

The 2014 Bill Jewett Award

The OPSIG board of directors takes great pleasure in awarding the 2014 Bill Jewett Award to Steve Benezra, editor of *THE DISPATCHER'S OFFICE*.

The award is in recognition of his outstanding performance in producing—on time—a really fine publication. I think it would be entirely fair to say that his work on the *DO* has had a great effect on the continuing growth of our organization. He has been able to attract new authors, and in addition has been able to institute an advertising section, which I hope you all have noted on the back page of each issue. This project has resulted in additional revenue for the

I met the late Bill Jewett at my first national NMRA convention in Seattle in 2004. He was sitting at the OPSIG desk talking to convention attendees and signing them up as new members for OPSIG. When I had a chance to speak to him he told me about the benefits of joining OPSIG because I was in the process of designing a large HO scale railroad. So I joined OPSIG and LDSIG at the Seattle convention. A year passed and I was busy building my Carolina Western Railroad.

At the next NMRA convention, the 2005 meeting in Cincinnati, I again met Bill sitting behind the OPSIG desk. I showed him the plans of the railroad I had built based on my discussions with the LDSIG group. Now I needed assistance from OPSIG in designing an operations plan for the railroad. After answering a number of Bill's questions, we then drew out a preliminary operation scenario based on my answers. Bill then told me that he, and his wife Julia, would be moving to Chapel Hill, North Carolina so they could be closer to their daughter and grandchildren. Chapel Hill is a short drive from my house. Needless to say I was excited by someone as knowledgeable as Bill to be on my operations crew. When Bill moved Chapel Hill he also became involved in op sessions in the area. Bill's presence influenced and improved some of the operations of the various sessions he attended. When I realized I needed more rolling stock for my 1950s transition-era railroad, Bill let me use about 100 pieces of his large rolling stock collection because he was just starting to plan his own railroad and had no use for them at the time.

Four months after Bill and Julia moved to Chapel Hill, Bill suffered a massive heart attack while on a traditional New Year's Day hike along the Eno River in Durham, North Carolina. Julia, her family, and OPSIG lost a wonderful person.

A few days after Bill had died I called Julia to ask if I could be of any help to her. She said, "Thank goodness you called. I have no idea what to do with all of Bill's railroad collection." Julia gave me permission to sell Bill's collection. After about three months I had sold all of Bill's railroad-related items. I told Julia I would like to pay for the rolling stock I had on loan from Bill. She said, "No, that's exactly where Bill would have wanted them to be." The funds raised by the sale of Bill's railroad estate created the Bill Jewett Memorial Fund of OPSIG. Julia Jewett, who remains my good friend, thought the fund and the annual award named after Bill would be the best way to honor the memory of Bill Jewett.

Without Bill, OPSIG carried on and continued to grow under

OPSIG—and has certainly helped to keep our dues structure steady.

The award to Steve is not only for his outstanding work on this publication, but also for his assistance to Bill Jewett's widow in raising funds for the establishment of the Bill Jewett Memorial Fund after Bill's untimely demise. The Fund permits our organization to financially assist other OPSIG-related activities.

Congratulations, Steve, from all of us and Thanks.

Jim Dalberg, OPSIG President

P.S. Now lest you all think that Steve spends all his time on the *DO*, let me tell you that I have seen him at many operating events.

the leadership of Phil Monat, Doug Watts and Jim Dalberg. While taking a memorable road trip from New York to the 2010 Milwaukee convention, my good friend, Phil Monat, mentioned that he was looking for a new editor of the *DO* because editor Bill Kaufman was leaving to take a position in the NMRA organization. Being "trapped" in a car with Phil, it was difficult for me to not step up and volunteer. Phil helped me get out the first couple of issues. Phil was also in the process of talking to White River Productions about printing the *DO* in full color. That change, along with getting a talented graphic artist, Ian Scott from WRP, transformed the *DO* into the publication you are reading today.

I have always believed in giving back to whatever community has supported me and enriched my life. Needless to say OPSIG and knowing Bill Jewett have enormously enriched my life and being editor of the *DO* has allowed me to return a little to this community. I am grateful and humbled by the Bill Jewett award presented to me at the NMRA convention in Cleveland. Editing the *DO* and working with all the contributors to the *DO* and members of OPSIG is the most enjoyable activity experienced by me as a model railroader. Being recognized with the Bill Jewett Award for having so much fun is indeed an honor. Thank you.

Steve Benezra



Jim Dalberg (left) presents Steve Benezra the award plaque.