



**ED BRENNAN, COLONEL, USAF (RETIRED)**  
**EARNs MMR 499**

**W**ow! What a ride! From the earliest days of my enjoyment of Lionel O-Gauge as a child to the most recent endeavors in HO (both on my home layout and at a local club), it's been a fantastic journey toward MMR. I can't begin to express the many joys, occasional frustrations, and, finally, the exhilaration that have traveled with me along the way.

The product of a grandfather who worked and retired as a carman on the former Louisville & Nashville Railroad, a dad who worked for several years in the L&N's South Louisville Shops, and an uncle who had a tremendous love of toy trains, I guess trains were just "in my blood" as they say. Growing up in Louisville, Kentucky, I found the L&N a part of my everyday being. At every turn, there was another encounter with trains. During grade school, my best friend's father worked in Industrial Development for the L&N. We spent a lot of time in the hobby during those formative years.

During high school, trains took a back seat to homework, athletic activities, and, of course, dating. Still, with all those distractions, trains still held tightly to a place in my inner being. Who could forget the General in pieces awaiting restoration in Louisville in 1962? Likewise, the sight of Southern 4501 simmering behind Louisville's Union Station is deeply imbedded in my memory. Imbedded, too, is the memory of that first Varney F3 and a few gondola kits. The F3

bit the dust, but I still have the gons...and they still run!

College, too, presented numerous distractions; train time dwindled, but never completely went away. Following graduation, and the decision to serve in the Air Force, my flying career, marriage, and children took center stage. "Train time" sort of dropped off the map for a few years; time and money just weren't available as we built a household. When my son reached the age where trains fit into his life, my allocation of personal time to the hobby increased again. He and I spent countless hours chasing and photographing trains in such places as Omaha, Nebraska; Council Bluffs, Iowa; Edgemont, South Dakota; Minot, North Dakota; and upstate New York. His favorite railroad is Union Pacific; the memories of the UP we share hold a special place in my heart as well. When my daughter came along, we expanded our collection to the Rock Island. We still have a switcher and several cars I painted for her.

The opportunity to move about the country while in military service afforded me chances to see and photograph many diverse railroads and models. There's been lots of steam, including Norfolk & Western No. 611, UP 844, and Southern Pacific No. 4449, to mention a few. I've seen the UP Centennials in action when they were given a rebirth. Steamtown in Scranton, Pennsylvania, has been a railfan destination more than once. I even spent the night at Tehachapi, California, watching and listening to trains throughout the night under a

star-filled sky! Model train adventures were also a plus as we relocated 18 times in 30 years. Membership in clubs from North Carolina to North Dakota, and personal layout operating sessions from California to New York presented a wonderland of ideas, many of which have been incorporated into my home layout. The personal friendships built during those years will last as long as I do.

What's the point? Throughout over 50 years of "playing with trains," I've come to the conclusion that it's a great hobby filled with some of the nicest people you'll ever meet. Along the way, those people have had a tremendous influence on me...both in the hobby and in life. Whether NMRA members or not, the modelers with whom I've crossed paths were more than willing to share their talents, advice, expertise, and constructive criticism; those gifts have made me a much more comprehensive modeler and, beyond a doubt, a much better person.

Years ago, I'd never even considered the NMRA's Achievement Program. Thanks to the leadership (and prodding) of several Division 8, MCR, members (Jerry Ashley MMR, Joe O'Gara, and Ivan Baugh), a crucial assist from MCR's Bob Weinheimer MMR, continued inputs from a very talented friend Marty Denale, and the continuous support of my wife, JoAnn, and family, as well as the inspiration of some of the finest model railroaders in the world, the dream of Master Model Railroader is now a reality. I can't begin to thank them enough, for in walking the path to this destination, I'm now a much improved modeler....and, hey, I'm still learning. Isn't that what being an MMR is all about? Best of all, I'm even more intent on helping others on their journeys in this wonderful hobby.

I'm humbled when I see the roll call of others who've achieved this designation. It has, indeed, been a fantastic ride! The best part is that it's not over yet. Happy Railroading!

*Ed holds Achievement Program Certificates in Association Volunteer, Master Builder—Cars, Master Builder—Structures, Master Builder—Scenery, Chief Dispatcher, Model Railroad Engineer—Electrical, and Model Railroad Engineer—Civil.*

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