



Michael C. Brestel

May 14, 1951 – May 22, 2024

It is with great sadness, we announce the passing of Mike Brestel, HLM & NMRA Fellow, on May 22, 2024 at the age of 73. Mike embodied the spirit of volunteerism and service at all levels of the NMRA for over 57 years. He provided outstanding service to our members, our staff, mentoring future leaders, and providing encouragement to members at all levels of our organization.

Mike was much more than a volunteer to the NMRA, he was a husband to Mary, father to his daughter Rebecca, and grandfather to two adorable girls. He served his community through the Booster group at his offspring's school and the Civic Business Association. He was active in his church and served as a youth group leader for many years. He was an avid Cincinnati Reds fan and followed the Reds to his last days.

We know Mike best for his service to the NMRA starting in 1966 when he was only fifteen years old – even before he joined the NMRA in 1967. He became a Life Member early on when his wife gave it to him as a present. He was on the publicity committee for the 1966 National NMRA Convention in Cincinnati – a convention sponsored by The Cincinnati Model Railway Club (established in 1934), a O-scale Club that Mike joined much later and served as Club President for many years.

Mike was a former NMRA President (2006-2012), Vice-President (2004-2006), Mid-Central Region National Trustee (1993-2004), At-Large World-Wide Director, Nominating Committee Chair, Publications Manager, Policy Committee Chair, Honor Committee Chair, Calendar Editor, Insurance Coordinator, and was a member of the Howell Day Museum Committee. He became

Honorary Life Member #58 in 2012, received a Meritorious Service Award, four President's Awards (2005, 2016, 2019, 2021), and was honored with an NMRA Fellow award in 2024.

He was Publicity Chair for the 1980 National Model Railroad Exposition in Cincinnati that was sponsored by the Model Railroad Industry Association (MRIA).

In the Mid-Central Region, Mike served as President (1976-1983), National Region Trustee (1993-2004), and Region Contest Chair (1976-1983). He served the MCR well over the years.

Mike was an active member of Cincinnati Division 7 of the MCR in many different roles over the years. He served as Superintendent (1988-1992), Assistant Superintendent (1984-1988), Treasurer (1982-1984), Board of Directors (1993-1997 & 20023-2024), OilCan (newsletter) Editor (1972-1979), OilCan Publisher (1986-1997), and Special Projects Co-chair (2017-2021).

He served multiple times in key roles to help conduct train related conventions in the Cincinnati area, including Chesapeake & Ohio Historical Society events and several NMRA gatherings. The most recent of those NMRA conventions were the 1997, 2003 and 2018 MCR Conventions as well as the huge 2005 NMRA National Convention, all conducted with excellence by Cincinnati Division 7.

Mike was a member of four different train-related clubs over the years, serving each with passion and vision. He started with the Western Hills Model Railroad Club (HO), then The Cincinnati & Great Western Model Railroad Club (HO), then the Cincinnati Model Railway Club (O-2 Rail), the Cincinnati Railroad Club, and the Chesapeake & Ohio Historical Society. He brought his knowledge and spirit of volunteerism to each club over the years.

He served the model railroad community by working in hobby shop (The Model Railroad Shop) during his teen years, then at Walt's Hobby Shop, then as owner of Western Hills Photo & Hobby Shop until his passing.

Mike was my closest friend for over 50 years and will be missed every day. The consolation is that he is now with all the other close model railroad friends who have also passed away. We miss them all, but they now have unlimited space to build model railroads.

Tribute by Frank Koch, May 22, 2024
Photos by Larry DeYoung and Don Phillips, respectively