

# Jim Allamian wins the first Bill Jewett Award

BY PHIL MONAT

Jim Allamian has been named the first winner of the Bill Jewett Award for his long-time service to the Operations Special Interest Group as assistant treasurer, membership manager and manager of Dispatcher's Office back issues.

The award, named for the visionary OPSIG leader and carrying with it an engraved plaque and \$250 in cash, cites Jim's longtime involvement, support and hard work on behalf of the group and its members. His citation was announced at OPSIG's most recent annual meeting, held during this summer's NMRA national convention in Anaheim, Calif.

Like many in the hobby, Jim has been "playing with trains" since he was 4 or 5, when he and his dad set up a 4x6-foot Lionel layout on the dining room table of their downtown Chicago home. The layout folded in half for storage when the table was needed for its more-mundane domestic purpose. Jim's childhood friend, Bob Hochstetter, had a more permanent American Flyer layout, and they both enjoyed countless hours of running model trains. Bob, a fellow OPSIG member, remains a close friend to this day and he and Jim have attended many NMRA and other conventions over the years. When Jim was eight years old his family moved to the suburbs and he suddenly had a basement available, so he switched to HO and started a layout. But as often happens, he never finished it.

Life's distractions failed to dim Jim's

enthusiasm for all things rail. Growing up, college, marriage and full-time work as a health-care financial consultant and CPA all happened progressively as Jim switched to N scale and started planning his dream layout. His work took him to many areas of the country and, being a Santa Fe and Union Pacific fan, he decided his layout would be modeled on the Cajon Pass area. His constant business travel did not allow much time to build a layout, however, so Jim joined several clubs but was never able to actively participate. His frequent business trips to Los Angeles and side trips to nearby Cajon Pass led to an introduction to prototype research, as well as the beginning of his interest in collecting documents and building a library. Jim's work also took him to Colorado where he became a narrow gauge enthusiast, and started collecting Sn3 equipment. Jim currently has complete collections of most model railroad publications, including *Model Railroader*, *Railroad Model Craftsman*, *Mainline Modeler*, and *Narrow Gauge and Short Line Gazette*, as well as many books, DVDs and videos. And don't forget that all of the *Dispatcher's Office* back issues also reside in his basement along with this impressive collection as well!

Jim's introduction to newsletters and volunteerism started in the early 1990's when he volunteered to re-print and make available a series of newsletters that had been published by a group of Cajon Pass enthusiasts. Over the years



**JIM ALLAMIAN**

he has also helped run two conventions, one for the AT&SF Historical & Modeling Society and one for the Union Pacific Historical Society.

In 1997 Jim met Bill Jewett at a hobby shop in Franklin Park, a suburb of Chicago. Like so many of us who knew Bill, Jim was impressed by Bill's gracious manner, willingness to help the hobby and promote operations, and his deep love and knowledge of railroading. Even though Jim was not an avid operator, his respect and admiration for Bill induced him to help this budding OPSIG group that Bill kept talking about, in any way he could. So, in February of 1997 Jim took over the back issue department of our organization.

Jim's responsibilities grew over the years as he offered repeatedly to help Bill with the growing workload. This included sending out welcome packs to new members while coping with the increasing volume of back issue orders

# BILL JEWETT AWARD

as the organization continued to grow. When the OPSIG started the incorporation process in 2005, his help was essential as we developed the required information reports. He was a great help to the newly elected Board and smoothed the transition to our new organizational structure.

Bill's sudden and unexpected passing, however, threw much of our work into turmoil. Aside from losing Bill's expert guidance in the editorship and production of our quarterly magazine, we lost the OPSIG membership master database since Bill still managed that part of our organization and his family could not locate those files. Jim volunteered to not only take over all of the accounting for the organization,

but also to become the Membership Manager. Jim had to completely recreate the membership master database using old mailing records and hard copy regional membership lists. He also developed our first basic financial reports, all while we were applying and waiting for IRS 501c(3) approval. After accomplishing those daunting tasks, Jim turned his attention to our renewal efforts (many of you may have seen our reminder post cards or email messages in the last six months), instead of relying on the easy-to-miss mailing label number.

While Jim's long term involvement, support and hard work on behalf of the OPSIG is impressive and much appreciated by all of our members, the Board felt that his

contributions during those turbulent and difficult times in early 2006 earned him the right to be the first winner of this Award. I'm sure you all share our belief that Bill would be pleased with this course of action.

Jim and his wife Barbara live in Wood Dale, a suburb of Chicago. While retired from health care financial consulting and its frequent travel requirements, he told me he has recently taken on some part-time accounting work for a company that manages many of the airport flight status display screens all over the world. Perhaps to help pay for the N scale AT&SF and UP, and Sn3 Colorado narrow gauge equipment he still is collecting? I can't help but think a home layout is in his future, but given his huge library collection I'm not sure where he would put it! Jim's other interests include travel, photography, jazz, theater and Southwest American Indian pottery, rugs and sculpture. It is surprising to see that someone who has given so much time, effort, and energy to the OPSIG doesn't turn a throttle himself very often. But, I guess that just shows that those who volunteer and step forward do so at the risk of not having enough time to share in all the joys of the organization they work so hard to promote. We should be grateful and appreciative of them, for without folks like Jim your organization would not exist. 🚂



Board members pose with the award plaque at the NMRA Anaheim 2008 national convention. Pictured here are Dave Cochrun, Kathy Sparks, Phil Monat, and Seth Neumann.

