



## FRANK MARKOVICH EARNS MMR #514

**F**rank did not start out being a model railroader but rather a model builder. He did receive an American Flyer train set as a child that he shared with his two brothers. They were more like Gomez on “The Adams Family.” They started out just running the trains in an oval and then put up wood blocks to knock them over. This didn’t last long. Shortly thereafter, Frank received his first plastic Revell kits, mainly military and some auto kits. From there, he went on to build control line airplanes and flew RC planes with his cousin Ray. Frank was good at building but not very good at flying. This frustrated him since he spent hours building an airplane just to have it crash on the first or second flight.

During his college years, Frank wandered into Franciscan Hobbies in San Francisco, California, and started looking at trains. He made an immediate connection — trains don’t crash and have lots of challenges for modeling. He was hooked but didn’t know where to start. He built a small 4x8-foot layout in HO and ran trains for hours at a time while studying.

Realizing he needed scenery and structures, Frank bought his first Campbell kit and some Central Valley car kits in HO. While at another hobby store he saw some structures built by Colin Emerson and contacted him. Colin took him to a Coast Division of the PCR meet at Riordan High School in San Francisco, California. There, Frank met Mic Greenberg and Gary Nash. He now had a group of friends who were great structure builders. Colin and

Mic helped Frank with advice on his first scratchbuilt structures. Frank entered them in a contest and won 2nd and 3rd. As his modeling skills developed, Frank began receiving some first place awards for his scratchbuilt structures.

About the same time, Frank met his wife, Susie, of more than 35 years; they were married in Sonora, California, not far from Tuolumne, where Westside Lumber was located. Frank had by this time started to really love narrow gauge and particularly logging. He started to build a second, much larger layout in HOn3. He loved the small, geared locomotives but found that they just didn't run all that great. At a PCR meet in Santa Rosa, California, he watched an Iron Horse On3 T-boiler shay just crawl back and forth on a track. That was it — he switched to On3 and has never looked back.

The Markovich family, now with two great children, Frankie and Michael, moved to Belmont, California. The new house did not have an ideal place for a layout, so Frank had a basement room added. The contractor removed more than 40 yards of dirt and rock and redid the foundation, adding bracing to the house and pouring a concrete slab. Frank finished off the room himself. With permitted time and so forth, this took more than four years to complete.

Then, Frank and Susie had a daughter, Christine. Between the three children and Frank's work as an electrical engineer and music teacher at the Skyline Community College in San Bruno, California, not much was done on the layout for some time.

As the children got older, Frank had more time to work on his layout. He based it loosely off Westside Lumber but named it Twain Harte & Sonora Pass Railroad. Frank and his family have a cabin near the old Westside Lumber in Twain Harte, California, about 10 miles from Westside. The layout's vision is to be a logging railroad set in late 40s in foothills and Sierras. The center point is Twain Harte, just north of Yosemite Park. The railroad heads east toward Beardsley Lake. Its mission is to represent what a logging line might have looked like in the Twain Harte area. The railroad is based loosely on the West Side Lumber and Pickering Lumber Companies along with other logging railroads in the Sierras.

The layout is about 85 percent complete and was featured in the *Narrow Gauge and Short Line Gazette's* Nov/Dec 2010 issue. The layout is in a 16x22-foot finished room. Frank is also a member of an On30 modular group, The Yosemite Short Line.

Frank earned the Golden Spike Award, and then, with encouragement from many, including Jack Burgess and Bob Brown, Frank went about getting the necessary awards for the MMR. He already had Volunteer and Author since he ran contests and youth programs for the Division and PCR and wrote numerous articles for the *Gazette*, *Coast Dispatch* and the *NMRA Magazine* — formerly known as the *NMRA Bulletin* (at one time he had a regular column on narrow gauge). Frank is currently the PCR Coast Division's superintendent.

To attain MMR, Frank did a project plan that mapped out each step needed for each award, down to the small details. He tracked that weekly and was able to finish in a couple of years' time. Frank found that to complete the various categories was both a challenge and a learning opportunity. He found that he actually liked scratchbuilding switches as an example.

Frank has retired from engineering but not from teaching. Frank and Susie now have four grandchildren; the older ones love to watch his trains run and to ride on full-size trains. Besides scale model railroading, Frank teaches guitar at Skyline Community College and plays in his church worship team. In modeling, Frank's real love is still in building, mainly scratchbuilding using wood. His next big project is a sawmill. He has been building the machinery for the sawmill and will start construction by the end of this year. You can see the track plan and photos at [www.frankmarkovich.com/Twain%20Harte%20Sonora%20Pass.htm](http://www.frankmarkovich.com/Twain%20Harte%20Sonora%20Pass.htm).

Frank welcomes visitors — please email in advance to [frank@frankmarkovich.com](mailto:frank@frankmarkovich.com).

*Frank earned the following Certificates: Master Builder—Structures, Model Railroad Engineer—Civil, Master Builder—Cars, Master Builder—Scenery, Model Railroad Engineer—Electrical, Model Railroad Author, and Association Volunteer.*