

Keeping Track

Official newsletter of the Abilene Society of Model Railroaders

Volume 1, Issue 1

March 1, 2005

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Editorial Comment -- Welcome to the re-born newsletter for the Abilene Society of Model Railroaders. A few years ago I did an ASMR newsletter for awhile, but I got virtually no feedback from members, and after a couple of years of feeling like I was operating in a vacuum, I decided to cease publication. While president Don Balch and several members were recently brain-storming ideas for generating interest and enthusiasm, and increasing communication between ASMR members, one of the topics that came up was a newsletter. Ever the optimist, I volunteered to give it another try. We will be including some new ideas this time, but we'll still be asking for inputs from members. Whenever you have thoughts or comments on anything you see in the newsletter, or something totally different, just drop me an email, call me, or write me a note. I'll take it from there. ASMR has a lot of potential as a hobby club, but right now we are barely scratching the surface of it. As you read through this introductory newsletter, I hope you will begin to get on board as we try to launch a new era for ASMR. What follows are notes on some key areas under consideration. *JG*

Club Committees – One complaint voiced by members is that we talk about, and even vote on doing things, but too often don't follow through on them. Part of the problem could be that many times no deadline is set, and/or nobody is personally accountable for seeing that a particular project or task gets done. President Balch wants to fix this problem by having volunteer or appointed individuals and committees to be responsible for seeing that specific things are done by specific times. For example, if the tracks need to be cleaned prior to a planned operating session, somebody will be in charge of getting a crew together and doing it.

Standardization – One important committee being considered is a group (probably three members) to determine reasonable standards for layout scenery and development, operations, etc., and insure that those standards are being met. Of particular importance with regard to operations, for example, is the fact that all engines and rolling stock involved in any operating session must have couplers that mate properly, the right kind of wheels, the correct weight, etc. All equipment will be checked prior to an operating session, and equipment not meeting standards will not be used.

Trips and Outings – Several members have expressed an interest in doing things together outside the confines of our layout facility and normal meeting times. Examples: Some would like to go over to the Metroplex and ride the light rail system and the Tarantula RR. President Balch is interested in visiting other model railroad clubs, and there are a number of area train shows we could attend together. Once we decide on doing some of these things and set dates, the information will be published on a club calendar which will appear in this newsletter.

Publicity – ASMR's existence may be one of Abilene's better kept secrets, but there are many ways we can and should use to let our presence be known. Lately, we haven't even been taking advantage of the free publicity available in the Reporter-News club meeting announcements. We had a web site for awhile, and we need to get that going again. We also need to make sure ASMR tri-fold info brochures are kept available in strategic locations around Abilene, including Dyess AFB. Putting on public model railroad displays and doing programs at civic clubs are great ways to gain positive exposure. A publicity committee could see that these kinds of things are being done in an organized way.

Membership and Retention – The continued existence of any club centers on membership in three ways – keeping those you have to the greatest extent possible, replacing those who depart for reasons beyond the club's control, and hopefully, recruiting enough new ones to actually grow the club over time. A membership and retention committee to make sure we are up to speed in all these respects is sorely needed.

Parting Thought – ASMR has been in existence for nearly 15 years. Along with several "banner years", the club has weathered some formidable challenges during that time and managed to stay on track. We are now at somewhat of a "crossroads". If we continue as we have been, the future doesn't look very bright, but if we take this opportunity to "re-invent" our club, we can hopefully make things more fun for present members and attract the kind of prospective members we need to grow and flourish. We have the potential, all we need to do is live up to it!