

MASTER MODEL RAILROADER #117 JOHN DAVID SPANAGEL

J.D. "Dave" Spanagel, 50, Portsmouth, Va., is MMR #117. Dave's understanding wife of 28 years is Janet. They have a married son, John, who is pursuing an engineer career. Dave is employed at Norfolk Naval Shipyard and is a supervisory Electrical Engineer in the Design Division where he guides and directs the design and engineering work of alterations and repairs for aircraft carriers and nuclear-powered guided missile cruisers.

Dave was six years old when he received an American Flyer PRR Pacific freight car set at Christmas. He remembers that from 1940 to 1950 the amount of tinsplate American Flyer equipment increased with each Christmas. He still has 8mm movies of his tinsplate layout. Dave entered high school in 1950 and decided that HO scale equipment looked more accurate. He switched to HO soon after Gordon Varney introduced the SW7 Switcher and the metal freight car kits.

Soon the basement of the Spanagel house in Chagrin Falls, Ohio, housed an open framework L-shaped layout measuring 26' x 14' with a five-foot maximum depth. Using money earned delivering papers, mowing lawns, and working in the local drug store, Dave bought a good collection of locomotives and rolling stock. These were packed up and stored when Dave left for Duke U. to study engineering.

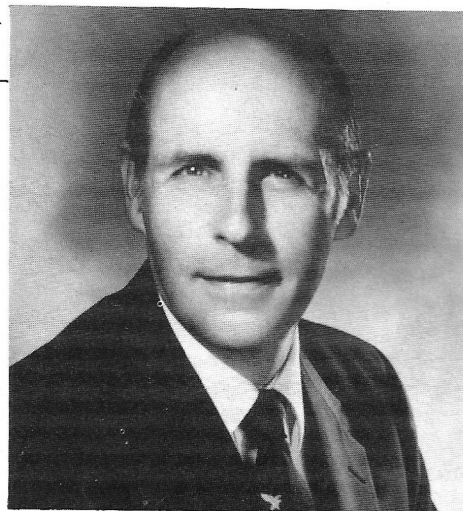
After earning a degree in Electrical

Engineering, Dave accepted a commission in the U.S. Navy and completed the Navy Flight Training program. He flew Anti-Submarine helicopters in the late '50's and early '60's. After the Cuban Missile Crisis, he returned to civilian life taking an engineering job at Norfolk Naval Shipyard. In 1964, he again started acquiring HO equipment and buildings to Portsmouth, Va. He and son John built a small layout, and the two had great fun learning and relearning the hobby. In 1968, Dave joined the NMRA and in 1972 became a life member.

With the forming of the Tidewater Division of the MER in 1972, Dave began attending division meets. The family attended the first Regional Convention at Silver Springs, Md., in 1973. It was the start of Dave's efforts to become an MMR. While viewing one of the layouts on tour, he learned about the Achievement Program and decided to make becoming an MMR a modeling goal.

Dave has won numerous modeling awards at the regional level. He served as contest judge and presented many clinics at the Divisional and Regional levels. He is the "Train Doctor" at annual mall shows during Model Railroad Month.

In 1975, the Spanagel family built a new house and Dave designed a train room into the area above the attached garage. In July 1976, he started building The Old Point Comfort Lines Railroad, with a design geared toward the AP. The railroad has over 650 feet of hand-laid rail with over 70 scratchbuilt turnouts, crossovers, and structures. In 1983, Dave organized the HO Scale Collecting and History SIG. He has been the



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group's newsletter editor for four years. Dave holds AP Certificates in Motive Power, Scenery, Civil, Electrical, Dispatcher, Volunteer, and Author.

Crediting the hobby with being a relaxing factor in his life, Dave most enjoys the many friendships the hobby has gained for him and his family. He is a strong advocate of the Achievement Program and encourages others to work in the program. He credits two of his predecessors as MER AP Chairmen, John Glaab and Rich Shoup, with stimulating and encouraging this interest.

Like all MMRs, Dave enjoys sharing his talents and interests with others. It is this characteristic, the eagerness to share and teach others that makes an MMR a valuable resource person for the NMRA. When a perplexing day is finished at the office, Dave says there is no better way to relax than let out the throttle and see a steam locomotive working hard as it tackles Blue Ridge grade with 2,600 tons of freight cars.