

JOHN MACGOWN EARNS MMR # 517

Why I Love Model Railroading

It started on my seventh birthday (December 18, 1934), and Christmas that same year when I received a Lionel O gauge train set. That train set was placed under the Christmas tree for many holiday seasons. As the train set assumed a life of its own, it was placed on a plywood table in the basement so I could play with it year round. Cars and structures were added every holiday. My father helped me build a turntable. I was the envy of all my friends.

Gradually, schoolwork and girls stole time away for the trains, and World War II was upon us. At 17, I enlisted in the Navy. When on leave from boot camp, I went to the basement to view my empire, and to my amazement it had disappeared. When I questioned my Mom, she said that she thought I no longer liked to play with trains and sold them to a neighbor. I was dumbfounded.

After the war, I returned to school and earned a degree in Graphic Arts and married my high school sweetheart, Evalyn. We now have a family of five children, 14 grandchildren, and 12 great-grandchildren.

Eventually, I tired of the daily commute into New York City. I knew I had gained enough experience to start my own graphics arts shop, so opened an office three blocks from my home in Valley Stream. I handled mostly technical / industrial accounts, such as Union Carbide, U.S. Rubber, Nuclear Associates, Amprobe, Slater Electric, and Brownell Electric.

My interest in model railroading had returned. I started to read the model publications, dreaming about my new layout. I bought two Campbell kits to see if I liked HO scale. I enjoyed them a lot; the next step was to see if I could scratchbuild. I selected the Brooklyn Manor station on the Long Island Rail Road for my first project, since it was near my home and I had used it many times. After taking many photos and measurements, I drew a set of plans. The real challenge was to build it on a steep grade. It won prizes on both the Divisional and Regional levels.

I joined the Rockville Centre Model Railroads to get my feet wet and stayed with them for 18 years. During that time, I learned many handy things such as how to build turnouts and make diode matrices (to control turnouts). I accumulated most



of my time for Chief Dispatcher operating their large layout.

I joined the NMRA in 1972 and became active in the Sunrise Trail Division almost immediately. Over the years, I have served the STDiv as President, Vice President, Director, Achievement Chairman, and Contest Judge and the Northeastern Region as Secretary. I have also enjoyed presenting many clinics.

About five years after joining the NMRA, I began the long, slow journey that culminated in my recently becoming a Master Model Railroader (MMR 517) by

earning the Master Builder Structures AP Certificate (March 1977). This was followed by Model Railroad Engineer-Civil (July 1978), Model Railroad Engineer – Electrical (August 1980), Association Volunteer (January 1982), Model Railroad Author (August 1982), Master Builder-Cars (May 2006), and finally Chief Dispatcher (November 2013).

I have been building my dream HO and HO3 layout (the Evenston & Johnston R.R. Co.) for many years. When will it be finished? Never, I hope.

I have made many friends as a result of belonging to the Rockville Centre Model Railroaders, the NMRA, and the Sunrise Trail Division. Sadly, some like Roger Ramsdell, MMR 155 and Buzzy Washington have passed on. Thanks also goes to Walter Neumen, MMR 205, Steve Perry, Ludwig Riemenschneider, Mike Siegel, and Dwayne Yorke, for their help and friendship over the years. Thank you too NMRA and model railroading. Last but by no means least, a big thank you goes to Evalyn, my wife of 63 years, for her loving support.

Upgrading your fleet?

Changing eras?

Switching prototypes?

Changing scales?

Cleaning out
the basement?

Moving?

Lightening your load?

Selling
non-railroad
stuff?

**Don't forget to choose
the NMRA
as your ebay charity!**