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The American Candidate for NMRA At Large North America Director, 2024

What NMRA and Its Members Need from the Next ALNAD

NMRA is surging into a bright future. Led by our visionary President, Gordy Robinson, NMRA has attracted incredibly talented and energetic department chairs and officers and undertaken significant new projects, many of which have greatly increased NMRA online and electronic communication. The relentless energy of people like Speed Muller and Riley Triggs have given us a first-class digital magazine. Gordy's focused management of NMRA's marketing consultant and his personal interest in strong communications gave us the NMRAX online videoconference series, more social media posts, and greatly increased member outreach. While youthful energy, drive, and ambition are strong drivers for NMRA's future growth, the organization also benefits from having a steady hand on the oar at the Board of Directors level.

I am that steady hand. Having worked my entire career in professional services, I deeply understand the importance of attentive, perceptive, and timely service to clients; in the context of NMRA, our members are our clients. Having advised and counseled numerous Fortune 500 companies (see below), I bring a level of sophistication to the NMRA Board that has been found in few other elected officials. Like it or not, NMRA is a corporation with a multimillion-dollar budget, employees, international reach, critical standards activities, and liaison relationships with many other groups. NMRA is too important not to have members of the Board of Directors with real-world business experience. Merely being retired from a non-business profession, and being a good modeler, is not enough. Knowing and having experience advising CEOs, CFOs, and CMOs is essential. In addition, having extensive social media activity or being a podcast fan do not contribute to effective Board leadership. The Board's role is in policy definition and oversight of officer, department, and committee activities. We have outstanding volunteers and contractors in our marketing positions and officer roles; their job is to communicate with and listen to members in a variety of media. The Board's role is different.

Maintaining a geographical and cultural balance among our Board members is important. While NMRA has international reach, its members are overwhelmingly

American, and North American modeling dominates the interests of our members. Based on member geography alone, NMRA’s Board of Directors should have an American majority, especially as we have a Scottish President. Yet if my opponent is elected, the geographic makeup of the Board would be:

Director Position	Current Nationality
Atlantic District Director	British
Canadian Director	Canadian
At Large Worldwide Director	Australian
Pacific District Director	Australian
At Large North America Director	(would be Canadian)
Central District Director	American
Western District Director	American
Eastern District Director	American

I respectfully suggest that given the international makeup of our other Board members, the ALNAD position should be an American seat. I am the American candidate.

Personal Background

I presently serve as At Large North America Director, and I’m seeking a second and final term in this position. Directors are term limited, so if re-elected, I would serve from 2024 to 2027. I’m age 59 and reside in the Austin, Texas area; my home is in Spanish Oaks, an unincorporated home development in Travis County, outside Austin city limits and near the City of Bee Cave. However, I was born and raised in Sunnyvale and Los Altos, California, in the Silicon Valley area. After graduating high school in 1982, I earned a B.A. in Communication Arts, emphasizing television directing and screenwriting, from Loyola Marymount University in Los Angeles, in 1986. I also minored in computer science, having started programming in high school in 1978. Next I earned a J.D. (law) degree from the University of California, San Francisco, in 1989.

From 1989 to 1995, I worked as a lawyer in private firms in Washington, D.C., Pasadena, and Silicon Valley. From 1995-1997, I interviewed with Steve Jobs at NeXT Software, Inc., and his General Counsel, joining the company as its second lawyer. Apple bought NeXT in early 1997, and I decided to return to a private law

firm. For the 30+ years of my legal career, I've focused on patent procurement, trademark acquisition and enforcement, copyright, and related matters in the field we call intellectual property law. Today, I'm a partner in the Austin office of Baker Botts, L.L.P., one of the top 50 law firms in the United States. I primarily write and secure patents for applied generative artificial intelligence systems. We have offices from Brussels to Singapore, including eleven offices in the US. While my career has taken me to clients around the world, I've also worked with many startups and small companies. The firms that I represent or have represented include Netflix, Priceline, OpenTable, Booking Holdings, Cisco Systems, Coupa Software, Grammarly, PagerDuty, and more.

