



NICHOLAS S. MUFF, MD EARNS MMR # 540

I was born in 1945 within walking distance of Los Angeles Union Passenger Terminal. I grew up in the San Fernando Valley. Our 1½th-acre lot on Saticoy Street was backed by the Southern Pacific Coast Line. My grandmother used to bounce me on her knee, chanting “Chugga Lugga, Chugga Lugga” as the *Daylight* with GS-4s and freights led by Cab-Forwards rolled behind our house. When I was older, I could hear the whistle blow and be down to the back fence before the train passed by. I suppose this marked me for life!

When I was five years old, my dad bought me two O Gauge Marx tinplate train sets: The Santa Fe Warbonnet Diesel set with Santa Fe passenger cars and a die-cast steam engine with freight cars. My Grandpa Ross built a 4x8-foot plywood table that folded up against the wall. The layout was a figure eight within an outer oval of track.

When I was about 10 years old, I sold the Marx trains and bought my first HO locomotive, a Mantua 0-4-0 “Booster.” The layout was converted to HO. Living in the Los Angeles area, the layout was Santa Fe Southwest themed. Those Warbonnet-clad diesels had really impressed me!

I survived the Athearn rubber band, “Hi-Fi” drive era. I liked to add lights to my Plasticville buildings and discovered that “blue” lights created a nice moonlight effect.

Family outings to Barstow and Victorville, California, let me see more railroad action. On Friday evenings, Dad drove the family over to Santa Fe’s Pasadena Depot to watch the *Super Chief* and *El Capitan* make their station stops.

It was my good fortune our next door neighbor was George Hook and Central Valley Model Works. George did not have children and became like a second dad to me. He was always willing to answer questions, critique my early modeling efforts, or share some parts from the scrap bin. He was a great mentor.

In 1958, my maternal grandparents moved to Wye City in northwest Arkansas. From 1959 to 1967, Mom, Sis, and I made summer trips by train to visit our grandparents on their farm. We rode the (then new) Hi-Level *El Capitan* to Kansas City.

There, we changed trains and rode Kansas City Southern’s *Southern Belle* south to Siloam Springs, Arkansas. My time in the Kansas City Union Station really impressed me. These trips created a lifelong interest in the mainline passenger railroading and its fascinating rolling stock.

Kansas City Union Station was a veritable “temple” of railroading with its Neo-Classical styling and dozens of passenger trains passing through each day. Some favorite memories of mine are standing on the Grand Avenue Bridge on a sultry evening, watching the trains come and go. Freights ran through the same area on run-around tracks behind Union Station. Later, improvements in family finances allowed us to use the *Super Chief* between Los Angeles and Kansas City.

During my late teens, I made a big detour in my rail and modeling interests when I discovered a color picture of a West Side Lumber company Shay in one of the Pacific Fast Mail catalogs. I just had to see these odd-looking locomotives in action. My dad took me there for the first time in 1961. The West Side was still using steam in the woods and around the mill. On subsequent trips, we toured the mill, hiked in, and explored the camps in the woods.

Finally, in summer of 1963, we built our own gasoline-powered railcar and toured the entire abandoned West Side trackage from Tuolumne, California, to Camp 45. From then on, until I left for college, I was modeling the West Side Lumber company on hand-laid Code 40 rail with scratchbuilt turnouts. I managed to finance the purchase of two PFM B-2 Shay’s and one B-3 three-truck model.

College and marriage to my childhood sweetheart in 1967 put the model railroad on hold. I got back into the hobby again with friends formed in medical school. We were, for a time, the “Loma Linda Society of Ferroequinologists.” As a loose-knit club, we built the “Cascade Southern” in Warner Swarner’s garage. The layout was loosely based on Western Pacific’s Feather River Canyon. The end of medical training brought that layout and club to an end.

My wife and I ended up in Sedro Woolley, Washington, in the northwest corner of the state. The club in Loma Linda had rekindled my original interest in passenger railroading in general and the Kansas City Southern Lines in particular. Here was a seldom-modeled railroad, with a striking paint scheme and an interesting variety of diesel locomotives. I began plans for a KCS-themed layout. The first endeavor, foreknown to be temporary, was built at the front of a two-car garage. Union Station’s portion of that layout survived to be part of my current layout.

When we built a 30x40-foot addition to our home, a basement for the model railroad was part of the plan, which included space for a full-sized F7 locomotive cab and a 30-foot section of a full-size passenger car mock up.

Since 1985, when the addition was completed, I have been realizing the plan that I originally created. This includes downtown Kansas City, with its Union Station, now completed, and the KCS mainline south through Missouri, Arkansas, and Oklahoma to the layout’s southern terminus in Shreveport, Louisiana. The loop-to-loop railroad has recently been converted to DCC.

I have enjoyed publishing more than 100 articles in several of the hobby magazines. I learned to create CAD drawings in the process of designing the buildings for Kansas City and Union Station. This got me involved with publishing plans and ultimately with model manufacturers. I have

worked with eight different manufacturers on more than 200 different models, mostly brass, some high-end plastic. That is the fun thing about this hobby, it involves so many different skills and interests, you never know where it will lead! I enjoy all aspects of the hobby from historical research to historical recreation on my layout. That's why I agree that it is the world's greatest hobby. It can keep your interest for a lifetime!

I still live in Sedro Woolley with my wife of 47 years. I have a son, Nick the III, who lives in Miami, Florida; a daughter, Tiffany, who lives here in Washington; a grandson, Caleb age five; and granddaughter, Kaylee, soon to turn three. I look forward to retiring at the end of 2015 to enjoy more time model railroading and with my family!

## **AP Certificates - Nick Muff**

**Association Volunteer**

**Master Builder – Prototype Models**

**Master Builder – Structures**

**Master Builder – Cars**

**Model Railroad Engineer – Electrical**

**Master Builder – Scenery**

**Model Railroad – Author**