



BRIAN W. SHERON EARNS MMR #469

Like most model railroaders, I was introduced to model trains as a child, and the fond memories and fun I had provided the impetus for me to get back to model trains when my oldest son (who is now 36) turned 5. While model trains did not stay in his blood, they remained in mine.

So what got me interested in the Master Model Railroader program anyway? Well, I've been working on my third layout (The Long Island Rail Road, Port Jefferson Branch, circa 1964) since we moved into our third and current house in 1988. My layout was fairly complete by 1996, and was a featured article in the September 1997 issue of *Railmodel Journal*.

I actually "burned out" on model railroading about that time (as I told people, one too many drops of solder fell on my ankles while I sat cross-legged under the layout wiring up turnout machines), and turned my attention to learning to play the banjo and restore classic wooden boats as hobbies. However, in 2004 the Potomac Division's layout tour coordinator asked if I would be willing to host an open house/lay-

out tour. I was at first hesitant, but decided it was time to get back to the railroad, and I therefore agreed. I cleaned up the layout and got it back to a sufficiently operational condition for the open house.

Once back into the hobby, I discovered and became fascinated with DCC and sound locomotives. This led to me to completely rewire and convert my layout for DCC operation. I also finally cleaned out a room in the basement adjacent to my layout room, and was able to expand my railroad to add the New York City Pennsylvania Station terminus. Following these improvements, I was again asked by the Division to host an open house in May of 2008. Subsequent to the open house, Tom Brodrick, a member of our Division who had visited my layout, asked me if I'd like to join him and others in his group in an operating session at his house. I had never participated in an operating session, didn't know what to expect, or if I'd like it, but figured I'd give it a try.

I went to the session with Tom and his operations group and had a great time, since it opened up a whole new aspect of model railroading for me. I assume I didn't offend anyone or screw up too badly, since the group invited me back, and by July I was asked to host my first operating session. It turned out that a number of the members in the operations group were also active in our division, including the division superintendent, Marshall Abrams. In October 2008, Marshall approached me and asked if I'd

like to be the Achievement Program (AP) Coordinator for the Potomac Division. I said "Sure. What's an Achievement Program?"

Well, I quickly familiarized myself with the NMRA's Achievement Program by gathering and reading all the information I could about it and learning what my duties were. I also found out that as the AP coordinator, I had to write a column for the quarterly division newsletter. But what could I write about? Figuring I could kill two birds with one stone, I decided that the best way to learn about the Achievement Program was to participate in it and try to earn Achievement awards. That way I could use my learning experience as a source of information for my quarterly column. Not quite three years later, I completed the requirements for the Master Model Railroader (MMR) certificate.

I think that if working towards achieving my MMR certificate taught me anything, it was to become a better modeler. Working through the requirements was a challenge. But challenges are good. They force you to do better and achieve results of which you probably thought you weren't capable.

(Certificates earned: Author, Volunteer, Model Railroad Engineer-Civil, Model Railroad Engineer-Electrical, Chief Dispatcher, Master Builder-Cars, Master Builder-Scenery)