

KEEPING TRACK

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The Word From the Prez

ASMR Members Have a Ball During Trip to Fort Worth

Saturday, May 20, was a real treat for six ASMR members. We left Abilene bright and early, at 7:30 a.m. sharp. Everybody got a chuckle as we passed the point just east of Abilene where we turned around due to icy road conditions on our attempt last winter to go and operate on Jim Norwood's KCS layout. Before we arrived at Jim's this time, we went to LMRA for the monthly "Cow-catcher" meeting of the Ft. Worth area division of LSR. They had a special guest, Bobbye Hall, selling and autographing copies of her new book about her hobby shop experiences. Mrs. Hall is in her mid-90s, and she sure looked good for her age. Her book is: *Tracks From Texas To Tokyo*.

Next we headed for south Ft. Worth and Hobby World, for some shopping. Each one of us found some interesting train "goodies" we couldn't resist, and after having our pockets lightened it was time to head to Norwood's. Anybody who hasn't seen his layout is missing a real treat. It covers nearly the whole second floor of his house, which I will guess is over 1000 feet. It fills two former bedrooms and goes around the perimeter of a third which is now Jim's office. It also snakes through 8 other closets, storage rooms, or bathrooms. You feel like you are traveling from place to place, rather than just around a room like a lot of layouts. There were 11 or 12 of us there (including locals) to operate. Jim did the dispatching from one of the closets that the railroad runs through. He uses the Rail-Op program that Cody and I learned about on our trip to Arkansas last fall. He had about 20 train sheets made up for the session -- everything from mainline runs to locals, and even a yard switcher job. We could operate individually or in pairs. Ken E and Dan chose one of the hardest trains, and it took them the whole session, even considering that Ken had run this train before and was familiar with it.

Next was the team of Cody and Chris, and they had a mainline train with no intermediate switching. They had to make up their train and then get out over the road and deliver it. Sounds simple, right? Cody

and Chris thought so, too, when they went around the wye and "Voila!" they were done. When they reported to the dispatcher their OS arrival he had to tell them, "Boys, boys, you went out of town in the *wrong direction*". After a good laugh, they had to back their train back through the wye and depart in the right direction. This time they made it, even weaving through opposing traffic, and even got to run a second train before the session ended.

Next up was Mel. Poor Mel took the Ft. Smith to Heavener local and got stuck in a closet! It took him a good while to get out of it, but he had lots of fun running switches and maneuvering in there. Ft. Smith is built in the closet of the bedroom that is now Jim's office, and is one of his newer additions. When Mel finally did come out of the closet, he took his train on to Heavener, okay. An interesting thing is that on the way he had to pass through Poteau, OK., where Mel has family ties.

Now to my trains. My first train was a local out of Heavener yard, then up a branch line leaving the main at Coal Creek and return. I took six cars up and returned with ten cars. There was a lot of switching and maneuvering to do to get the cars where they belonged and get cars that weren't going back where they belong also. My next train was a transfer from Knocke yard to Neff yard, and remember this is modeled in 1962, so cabooses are mandatory on all trains. I had to switch my train from the various yard tracks, then add a caboose, call the dispatcher for track time to travel to Neff, drop the caboose to the caboose track, the various cars to their tracks, and then take the power to the service track. It was a lot of work between the two trains but it was also a lot of fun.

This was the first time for Chris, Dan and Cody to operate on Jim's layout, and on the way home *everyone* talked about how much fun they had. Let's keep having fun like this, guys.

Your Prez, Ken Riediger

Model RR Meets & Shows

June 1-4 – Lone Star Region Convention, San Antonio

Club Ball Caps Available

There are still plenty of those good-looking white ball caps with the ASMR logo on them available for members to purchase. If you haven't got one, or your old one is sweated out and grubby looking, see Pres. Riediger to buy one, and show your ASMR pride!

Mike Ziegenhagen Donates Locomotives, and More, To Club

As mentioned in the meeting notes, Mike Ziegenhagen decided to donate two brand new Proto 2000 GP-7 locomotives to the club. They even have decoders already installed, and will be ready for use during club operating sessions as soon as they are painted. Both are undecorated, and Jim Frankenfeld has volunteered to do the airbrush and decal work once members decide what railroad and paint scheme they want. In addition to his generosity in donating the two engines, Mike also deserves a pat on the back for voluntarily repairing the Burlington GP-7 diesel that John Conley's family donated to the club after he died. It had running gear and light problems, but with the new wheels, gears and lights Mike installed, it now hums along like a dream and shines brightly. Well done, Mike! And Thanks.

May 6 Meeting Notes

Pres. Riediger opened the meeting at 10:10, and thanked the members for participating in the Abilene Founders' Day event downtown on April 8. He then discussed the work that needs to be done on the portable modular layout to get it ready for the next public showing. Members voted for the club to purchase 15 ball caps which remain from the order Ken England took the initiative to place last month so members could have new club caps in time for the Founders' Day event. Pres. Riediger discussed the operating session in Fort Worth which is set for May 20, and six to eight members indicated a desire to attend. Those going will car pool from the ReMax office, departing at 7:30 a.m. Part of the trip includes attending a meeting of the "Cow Catchers" model railroad group in Fort Worth, before going to Jim Norwood's for the operating session. Pres. Riediger noted that Mike Ziegenhagen has generously donated two Proto 2000 GP7s to the club for use during ASMR operations. Both are undecorated, and members need to decide on a railroad name and paint scheme for them. The meeting adjourned at 10:35, with 11 members present. Next meeting will be June 3. Note: Right after this meeting Pres. Riediger held a ballasting clinic. Several members participated, and the "hands-on" training resulted in

one corner module on the portable layout getting ballasted.

The Editor Speaks

A Trip to Hall's Hobby Shop: An Experience to Remember

For over half a century after WWII, one of the best known places in the Metroplex to find model railroad trains, books, and related supplies was Bobbye Hall's Hobby House. It was located east of downtown Dallas, on Bryan Street, in what eventually became a pretty seedy part of the city. But you could find just about anything to do with model railroading there, if you had the time and persistence to root around the shelves, nooks and crannies filled to overflowing with merchandise. Because there was just so darn much stuff in all scales, I always found it kind of an overwhelming place to browse. But if you needed help finding what you wanted, sprightly Mrs. Hall, even at 90-plus, could usually direct you right to it in a heartbeat. And no collector worth their "salt" would be caught without some of Mrs. Hall's "Hallmark" line of imported brass locomotives and rolling stock on their roster. Toward the end, there was a brief period of hope that somebody would take over the shop from Mrs. Hall and keep it going, but sadly that didn't happen. There's an oriental food restaurant in that part of town where we like to eat when we're in Dallas, but it sure makes me feel sad when I look next door and see that the building which once housed the legendary Hall's Hobby House is now a Vietnamese pool hall. With the help of a professional writer, Mrs. Hall has documented her many years as a hobby shop proprietor and brass model train importer in a book called *Tracks from Texas to Tokyo*. It is briefly reviewed below, and I look forward to reading it.

JG

Legendary Hobby Shop Owner Tells Life Story in New Bio

In 19 chapters, *Tracks from Texas to Tokyo* chronicles the life of one of the hobby industry's most charismatic figures, Bobbye Hall. From 1946 to 2001, Mrs. Hall built an empire with Hall's Hobby House and Hallmark Models, Inc., in Dallas, and became the Southwest's premier hobby and model train retailer/importer. At age 92, she retired from a career that included Hall of Fame honors in the industry, and the highest award for her tenured service in the National Model Railroad Association. Her book, co-written with Tim Blackwell, retails for \$15.95. Note: *The source for the information in this review is an internet publicity site*