Conducted by Pete Moffett, MMR, AP Chair

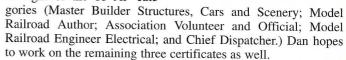# "I think I can,' is N-scaler's motto

Dan Lewis earns MMR #268

Unlike most model railroaders, Dan Lewis never played with Lionel or American Flyer trains as a kid. In fact, his introduction to scale model railroading came after he was a college professor, when he traded an old set of golf clubs for a box of HO equipment that he assumed would become toys for his two-year-old son. As it turned out, before his son was old enough to play with it, Dan built his first layout, later giving away or trading the whole lot to switch to N scale. That was more than 20 years ago, and he has stuck to model railroading and N scale as his favorite avocation.

Dan first heard about the Achievement Program in Division 8 of the North Central Region. After seeing the exquisite modeling of Irv Schulz, one of several MMRs in his division, he almost set aside the whole idea as unachievable. The caliber of Irv's work is so extraordinary that Dan was afraid he didn't have a prayer. In some ways it seemed as though N-scalers were at a disadvantage because of the small size of their medium.

As Dan read the regulations, however, he knew that he had a fair chance to pass muster in some of the categories. He started with the Golden Spike Award and began entering models of cars and structures in regional contests. These contests were most valuable because, through them, he gained first-hand information about how to improve his modeling. He learned what criteria the judges actually used in assessing a model, and he discovered from other modelers some of the techniques and skills he needed to advance. One Merit Award at a time, one category at a time, he began to pass the necessary mileposts. Others in the program encouraged him and his family was supportive. In Dan's own words, "it's been a most enjoyable ride!"

So far Dan has certificates in eight of the 11 AP categories (Master Builder Structures, Cars and Scenery; Model Railroad Author; Association Volunteer and Official; Model Railroad Engineer Electrical; and Chief Dispatcher.) Dan hopes to work on the remaining three certificates as well.

Dan wonders out loud "Can I scratchbuild locomotives in N scale? I'm not sure, but in the words of the little engine who could, 'I think I can.'"