

First hobby was amateur radio

Albert P. Gibes earns MMR 223

I am 64 years old, have been married to my wife Margaret for 41 years, and am a retired TV broadcast engineer. We have six beautiful children that are married with children except for our youngest, Steve, who still lives at home. We have 12 grandchildren — so the Gibes family has the potential for many more MMRs!

When I was young I lived on a small farm about 10 miles west of Pellston, Mich. During quiet days, while doing the farm chores, I could hear the far-off whistle of the trains as they approached road crossings. I remember it as a beautiful sound — it was probably my first love for trains. However, my love for model trains would come much later.

My first real hobby was Amateur Radio. I obtained my “ham” ticket while I was still in high school. Since I had three brothers who were also hams, it was a fun hobby swapping the family gossip — and all for free! Three of us are still active hams and hold regular scheduled QSOs. A QSO is a communication by amateur radio.

In 1954, after completing my tour in the US Marine Corps, I settled in Pekin, Ill., and lived near the P&PU tracks. The sounds of trains was almost constant at our Pekin home, since we lived only several blocks from a switching yard. But my real interest in model trains would come later.

We moved to Tucson, Az., in 1969 where I took up other hobbies such as, Boy Scout Leadership, Little League coaching and umpiring, and Bass Fishing. But one Christmas, when my son Billy was 10 years old, he received a Chattanooga Choo-Choo train set. This sparked my interest to model trains, and from then on “Dad” was hooked! After going through a 4x8, “round-the-Christmas-tree layout” I graduated to a 5x9 “inside-the-ping-pong-table layout.” This was located on our back porch and was greatly bothered by the Arizona dust. An event happened to this layout that is noteworthy. Since the back porch was exposed to the elements, our family cat had a litter of kittens inside one of my tunnels. I wasn’t aware of this until I noticed that some of the scenery was being chewed up. To this day one can find teeth marks on some of my old structures.

My real layout, that still exists today, wasn’t started until enough of my kids got married and left home so I could have their room for my pike! This happened in 1985 and I call my layout the Pekin Pellston & Peoria RR. It has hand-laid, code 70 rail with scratchbuilt switches. The height of the layout was kept to only 37 inches for the benefit of the little people — my grandkids! Some of the scenes included on the PP&P are my boyhood farm and school house. My family enjoyed the fact that I used their names for the different areas of the layout. Either standard DC or CTC-16 command control can be selected for track power. I use computer-generated switch lists during operating sessions. The PP&P RR has earned the Golden Spike Award. It has been shown on our local TV news broadcasts, and has been featured in *Railroad Model Craftsman*. Building the PP&P has been an instrument that has aided me in completing the requirements for MMR.

I want to thank my wife Margaret for her support toward my participation in model railroading. My thanks also go to Carroll Powell and especially to Dottie Finch who have always encouraged my participation in the AP and have always cheerfully answered so many questions that I asked. But most of all thanks to the NMRA, which sponsors the AP that has made earning this MMR award possible! The AP not only helped me achieve excellence in modeling but also provided the opportunity to meet many good friends. Earning this award has not only been educational but also has made model railroading fun. •

