

Master Model Railroader 99, John Wissinger

personality profile/Tom Madden



Master Model Railroader No. 99 is John Wissinger, 43, of New Castle, Pa. John is a senior industrial designer for a plumbing products manufacturer. He and his wife Alice are the parents of two children.

John became interested in trains as a small child. He can recall seeing, when very young, the little mine locomotives pattering around a coal mine near his home in suburban Pittsburgh. He remembers wondering why he couldn't take one of them home, as they looked like nice toys! An American Flyer trainset for Christmas started him in the hobby; he moved into HO in the early '50's with the purchase of three Varney ore car kits. He built several HO layouts in his teen years, "each," as he puts it, "less complex than the last."

He scratchbuilt his first car in 1957 and was fortunate to have the guidance

of Bob Hudson, the father of one of John's friends. Bob was an accomplished scratchbuilder and was able to encourage John and help him develop his skills. Bob also introduced John to traction modeling, which has remained John's primary interest.

John built his first traction layout in his parents' home in the early '60's, and began work on a portable 36" x 66" layout in 1964. Several moves later, both layouts still survive. The little portable was the subject of an article in the October 1979 RAILROAD MODEL CRAFTSMAN.

A member of the Western Hills Model Railroad Club in 1965 until its disbandment in 1968, John joined with a group of modelers in 1969 to form the Cincinnati and Great Western Railroad Club. He has won numerous NMRA contest prizes with his traction models, and has presented clinics at National and

Regional conventions, and at Division meets. He is currently Mid-Central Region Vice-President, has served as Superintendent of Division 7 of the MCR, and has been on several convention committees. He received his MMR award after earning certificates for Motive Power, Structures, Civil Engineering, Electrical Engineering, Chief Dispatcher, Association Volunteer, and Author.

The competitive aspects of model contests and the challenge of the Achievement Program have been in-

strumental in keeping John interested in the hobby. Like most of us, John has, from time to time, reached "plateaus" in his modeling times when interest waned and challenge seemed lacking. Each time he has been able to work himself out of these doldrums by finding new interests within the hobby: new modeling friends, contests to be entered, clinics to be given. And finally, when the contests had been won and the clinics given, there was the Achievement Program.

John has very positive thoughts

about the AP. He obviously feels that the work of those who participate in the AP serves as inspiration and example for the rest of us. As he says, the AP "offers advanced modelers the challenge to continue to improve their skills and, in order to earn particular certificates, requires them to complete things they may not have otherwise done. This is where everyone wins. Some people consider the Achievement Program to be a reward for the 'over-achievers.' I consider it a challenge to do my best."