

Our model railway community has lost a genuine human being and a model railroader of iconic status – Stafford Swain, MMR #98 passed away on April 11, 2018 after suffering ill-health for a number of years. While those issues forced his retirement from model railroading, his unselfishly made contributions will benefit our hobby for many years.

Never shy about inviting strangers, newcomers and long-term friends to become involved, Stafford's personable approach and freely given guidance encouraged and aided ever-so-many in our hobby. His enthusiasm and unbounded willingness to share material, details and techniques inspired untold numbers of modellers. He willingly spent hours discussing ideas with modellers of all ages with an open mind as he shared what he knew and acknowledged the input of others, all the while raising the modelling bar. He revelled in introducing younger people to model railroading knowing they were a key element for our future. This approach included his commenting a number of times that model railroading and its people offered considerable fellowship and pure enjoyment. Personal pride in what he did and contributed was a humbly accepted emotion.

In a perceptive and masterful manner, his Canadian National Railways Whiteshell Subdivision model railway miniaturized so many key physical attributes along with the feel of the Canadian Shield east of Winnipeg late in the steam era. I was most fortunate to be able to visit and to operate it a number of times. These circumstances were initially mind-boggling, then inspiring and always greatly appreciated. Experiencing his model railway triggered many to initiate programs to improve their modelling in an effort to emulate something akin to his depictions.

His tireless dedication to accurately modelling the details of Canadian railway prototype elements had roots in his profession – accounting. His professional attitude carried over to his thorough and relentless pursuit of a vast array of topics while ensuring historical accuracy and completeness. His extraordinary research and analytical skills resulted in a knowledge base that set a solid foundation for prototypically accurate motive power, rolling stock, structures and provided leadership in creating scenery representative of the area modelled. This was compounded by his following prototype practices during operating sessions. The result was that the over-all quality aspect in model railroading spiralled upward. While the breadth of model railroading has benefitted from Stafford's approach, Canadian modellers have been more blessed by his efforts.

Always so willing to contribute from the breadth of his knowledge and his vast collection of photographs and plans, Stafford provided over 80 articles to model railroading's commercial press and to CN Lines dealing with building high-quality prototype-based models. Innumerable clinics were offered on a wide range of topics that further illustrated his love for assisting others with learning about a topic. He was generous with his time, information and techniques; his dedication to mentoring led to my earning MMR status. His collection of material and skilled creation of masters was responsible for providing commercial companies with information for accurate copies in plastic and resin for prototype cars and for greatly improved accuracy in brass models.

Service to our hobby was commonplace for Stafford. Considerable effort was expended in successfully eliminating the Canadian federal government's 20% duty on model railway equipment imports. His wide range of organizational skills served many model railway related groups. For several years his capabilities stimulated the Winnipeg Model Railroad Club while he fulfilled the responsibilities of a number of positions. The NMRA's Thousand Lakes Region was favoured by his abilities. Numerous times he was part of convention organizing committees and then his model railway hosted attendees where he answered any and all questions from everyone. He served as a contest judge, promoting fair evaluation while promoting accuracy in modelling projects. Our 1983 national convention – Railway Jamboree - benefited from his being the Chairman. That profitable convention saw many innovations that continue today – the pocket-fitting timetable book, a graph of daily events, coloured ribbons for tours and lapel pins for the event.

For many years Stafford served as the heart and soul of the CN SIG as their Freight Car Editor and as Chairperson. His efforts, dedication, dreams and initiatives included accurate paint, brass number boards, decals and raised cab numerals for steam locomotives. His successful leadership was rewarded by growth in membership and magazine subscriptions. He was instrumental in the having the CN SIG publish, "Across the Canadian Shield". Unheralded, his efforts were behind the re-invigorating of the CP SIG in 1997.

All the while, Stafford's friendship and pleasant personality overshadowed his well-deserved reputation as one of North America's most capable prototype modellers.

My friend, you will be greatly missed - Rest in a well-deserved Peace.

Fred Headon, MMR #328