



Michael J. Collins—MMR #157

Mike grew up in Wilkes-Barre, Pa., on Market Street. From a third floor porch he overlooked the W-B Station platform of the Laurel Line (named after the states' flower, mountain laurel). This interurban (official name: Lackawanna & Wyoming Valley) ran between Wilkes-Barre and Scranton on the world's longest continuous loop electric railroad. Across the street was the Lehigh Valley station with the Black Diamond and the John Wilkes passenger trains during the transition years of streamline steam to Alco PA's of the '40s and early '50s. Also nearby, the CNJ station (a historical landmark, now a restaurant) where he train-watched camelbacks, orange-and-blue cab freights and got his first ride in an SW diesel. (Note the connection to his railroad, the Central Penn Valley.)

Mike's family railroad roots include his dad, Joe, who worked at the Pine Ridge Coal Colliery railroad in Miners Mills, Pa.; uncle Joe Grady was an engineer for the West Pittston & Exeter shortline handling coal and ash for the

Meet Michael J. Collins, MMR #157, with grandchildren Danielle (18 months) and Bryan (age three), the "Ghostbuster" who can run Pops' layout, the Central Penn Valley (T/S program 110). "Pumpkin" (Danielle) is still in training with a G scale Christmas display.

Penn Power & Light powerplant at Stanton; and his cousin Leo Walsh was in operations/yardmaster for the LV at Coxton in Pittston.

Raised on Lionel, Mike started in HO in 1953 but stopped in 1955 with an Air Force enlistment. Then marriage in 1957 to a wonderful person—Mary. Next came two great boys, Michael and Mark.

In 1980, Mike's hobby activities resumed when he followed his friend Frank's example by trading his Lionel equipment for HO at a new hobby shop in Floral Park. Joining the NMRA seemed reasonable and a good source of information. The Achievement Program was a natural incentive to attain. His first certificate was Master Builder-Electrical in 1982, which was somewhat related to his work as an aviation electronics systems instructor for Pan Am at JFK. Then he achieved the Scenery certificate in '83. In 1988, MR Author (the longest to obtain), the Golden Spike Award and Chief Dispatcher (the most difficult for him). Then came Structures and Cars certificates in 1989 and finally Prototype Modeler in January 1990 (the first in the Sunrise Trail Division).

Mike affirms model railroading is a diverse hobby offering something for any modeler, though he prefers scenic details and publishing (examples: NMRA BULLETIN, May 1989 and PROTOTYPE MODELER, Sept.-Oct. 1989).

After 10 intense years in the Achievement Program, Mary hopes his next certificate is Master Husband!