

2012 Bill Jewett Award

The OPSIG Board of Directors takes great pleasure in awarding the 2012 Bill Jewett Award to Phil Monat for his outstanding service as President of the OPSIG from 2008 to 2011. After the untimely passing of Bill Jewett in January 2006, Al Oneto took on a short term interim presidency of OPSIG. Phil took over from Al as interim president and then as elected president

of OPSIG. In the ensuing years, Phil fostered significant growth of the organization's membership. Phil served as editor of *THE DISPATCHER'S OFFICE* and brought it to being a regular production journal of high quality. In addition, Phil brought his prodigious powers of persuasion to bear in recruiting new authors to the *DO*'s pages as well as new editors. Because of

his managerial skills, Phil was instrumental in significantly increasing interest in operations within the model railroading hobby. In between all of this activity, Phil manages to participate in operating sessions, usually arriving on his BMW motorcycle. Congratulations to Phil for receiving this much deserved honor.

—Jim Dalberg

Now they have done it! I am honored and stunned to be this year's winner of the Bill Jewett Award. As a former president of the OPSIG and the person who was leading our group during the formation of this award, I naturally have the greatest respect for the four model railroaders who have previously been honored. Putting me in that category, I think, lowers the bar a bit. But I'm touched and flattered all the same.

I have always loved trains and especially model railroading. Like many of our fathers, my dad started this ball rolling with a layout in the basement and attendance in a club back in St. Louis, where we lived. In those simpler days, my father, a physician, would take me with him to the hospital and leave me out by the Wabash tracks in front of the place while he tended to business. I still recall the specific sounds, sights and smell of those early diesels as they struggled to climb the hill south of Forest Park.

We always went to the club, The St. Louis HO Gaugers, on Friday night. Anyone who knows my preference for running yards will not be surprised to learn my dad ruled the yard at the club. Seeing him through the cigar and cigarette haze, however, was sometimes a challenge—it's amazing what we got away with in those days! From that point on, model railroading (and NMRA membership) has always been central to my life, even through college and work.

I have built several layouts. The first one at home I kept expanding and changing, just as I do on my current one (old habits die hard, it seems). I did not have a layout in college so I spent most of my time chasing the vanishing Rock Island (it ran through Iowa City) and other railroads of the Midwest.



Scott Dunlap photo

I am a theatrical and architectural lighting designer so when work took me to New York City, I immediately started planning a new layout.

A layout within New York City is not easy, but I started building a large one here based on some semblance of the MoPac. I quickly decided, however, that it was not suitable for serious operations, which I had begun to take part in and pursue at other layouts in the area. Key to my awakening interest was a fateful meeting with Bill Jewett himself at an NMRA convention in Columbus. He introduced me to the OPSIG and its wonderful journal, *The Dispatcher's Office*. We ran together several times and, in my humble opinion, no finer gentlemen and supporter of the OPSIG has yet been found.

My current layout is a large, modern CTC-controlled point-to-point creation

based loosely on the Lehigh Gorge area. When I'm not tearing it up or modifying some part of it or traveling for work, it provides serious operations on a regular basis for 14 of us so-inclined folks.

I was a longtime OPSIG member when I got a call about Bill's untimely passing. Asked to take over the presidency, I hesitated at first, concerned about my unpredictable work and travel schedule (show business is worse than railroading!). But I did step forward and along with the other talented folks on the board, we worked to make the OPSIG a better organization.

I thank you all for your support and the board for honoring me with this wonderful award. See you at a session somewhere, I hope—I will be there with my OPSIG shirt on.

—Phil Monat