I began model railroading with an N scale train set in about 1976. With this, I represent generational change. I am part of the first generation not to enter the hobby with Lionel O gauge or a larger scale. I enjoyed N scale modeling for about 5 years until college called and the layout had to come down. In that early period, I discovered that Bob Brown, editor of *Narrow Gauge and Shortline Gazette*, ran the magazine from offices and his home in my town, Los Altos. Model railroading 'royalty,' right there in my back yard. I met Bob around 1980 and saw his Tuolumne Forks layout on a PCR layout tour, though I was only 16 years old. I was hooked! At LMU, I honored my inner model railroad geek by building a Roundhouse HO scale die cast SP Consolidation steam locomotive in my dormitory room. That model runs poorly, but I still have it as a reminder that I stayed engaged in the hobby at every stage of my life. Marriage and raising two daughters limited my layout progress, although I did build several HO layouts in several homes. Now, in my home, I'm building my fifth layout, a modest 15' x 15' representation of mid-1950s Southern Pacific railroading in the San Joaquin Valley of California. While the layout is HO scale, I also appreciate O scale and narrow gauge.

For many years, I have subscribed to and read *Railroad Model Craftsman*, *Narrow Gauge and Shortline Gazette*, and the *NMRA Magazine*. I participate actively in the *Model Railroad Hobbyist* Forum and NMRA's discussion forum on the Discord platform.

Goals for My Next Term

- Introduce a Board-sponsored Young Railroad Modeler Fellowship (YRMF) providing a qualified young modeler aged 18 to 25 with all-expenses-paid NMRA membership, attendance at our national convention, mentorship, and other resources for a one-year period, supported by tax-deductible member and industry contributions

- Advocate for a national, executive-level, full-time, paid Membership Director with no member dues increase, the position targeting new member recruitment --as well as new forms of marketing and advertising to drive member growth
- Implement and execute professional leadership training coursework for all NMRA officers, department chairs, and Board members to improve the professional posture and leadership skills of all concerned--thus building better leaders for the future\
- Define a modernized National Convention Template to set the expectations of NMRA leadership and NMRA members for the structure of national conventions after 2025
- Selected updates to the Achievement Program
- Drive forward a comprehensive update of NMRA--s website using a professional outside contractor

Achievements of My Present Term

- Spearheaded a \$100,000 increase in NMRA--s annual budget to fund new marketing contract positions and substantial new marketing activities--with no increase in member dues; I have been one of the Board--s most vocal supporters of increasing marketing and member recruitment funding
- Continuous detailed review and questioning of NMRA--s budget and CFO reports--often the only voice on the Board to ask questions
- Opposed a dues increase to fund the digital magazine, advocating instead that all members should receive the digital magazine included in basic dues with any incremental costs funded from NMRA cash on hand
- Joined the NMRA Investment Committee to provide a fresh view to the direction of NMRA stock and mutual fund investments
- Expanded the Division retention activity matching fund from a meaningless \$50 per division to a meatier \$200 match per year, resulting in a sharp uptick in applications and usage
- Strong, regular questioning in Board meetings of leadership and committee chair reports and decisions
- Attendance and participation in over 20 monthly executive working group meetings to advance projects
- Wrote and published articles in the *NMRA Magazine* providing guidance on Region-Division directors & officers insurance and about the retention matching fund

- Attended all national conventions from 2017 to 2023 and multiple region conventions
- Arranged new leadership of the Howell Day Museum Committee to manage the *Magic of Scale Model Railroading* exhibit at the California State Railroad Museum and assisted in transition activities from the prior exhibit leader

Past Service to NMRA

- At Large North America Director -- 2021 to Present
- Assistant Legal Counsel, Intellectual Property -- 2014 to Present
- President, Pacific Coast Region -- 2019 to 2021
- Secretary, Pacific Coast Region -- 2017 to 2019
- Co-Chair, PCR Region Convention, Bakersfield, 2017
- Member since 1999

Achievement Program Certificates

- Model Railroad Author (earned)
- Association Official (earned)
- Association Volunteer (earned)
- Model Railroad Engineer -- Electrical (pending)

Education

- B.A. Communication Arts (Television Directing, Screenwriting; minor in Computer Science), Loyola Marymount University, Los Angeles, California, 1986
- J.D. University of California, Hastings College of the Law, San Francisco, California, 1989

Work Experience

- 1989-1995 – Private Practice, law firms, Washington DC, Pasadena, CA, and Menlo Park, CA
- 1996-1997 – Associate General Counsel, NeXT Software, Inc., Redwood City, California
- 1997-Present – Private Practice, law firms, San Jose, CA and Austin, TX
- Including 20 years as co-founder and name partner, Hickman Palermo Becker Bingham, LLP, San Jose, CA
- Now a partner at Baker Botts, L.L.P., Austin, Texas