



P.J. MATTSON EARNS MMR #467

I got my first train for Christmas when I was five years old. It was an American Flyer "S" gauge train. I had a small platform in the basement to run it on. I don't know what happened to that train.

When I was 16, my father was killed in an unfortunate motorcycle accident. I had a neighbor named Paul Gaunt that took me under his wing and introduced me to HO trains. He had me join club that was in the third floor of another person's house. I was given a section to model all my own. Something happened and we had to dismantle the layout and the club disbanded. I still have the hump yard in my garage tacked to the rafters in the roof.

During this time, I got a Tyco work train. It was my first HO gauge train. It was yellow and had a 0-4-0 engine, a flat car with a crane, a gondola, and a work crew car. I still have this train.

The group attempted to get clubs started a few more times. We did have a nice layout going in the third floor of Pitman's municipal building. We also sponsored a Cub Scout group. This lasted about five years, and again we had to dismantle the layout. Later, I was drafted and went to Vietnam. I had started a layout in my mom's third floor apartment. I then met my now wife and when we decided to marry I looked for a home with a basement for the trains. The Raccoon Valley Railroad was born.

One day Pappy, Paul Gaunt, called me about going with him on a Friday night. This got me involved with a group known as the South Jersey Friday Night Operators. The then New Jersey Division Superintendent

was part of the group and he encouraged me to join the NMRA.

I became involved as the Registrar for the NMRA's National Convention in 1993 — the Valley Forge Express. To get ready for this, I did the Markers '89 MER convention. After the National, I was the Register/Treasure for the Jersey Limited in 1996. I then was named the Registrar/Treasure for all MER conventions.

All the volunteer work I did for these events led to my AP Volunteer Certificate. Off and on over the next 20 years, I did other AP certificate work. I was later appointed the AP Director for the New Jersey Division.

The layout in my basement expanded as the kids moved out and I got more space. It became one of the layouts operated by the South Jersey Friday Night Operators. I became a Director on the MER board and I now serve as MER's vice president. I am now a life member.

I worked as a Chemical Emergency Responder for the DuPont Corporation until I retired. I am also a volunteer fireman

for my home town Woolwich Fire Company, where I was Chief for 14 years.

I plan to continue working on other AP awards. I have one thing to say to all modelers: If I can do this, so can you. It takes some effort and dedication, but you will find it is not as hard as you think it is.

P.J. has earned the following certificates: Dispatcher, Volunteer, Electrical Engineer, Scenery, Civil Engineer, Official, and Motive Power.



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