



**JOSEPH GELMINI EARNS MMR #502**

I have been interested in trains, they tell me, since age two. Growing up in the Baltimore area, my favorite railroad was Western Maryland, with Baltimore & Ohio being a close second. I still remember waiting on the passenger platform at Camden station hoping to see the new diesels, and being disappointed when a B&O president class Pacific pulled in! I got my first train set, a Marx O-27, at age 4 and then several American Flyer S-gauge sets after that. My parents were supportive and allowed me to keep the trains going long before and long after the traditional holiday season. I spent many winter nights poring over the AC Gilbert catalogs planning and dreaming about that mighty empire I would someday build. On many Saturdays I would ride the No. 4 streetcar to downtown Baltimore to visit French's Hobby Store and M.B. Klein's. Looking at all the HO trains they had on display made my AF equipment pale by comparison. So my lawn-mowing and paper route money funded my first Athearn "Hi-F" drive F7, the supersonic Hustler switcher, and some Athearn blue-box freight cars.

As a teenager, I got more and more into HO and stayed with that through my college years. My interest in trains led to a railroad career, first with the Pennsylvania Railroad as a brakeman/flagman working "under the wires" out of Potomac Yard; and from 1969 to 1982 with Southern

Railway, and then Norfolk Southern from 1982 until retirement. After 35 total years of railroad service, I retired in 2001 from Norfolk Southern as Director of Training & Development.

I was married in 1968 and carried the HO trains around through several job-related moves. As our three children arrived between 1970 and 1976, there was never room to build much other than a couple 4x8 switching layouts. In 1976, we moved to a house with no room for anything in HO. A model railroad buddy from work was moving into On30 and offered me his N scale equipment, which included a nice Atlas GP30 and a bunch of Kadee (now Micro-Trains) cars. I carved out some space in the basement between laundry appliances and the furnace to set up a small "test" layout. By 1983, we moved to Roanoke, Virginia, into a house with an 18x20-foot spare room in the basement. Here, I began my first serious N scale layout, selling the HO equipment that had traveled with me for 20-plus years to finance my journey into N scale. Another move to Georgia in 1988 finally gave me the opportunity to purchase a large basement with a suitable house on top of it for the family. The trains remained packed while I spent a year prepping the basement with drywall, electrical, flooring, and a drop ceiling. During this time, I joined the Piedmont Division of the Southeastern Region and started meeting some other model railroaders in the area, which even included some N-scalers! By now my train interests were in

Southern and Central of Georgia, and my first layout culminated with several tours of the layout during the 1995 NMRA National Convention in Atlanta. Following my retirement in 2001, I tore down that layout and started fresh because I wanted something better suited for operations. The Georgia Great Southern is my current home layout, occupying a 25x55-foot area in my basement.

My experience with the Piedmont Division led to many friendships and my initial exposure to the Achievement Program. One of my early acquaintances was the late Mike Callahan, MMR 134. Mike was a hard-drinking, cigarette-smoking, joke-teller of a guy who did his best modeling in the wee hours on his living room coffee table. But his modeling was superb, and many of his award-winning dioramas are destined for the Howell Day Museum. Another inspiration early on was Joe Nichols, Sr., MMR 48. A complete personality contrast to Mike, Dr. Joe is a true Southern gentleman and an outstanding modeler who has mentored many a model railroader over the years. More recently, Southeastern Region MMRs Bob Beaty, Glen Hall, Ben Bartlett, and, Piedmont Division MMRs Peter Youngblood, Charlie Crawford, Bill Zawacki, and Charlie Millar have all supported and encouraged me on my journey. I can only hope to do as much for others in the future.

My retirement provided a lot more flexibility in time, so as a small way to give back to the hobby that served me so well, I decided to get more involved in Division and Region activities. I have been a Piedmont Division director and served as Director of Administration for the Division for four years. Also, I am the Show Manager of the Piedmont Division's annual Model Train Show and an instructor for the Division's Boy Scout Merit Badge program. I served as Southeastern Region (SER) Vice President for four years and have been region President since June 2010. In February 2013, the NMRA Board of Directors appointed me Eastern District Director, filling the remainder of the term of the late John Roberts, HLM, MMR.

In addition to the Golden Spike, I earned AP Certificates for Association Volunteer, Association Official, Master Builder-Cars, Model Railroad Author, Chief Dispatcher, Master Builder-Scenery, and Model Railroad Engineer-Electrical.