

STEPHEN WOOD EARNS MMR # 507

**M**y entry into railroading and model railroading began as a young boy in New York when my grandfather took me to Harmon Yards for my birthday in 1965. It



was an experience that lit a fire under me. My first train set was a 1966 Christmas present from my parents. It included a small HO scale NYC switcher and several cars, and it still runs. In 1970, we moved again. This house had a small room next to Dad's home office, where I set up a sheet of plywood for the layout and could run two trains at the same time. Dad began to teach me how to make the old plastic kits. At 17, this was put on hold and the trains were put into boxes; I enlisted in the Army, serving overseas and then returning to the States.

There were numerous civilian jobs and home relocations. In 1998, I settled into my

present location. Then came the fourth layout, which I called the CLSC&W Railroad. The property has a building, which is perfect for a train layout. It is 45 feet long by 25 feet wide. In 2004, both Dad and I joined the NMRA. It was also time to get some help building a new layout, and I called Dad. His name is Charles L. Wood, which accounts for the "CL" in the name of the railroad.

I studied several books on L-girders and DC. I had not yet heard of DCC. It took 12 years to complete that layout, which had two freight lines on the lower level and two passenger lines (including curves with a 42-inch radius) on the upper level. The free-standing layout had a dreaded pop-up area. After about four years, the yard was added onto with more than 20 classification tracks. With this expansion and other issues, I realized it was quite difficult to reach many places on that layout. I tore it down in the spring of 2012. I am now building my fifth and final layout. It features four mainlines, a coach yard, freight yard, a freight staging area, and more than 15 industries/sidings. Best of all, it will be DCC.

In my personal life, I have a very understanding wife from the Republic of Panama. I am grateful for her allowing me time, not only at home but away at conventions and operating sessions, all of which helped me complete my MMR. I also have three wonderful girls.

I would also like to thank all the men and women from the Carolina Southern Division 12. They allowed me to attend and take part in operating sessions and signature programs. I thank also all the people who judged my models, cars, and

layout, and I really appreciate all the great feedback they gave me over the years. I appreciate my mother's allowing Dad the time to help me and teach me as well as her driving the hour and a half each way to bring Dad to the layout. In closing, I would like to thank our Regional AP Chairman, Charlie Flichman, who guided me and helped me through all the AP paperwork.

*Stephen earned the following AP Certificates: Master Builder—Cars, Master Builder—Structures, Master Builder—Scenery, Model Railroad Engineer—Electrical, Chief Dispatcher, Association Volunteer, and Model Railroad Author.*