I was able to meet many model railroaders and learn from them.

I began college in Texas just as my parents were moving to New York. They thought I had probably outgrown trains and threw away all my equipment. College, seminary, and graduate school did not allow time for any hobbies, but while trying to complete a doctoral dissertation, I vowed that if I ever received that degree I would build a layout again. That provided an extra bit of motivation. After graduation, my wife, Sally, suggested that it was time to buy some model railroading equipment. Who

could ask for a finer wife? She has been supportive of my hobby throughout our marriage and usually goes with me to NMRA conventions.

My first position was teaching in a small college in North Carolina. That area could not have basements, so my layout had to be in the attic. That worked pretty well except in the hot Carolina summers. I was involved in beginning a club and developed some fine friendships in the hobby.

A move to Lexington, Kentucky, provided me with a basement for the first time. I built a 6x12 layout that I enjoyed when professional duties allowed a little time. I was an off and on member of the NMRA then, but there was no active division in which to get involved. The Bluegrass Railroad Club had some NMRA members, and I began to know some really fine modelers.

Relocation to Indiana provided another basement and a larger layout. This is when I began to use DCC. Once again I was involved in developing a club which has since flourished and now has at least one Master Model Railroader.

Retirement back in Lexington meant another basement. Here, I built my best layout. Soon after we moved here an effort was made to establish an NMRA division, Division 10 of the Mid-Central Region. That club has meant much to me. Among its members are some outstanding modelers and at least three MMRs. Two of the members began hosting operating sessions and invited me to participate. That opened a whole new world of model railroading to me. While I loved my layout, it was not

suitable for good operation, so it ended up in the landfill.

My new layout has an unimaginative track plan, but it works well for operation with two major yards, four intermediate ones, and one short spur. Three of us now host monthly operation sessions. I have two a month: one with NMRA members and one with a church group including Hank Sneed, Harry Richart, Tom Lester, and Paul Evans, all of whom currently have six-month trial NMRA memberships.

Several people began to urge me to participate in the Achievement Program. It required me to do many things I never thought I could do, such as hand-lay track, build switches, and scratchbuild cars. However, David Greer, our AP chair at the time, surprised me with the Golden Spike Certificate and encouraged me. I made a false start in trying for the Scenery Certificate. The judges were really nice, but they showed me the deficiencies in my scenery, and left me with a list of things to do. When they returned, the layout looked much better, and I received my first Certificate. That was in 2005. It was followed by Civil and Electrical Engineering. One of the judges, Wendell Greer, helped me use the proper electrical symbols in the documentation, and I received the two Certificates.

I could have received Chief Dispatcher earlier because of all the operation I was involved in, but I didn't start keeping records until later. Finally, I fulfilled all the requirements. Having served three years as Superintendent of Division 10, I received the Association Official Certificate. That left Structures and Cars. Scratchbuilding six structures detailed enough to please the judges was a major effort, but I finally did it.

The thought of scratchbuilding cars terrified me. I knew nothing about brake rigging, air hoses, grab irons, and all the other things that go along with it, but I learned. That is the greatest benefit of the Achievement Program. You will learn so much that will enable you to do things you never thought you could do. Last summer I put on a full court press to finish the certificate and finally did it.

Division 10 has been a real blessing for me, and the friendships have been excellent. I must thank Fred Plymale for organizing the Division and sometimes serving as a judge. Pete Birdsong, MMR, our current AP chair, got me into operation and AP efforts. Pete, Bill Robbins, Lou Jaquith, Larry Smith, Ed Butcher, and Tom Bensberg have been sources of encouragement and regular

operators on my Lexington, Tennessee & Southern Railway. The LT&S has the same initials as my former employer, Lexington Theological Seminary.

Model railroading is a terrific hobby, and the NMRA has made a huge difference in my modeling efforts. I have learned a tremendous amount at conventions, Division meetings, and through friendships. The hobby is more fun when you can do it with others and learn from them. Everyone ought

to get in the Achievement Program. It was a seven-year journey for me, but well worth it. You may think you can't do it, but taking it one step at a time you will learn so much that you will surprise yourself.

William holds the following certificates: Master Builder – Scenery, Model Railroad Engineer – Electrical, Model Railroad Engineer – Civil, Chief Dispatcher, Association Official, Master Builder – Structures, and Master Builder – Cars. 🚂