



### ROGER WALKER EARNS MMR # 506

I grew up in London during and after the war. Model trains were scarce, and my love of railroading came from watching the prototype. We lived very close to the LNER mainline from London to Edinburgh, and I spent many hours watching the A Class Pacifics racing by. The London terminals were a short ride away by Underground, and even more hours were spent at Paddington watching the beautiful Kings and Castles. In my teenage years, I got a Hornby Dublo train set, but never had the space to set up a layout.

After university, I went to Baltimore for post-doctoral work, and met my wife, Gay. She had no idea of my love of trains until

we went back to England for a visit and my mother insisted that I clear all that “stuff” out of my old bedroom cupboard. Gay was surprised at all the railroadiana!

By that time (1966), we had moved to Canada, where I began teaching geology at McMaster University. The following Christmas, she gave me a Tyco train set with a circle of track. Of course, it began to grow. By chance, I got to know some other modelers in the area, particularly Keith Murphy and David Lee (MMR #27). David took one of my cars to a regional NMRA meet, and to my astonishment it took a third place. With his encouragement, I began serious car building, and by 1978 I had my Master Builder—Cars Certificate. I also had a partially built HO layout in the basement,

based on an imaginary northern Ontario mining road.

In 1973, we spent several months working in Colorado, where I fell in love with the Rio Grande narrow gauge. On our return to Canada, we moved to a larger house, and the new basement began to fill with a Rio Grande layout in HO<sub>n3</sub>. After a few years, I found that I could not get the required level of detail into an HO<sub>n3</sub> car, and I changed to On3. Most of my cars were scratchbuilt except for the Gramps tank cars and Pile Driver OB and Derrick OP.

By this time, career and family had taken over, and I stopped entering contests and going to meetings. The On3 layout expanded slowly, and in 1998, I left McMaster University and moved to Calgary as a consultant in oil and gas exploration. These were the boom years in the oil and gas industry, and I had little modeling time. I began a 4x8-foot On3 module using the cars and structures that I had brought with me from Ontario. Then one year I went to "Supertrain," the largest model train show in Canada. On display was a modern diesel with sound. I had never seen such detail in a diesel, nor had heard such effective sound.

Because I lived within sight of the Canadian Pacific mainline west of Calgary, I decided to buy a Canadian Pacific AC4400 with a couple of well cars with containers to run up and down a shelf above the Rio Grande. I installed sound in the AC4400 and loved the results.

The scratchbuilt On3 cars were taking several months of leisure time each to build, so I decided that if I wanted an operating layout, it would be a contemporary HO operation based on Canadian Pacific. After I retired in 2005, the one diesel and two well cars quickly expanded into a basement-filling layout incorporating one spiral tunnel (no room for both), a large switching yard with engine terminal, and many different industries. At the suggestion (or insistence) of Barry Conn, I joined the Calgary Model Railway Society (CMRS), and as a result of expressing some ideas and opinions, found myself on the Board of Directors. I have been responsible for organizing clinics at our semi-annual meetings for the last three years. As many other modelers have discovered, the more I got involved with CMRS, the wider my circle of friends became. At the same time, I re-joined NMRA.

Inspiration for my CP layout came from many of the excellent layouts in the Calgary area. In particular, I worked on Elmer Holm's layout with Barry Conn, Glen Judd, and the late Al Peirce, and most of what I have learned about the electrical side of railroading came from Barry and Glen.

As a geologist, I have paid special attention to rocks and scenery, and the area around my spiral tunnel and the adjacent gorge contains more than 100 individually applied rock castings made from my own molds. The castings have all been painted with acrylics. With the scenery more or less finished, I contacted the AP chairman for the Pacific Northwest region and was visited by evaluators Dale Sproule and Doug Wingfield, MMR. The scenery received an AP Certificate, as did the structures. Their suggestions led to a second visit, and the awarding of Certificates for Chief Engineer, Civil, and Electrical. My Author Certificate was relatively easy to achieve, particularly because I had spent my career writing technical papers for various geological journals. With six Certificates, I had to decide which to work on next. I chose Chief Dispatcher, partly because I had enjoyed many operating sessions on Elmer Holm's and Brian Key's layouts. However, I knew nothing about dispatching. After a year of learning, experimenting, and operating my own layout with various friends, particularly Stuart and Riley Ross, the NMRA evaluators again visited the layout. Fortunately, the layout behaved perfectly, and I was awarded my final certificate.

The NMRA Achievement Program has stimulated me to learn many aspects of the hobby that I would otherwise have ignored, and I consider the Achievement Program to be one of the most important components of NMRA. However, it is the friends I have made in Calgary that have really enriched my enjoyment of the hobby, along with the constant encouragement of my wife Gay. She had no idea of what she was starting with the Tyco train set!

When I am not working on the layout, you might find me trackside with my Nikon, on my skis, or mountain biking. I may also be train chasing with two of my train-crazy grandsons.

*Roger holds the following AP Certificates: Master Builder-Cars, Master Builder-Scenery, Master Builder-Structures, Model Railroad Engineer-Electrical, Model Railroad Engineer-Civil, Model Railroad Author, and Chief Dispatcher.*

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