



## GEORGIA DAHLBERG EARNS MMR #472

**M**y first encounter with a steam locomotive occurred in Boston, Massachusetts, when I was two or three years old. My mother was pushing me up a hill in a stroller. As we passed a board fence, I could see a locomotive puffing and rolling toward us pulling a string of passenger cars.

Just as we came to the middle of a steel bridge over the tracks, the engine passed under us with its thunder, vibration, and noise. The smoke and steam squirted through knot-holes in the wooden sidewalk, making smoke rings in front this little kid's nose. My love affair with railroads began at just that instant. I just had to know more!

We had the usual Lionel railroad layout in the basement. I did many chores to get the \$12 to buy an HO Fairbanks-Morse loco from the hobby shop in my hometown of Malden, Massachusetts. When I got it home, the F-M unit very realistically vibrated and smoked on two of the three rails of our Lionel layout, at least for a few minutes, then it burned out. Thus began my education in DC electricity at age 12. While in high school, I had the pleasure of riding the Southern Pacific *Daylight* from Los Angeles to Salinas, California, to visit one of my uncles. This is when I came to admire the SP and its cab-forwards. At Norwich University in Vermont, I started a model railroad club and was its president for the first year. In those days we did a lot of club model building and had the joy of running trains down many three-foot pieces of track assembled down dorm corridors. I graduated in 1962 with a BS in Civil Engineering and a commission in the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

After a little work on Los Angeles freeways and a brief re-acquaintance with the SP, I was shipped to Europe and served as an Accountable and Engineering Supply Officer for the Post Engineer in Verdun, France. I

had charge of a three-mile stretch of track serving the ammunition supply depot where we were shipping leftover WWII ammo to Vietnam. A French colonel gave a talk about the railroad conditions in Vietnam at the officer's club one night. The next morning, I was on the deck of our diesel switcher talking with him mainly about HO model railroad-ing as we checked the condition of my three miles of track. At the end of my tour, I had the fun of riding 100 miles in the cab of a 1915 British Consolidation hauling limestone to the Ruhr Blast furnaces. The French crew laughed at my new white coveralls, and I was impressed at just how dirty I was when we returned to Verdun. That trip of a lifetime capped the end of my two-year tour.

Back in the USA in 1967, I worked as a structural engineer, got married, had a family with two kids, and moved from "pillar to post." Model railroading was always a hobby, even if I was too busy to do much of it. At least I could accumulate kits and dream. By 1995, the kids were grown and gone and the marriage ended as well. I moved to Cincinnati, Ohio, for a new life. People told me I was a pretty good modeler, but I never thought I could win any contests.

Friends convinced me to enter my 1920-era, four-stack, flush-deck WWI destroyer in a local contest, and it won several prizes in Cincinnati and Best-in-Show in a contest in Charleston, West Virginia. I also built a 20x40-foot two-story addition to my house in Williamstown, Kentucky, specifically to build my dream layout at last. I joined the NMRA in 2005 and gave clinics at the National Convention in Cincinnati and Regional conventions while out west with the Cajon Division, PSR. I met Charlie Getz there. He chided me for not being in the Achievement Program and at least getting an AP Certificate in Civil Engineering. This started me working with Frank Koch to qualify for various AP awards. I have also been fortunate to win awards at Division 7, MCR contests. I am amazed that more of our members have not qualified for the MMR. All it takes is some patience and a little time doing what we all love to do. Model railroading is a great hobby for everyone and it certainly has been for me.

*Georgia has earned the following certificates: Civil and Electrical Engineering, Master Builder Cars, Structures, Scenery, Prototypical Modeling, and Model Railroad Author.* 