

ERNEST "ERNIE" LITTLE EARNS MMR® 647

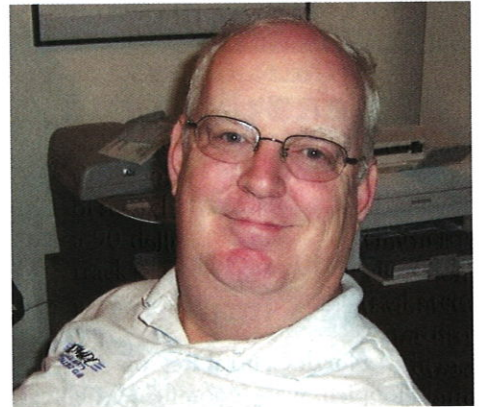
My model train experience started like many others — early in my life, there was a Lionel Hudson locomotive my father allowed me to run on his layout. However, I did not catch the model railroad "bug" until college, where I created my first layout, a 4x4-foot N-scale pike that I later converted to an HO layout after graduation. More than 30 years later, a friend of mine invited me to a train show to see his club's model modular layout, and that was it. It was there I caught the model train bug and have not been able to recover since. I joined a local model railroad club, got introduced to DCC, ran trains prototypically, and even had a few unexpected meets between my train and that of another member. I then constructed a 12x20-foot HO layout in the lower level of my house: the Norfolk Southern Connector Railroad. I still run on it today.

My journey to becoming a Master Model Railroader® began with a conversation between several of my train club members concerning if we, as a group, should participate in the NMRA Achievement Program. One thing that all of us in the group realized at that time was that it would be a challenging task and require all the participants to support, encourage, and advise each other along the journey. For us, the answer to the question was "yes," and our first mission was the Chief Dispatcher Certificate. All of us had been participating in operating sessions on an HO-scale Nickel City Line Railroad, owned by our friend Bob Rodriguez. Our operations hours were tallied, and after several months, we successfully attained the Chief Dispatcher Certificate in April 2009. Next, we took on the Association Volunteer Certificate. All of us had participated in teaching at several train-club-sponsored events such as BSA transportation badge clinics or other clinics at different train shows. After tallying our individual hours, we found each of us had met the requirements of Volunteer in October 2010. Next, each of us did something easy and applied for the Golden Spike Award for our layouts in February 2013.

At this point, a couple of the original group dropped out of the effort due to various reasons, but the remainder continued by taking on the Electrical Certificate. Some of us used a recently constructed club layout

as the basis for the certification work, but I used my HO-scale layout, where I was able to demonstrate my electrical knowledge and skills sufficiently to be successful in attaining the Electrical Certificate in March 2013. I then took on the Civil Certificate challenge of scratchbuilding switches, crossovers, and a 90-degree crossing, as well as creating a track plan of my home layout. One of the group had purchased Fast Tracks templates for a turnout and a 90-degree crossover, as well as the tools to construct them. These items were shared, and each of us purchased the necessary copper-clad ties, wooden ties (in my case, I constructed my wooden ties from basswood), and other detail parts to build the necessary track elements individually. With some coaching and honest critique from the others in the group, I met the Civil Certificate requirements in February 2015. Others in the group have done the same.

I have to admit if it was not for the support, mentoring, and gentle nudging by the other members of my group, I might have stopped here. But with that support, I continued on the quest to MMR® by taking on the Scenery AP and met my first real challenge. I am not an artist, nor do I possess a whole lot of patience when it comes to "detail" work. Rather, I am a person who is very capable of completing the "rough" work, where results can be seen quickly. The "detail" work is challenging for me because I need to see quick results in my work. Detail



work takes time and patience to get to the end of the project when you can finally sit back and see what you did. The Scenery Certificate caused me to have patience and to learn how to paint clouds, create scenes for my trains to operate through, and be creative. In the end, once again, my railroad friends had helped me work my way through this and allowed me to achieve the Scenery Certificate in October 2016.

Decision time, which AP to work on next? Car building, I mean, how difficult could it be to build eight cars? It had to be much easier than building motive power, right? In January 2018, I commenced building my first car, an HO-scale wooden tank car that I had seen in a Kalmbach book. And if you can build one car, why not three more at the same time? So, I undertook scratchbuilding an HO wooden gondola car, an HO-scale stock car, and an HO-scale combine car kit. I completed the builds and

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requested the Division's judge team to come to my house to evaluate the four cars. After the judging was completed, and I had four super-highly detailed cars but no Merit Awards. Honestly, I was very discouraged, but I learned a lot from the judging.

First and foremost was what I had thought was excellent work was not. Rather, it was fair work, and that if I were to achieve this AP Certificate, I would have to learn how to build "craftsman" quality cars. Attention to detail and doing it right had to be a part of my construction technique. My Division AP Chair, Mat Thompson, and I had a good conversation, and he provided me with constructive comments regarding my efforts and what I needed to do to be successful. Bottom line here is that after that conversation, I reworked the tank and gondola cars and was successful in getting my first two Merit Awards. Now I had two Merit Award cars and two super-highly detailed cars, leaving four more to go. I then constructed two more cars, a cylindrical hopper and a tobacco hogshead car, which both received Merit Awards on the first judging attempt. I had learned better construction techniques and improved the car

quality. I constructed two more highly detailed cars, which were kits, to complete the Car Certificate requirements in September 2019.

In the middle of the Car Certificate mission, I was experiencing some frustration and needed to get a feel of accomplishment to keep me moving forward on the MMR® challenge. I looked at the Author Certificate requirements and found that I had sufficient published materials to meet them and just needed to document my work and create a website. I had no knowledge of website construction, but once again, my fellow model railroaders helped me pick a host and critique the website I created to allow me to have something worthy of submitting for the AP. Something that I thought was complex turned out to be relatively easy, and in no time, I had attained the Author Certificate in April 2019.

With the completion of the Car Certificate requirements, I now met the requirements of Master Model Railroader® and filed my paperwork for both at the same time. I became the second in the group to earn MMR®, and the others are following behind me. I now have an opportunity to

share with them what was shared with me to help them be successful.

That is my story on how I became an MMR®, and before I forget, I need to thank my loving wife, Joyce, for allowing me the time to work on this endeavor and providing support on my effort. Also, I cannot forget to thank fellow Potomac Division model railroaders Mat Thompson (my Division AP Chair), Bob Rodriguez, Pete LaGuardia, and Bryan Kidd, and many other model railroaders — all of whom provided me support, advice, and sharing their experiences to get me through this challenge.

Certificates Earned
Ernest "Ernie" Little, MMR® 647
Chief Dispatcher
Association Volunteer
Model Railroad Engineer -
Electrical
Model Railroad Engineer -
Civil
Master Builder - Scenery
Model Railroad - Author
Master Builder - Cars

FROM HEADQUARTERS

WESTERN DISTRICT DIRECTOR ELECTION RESULTS

Rick Coble, Secretary

Didrik A. Voss, MMR® has been elected Western District Director to fill the Board of Directors seat vacated at the 2019 National Convention in Salt Lake City, Utah. This election was limited to voting members of the Western District.

Vote Tally

Didrik A. Voss, MMR®	396
Larry Alfred, MMR®	354
Mark Juett	320
Misc. Write-In	14
Abstention	35

Please note the results aren't considered official until the Board of Directors meets this March in Atlanta and accepts the report of the Ballot Committee.

Online voting was conducted using Electionbuddy. Paper ballots were produced, sent, and collected by CAO Jenny Hendricks and her staff, and counted by the Ballot Committee, chaired by Steve Studley.