

Keeping Track

Official newsletter of the Abilene Society of Model Railroaders

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The Editor Speaks

Whatever “Floats Yer Boat”

Sometimes in our zeal to do good, we may go overboard and alienate the very folks we are trying involve in that good, if we aren't careful. I'm thinking in particular of how some of us, me included, feel that ASMR has grown somewhat stagnant and needs to be revitalized. Our enthusiastic new president, Don Balch, has come up with a number of seemingly good ideas for breathing new life into ASMR, and is in the process of trying to implement some of them. Having been president of ASMR myself for several terms, I sympathize with Don, support his efforts, and hope that he succeeds where others, including me, failed to one degree or another at trying to energize the club membership. Here's the problem as I see it. There seems to be a level of involvement each member is satisfied with, which keeps them going, and that level is different for each one. It might not do for me, or somebody else, but it's enough for them. Some don't even come around much, but they keep paying their dues, which is the only official requirement for membership -- and who's to say that's wrong? In the 15 years I've been associated with ASMR, I've seen the club really active and growing at times, and I've also witnessed declines. Strangely, there didn't seem to be a readily identifiable cause behind either the ups, or the downs, except maybe the club's location. With that said, I still remain hopeful we can try new ideas and succeed in rejuvenating ASMR. If those of us who want changes lead by example, and appear to be having fun, perhaps others will follow. If not, you can lead a horse to water, but... Regardless of what we do, though, I think we should always remember that the club satisfies different needs for different folks, and nobody should be made to feel unwelcome or unworthy of membership based upon the level of involvement that “floats their boat”. *JG*

On the Other Hand

Damiano on “Participation”

I was saddened at our last business meeting to find only 7 members present, including me, and I arrived late. If this is going to be everyone's club -- which is the goal here -- then everyone possible needs to be at these meetings to make decisions on the club's present and future. Decisions do not need to be made by a majority of only those who are present, but by a majority of all of the club's members! I realize that not everybody is able to make every business meeting, but a more concerted effort by all would certainly increase participation, and decisions made by the club at large would have increased validity. I guess it gets down to the old adage that we can always find the time to do the things we want to do. Granted, I will be the first to admit that meetings are not something I am particularly fond of, especially on a Saturday, but they are necessary and important. The lack of members present would probably not be so bad, except that those who do not attend and participate are sometimes the ones that gripe the most about decisions which are made in their absence. With this in mind, I encourage one and all to make a greater effort to be present at as many meetings as possible. I look forward to seeing each of you at the next meeting, and the next, and the next... *David Damiano*

Club Layout Yard Update

Using three switch yard proposals drawn to scale by Cody Hilliard on a CAD program, several members considered the pros and cons of each arrangement at an impromptu meeting on April 16. After a discussion, which included looking at where the tracks and facilities would actually be on the layout, a majority of the members present voted to implement the plan that extended the yard through the area formerly occupied by Billy Belyeu's army post, and added an intermodal facility on John Conley's old module. The new switch yard, when finished, should be able to handle strings of freight cars up to 40 or 50 cars long.

Club Car “Outshopping” Project

The project to upgrade 50 of the freight cars generously donated to ASMR by the family of John Conley after he died is coming along well, thanks to members Mike Ziegenhagen and Ken Riediger. This crew has been busy bringing the cars up to operational standards by installing new metal wheelsets, insuring that couplers are installed and/or adjusted to mate and work properly, and adding weight to cars, as necessary.

Riediger’s Railfan Roundup

Here are three bits of information that may be of interest to the club. You probably have heard that the circus is coming to town. It will most likely come by train, but I’m not sure if it is the red train or the blue train. It will be in Abilene May 19th to 22nd, El Paso 5/11 - 5/15, and Odessa 6/9 - 6/12. Here’s is a link to the circus web site:

<http://www.ringling.com/schedule/index.aspx>.

The second item is about a biiiiigg load that went through the Big Country recently. It was a reactor traveling on BNSF from Houston to Denver aboard a 36-truck, articulated Schnable car. It spent the night in Sweetwater on 4/2/05. Here is a link that tells a ton about it and has numerous neat pictures of it traveling through our area and other places: <http://perroux.us/pages/reactor.html>.

And here’s another interesting site to check out involving the relocation of two huge UP locos:

<http://www.uphs.org/4023move.html>. KR

Report on Abilene “Founders Day”

Many moons ago, 15 to be exact, an Abilene weekend-long event called “Railfest” was born. Sponsored by the Abilene Preservation League, the central focus of the three-day affair was Abilene’s railroad heritage. It featured a well-attended model train show in which ASMR was a key player. After several successful seasons, Railfest was merged with the Buffalo Gap Art Festival, and became “Celebrate Abilene”. Sadly, neither event did as well in tandem as they had alone, and after going downhill for several more years, the art festival group dropped out. Celebrate Abilene limped along another few years, and this spring it was reduced to a one day event on April 9, called “Founders Day”. During the period of decline, model trains continued to be exhibited, but became less and less of a focal point for the event. This year it came down to three layout exhibits in the Elks building, one of which was a 4 X 8-foot, 0-gauge layout put together by your friendly editor, on behalf of the club. A supply of ASMR tri-fold info brochures was on hand for visitors to take. Estimates of crowd size by event officials ran as high as 3,000 people, but this exhibitor and others felt like the number that actually came into the Elk’s Building to see the model trains was closer to something between 500 and 700. Walter, God Bless him, was on hand to help out most of the day, and one other member did show up long enough to say “Hi” and leave. Other than that, ASMR membership was conspicuous by its absence in support of this opportunity to promote the hobby and the club in our community. And even though attendance at this event could have been more impressive, far more people viewed our train display during Founders Day than we could ever hope have show up at an open house in our present location. I’m going to editorialize a bit here and confess that I’m starting to feel like a “lone eagle” when it comes to trying to promote ASMR at public events like this one, and the Abilene State School Christmas lights display last December. Besides that, it’s kind of embarrassing when other model train exhibitors, who were non members and former members, asked me why nobody else from ASMR showed up to help represent the club. Good question! JG

Model RR Meets & Shows

May 21 – New Braunfels, TCA Meet

May 21 – Mesquite, Squadron Scalefest ‘05

May 29 – Fort Worth, Lone Star Train Fair

June 1-5 – Fort Worth, NMRA Convention

Herwick Family Expands

This personal item about Mel Herwick should have been in last month's newsletter, but didn't quite make it. Sorry 'bout that. On March 11, Mel became a proud grandfather for the second time with the birth of Laren Grace Hanna to his daughter and son-in-law, who live in Fort Worth. Not only that, Mel says he and his wife Elaine anticipate the arrival of a third grandchild in August! Congrats to you and your family, Mel, but please be advised that any further notifications of impending grand children may be viewed by some as "showing off".

Former Member Van Allen Engaged

It seems like only yesterday that Galen Van Allen was a young lad coming to ASMR with his father, John. But that was several years ago, and according to a notice in the April 17 Abilene Reporter-News, Galen, who graduated from Eula HS and attended Hardin-Simmons, is now set to be married on June 3. His dad, a former ASMR president, is presently living and working in Warner Robins, GA. Time Marches On!

Adopt a Platoon

There's a program on the internet called "Adopt a Platoon", which provides all sorts of items for soldiers stationed overseas. According to Mel Herwick's wife Elaine, one sponsor is even seeking donated model trains. At press time, I couldn't find that particular site, but if you run a search for the key words "Adopt a Platoon", you may have better luck than me. This just might be something we could help out with individually, or as a club. *JG*