

KEEPING TRACK

Official Newsletter of the Abilene Society of Model Railroaders

Volume 2, Issue 6

August 1, 2006

Editor: Jim Gibson

The Word From the Prez

Summer Heat and Distractions Fail To Curtail ASMR Activity

You can tell summer is here -- if not by the high temperatures, then by the decrease in attendance at club functions. In spite of summer, though, the club is continuing to grow as we welcome Dusty Garison as a new member. Members are still active at home and elsewhere, as evidenced by the new sign for the door, thanks to Mike Z. One of our "re-newed" members, Bill Page, stepped up and ballasted two of the remaining corners of our modular layout, which leaves just one to go. Cody has been at work updating the DCC/ trackwork status of the layout. Jim F has completed painting the two GP7's donated by Mike Z, and they look fantastic. The locos use the swamp holly orange and black T&P paint scheme, but replace T&P with ASMR. What keeps amazing me is how different people step up and do their part to help make the club better. So, summer may be here, but that sure is not stopping the activities of ASMR. I am proud to be associated with this group.

PS: We need to be thinking about a work day for getting our modules out and completing them.

Your Prez, Ken Riediger

Steve England Shares Video And Memories of Northlandz

Northlandz, located in Flemington, NJ, claims to be the largest model railroad layout in existence. Steve England visited it a few years ago with his father, who lived in the area at that time, and found it to be, in a word "huge". As he navigated the mile-long, multi-level viewing path through the complex labyrinth of mountain and valley scenery, Steve says he was particularly impressed by the numerous scratch-built bridges of all sizes with multiple trains running across them. He met the owner/builder of Northlandz in person while he was there, and when Steve mentioned that he was a model railroader, he got a behind-the-scenes view of how the enormous layout HO-scale layout is constructed and operated. There is supposedly enough structural lumber in it, for example, to build 42 good-sized houses, along with tons of plaster layered onto screen for the terrain. While he was there, Steve purchased a videotape of the layout and is willing to share it with anyone in the

club who is interested. Editor's Note: I viewed the tape and it's impressive, especially the action shots recorded by a train-mounted minicam as it moves through the scenery. I checked out Northlandz on the internet, and it is getting mixed reviews from recent visitors. Some are duly impressed, but others criticize the high admission price (\$13.75 for adults) and apparent deterioration of the scenery in some areas. This is all pretty "academic", since most of us won't get to New Jersey anytime soon to see Northlandz in person, but Steve's video is an excellent way to see what it looks (or looked) like.

Ken Riediger Wins July Operating Competition

The July operating session took place on the 3rd Saturday, as planned. Being the middle of summer with vacations and family things going on, plus the heat in our building, operators were slim. I had planned to referee the session but that would have left just two operators. Cody and Dan were the other two operators. Cody and Dan each drew six car cards from the box of cards, then I drew mine. We each looked at our cards and organized them into the order we planned to pick them up. Dan being the rookie member had to ask where some of the industries were but then we were off. Cody remarked he almost felt like he was cheating because four of his six cars were in the Abilene Yard and the other two were at another location. Cody started in the outside siding by Hailey's transfer. I started in the siding across from the Abilene Depot. Dan started at Windmill Flats. My first car was right behind the depot so as soon as I picked it up I was off to the Yard to pick up three cars there. At the yard I had to pull into a spare track and wait on Cody to get his cars and get out of my way before I could commence my pickup. I then went to my next stop at Tri-State Refinery to get my last two cars. Cody and I had our six cars picked up at the same time. Since we had a lack of attendees we called on a visitor to help check our cars for accuracy.

This is where things took a big change. My first three deliveries were very close to where I was and in a couple of minutes I had half my cars delivered. I dropped off another two cars at one location, and then the final car at its destination, and it seemed like in five minutes I had all my cars delivered. At this point Cody had only one or two set out, and

Dan had not quite found all his cars yet. Cody was shocked that I had finished so fast, especially after he thought he had such a good draw of cards to begin with. It just goes to show you never know what will happen and what luck of the draw will bring you. It may be more difficult picking up or it may be harder setting out – or both! All in all we all had fun and even our visitors enjoyed our operations "game".

And so goes the story of the July operating session. For those who weren't there, you missed a good session. Cody was also heard to remark that next time I need a longer switch list or some other handicap. :-)

KR

July 1 Meeting Notes

Pres. Riediger opened the meeting at 10:10, and the following items of business were discussed. Mike Ziegenhagen said he had started a sign for the outside door of the building, but had problems and will have to start over. He did complete a number sign, and showed it to everyone. Jim Gibson said that the State School Christmas Lane committee coordinator had called him to see if the club was going to participate again this year from Dec. 7 - 24. Members agreed that it is a good event for wide public exposure and that we should use the new modular layout, possibly including a winter scene. Pres. Riediger suggested that we consider putting some of our surplus funds into an interest bearing CD, and members agreed that we should invest \$1,500. He is going to check into it and report at the next meeting. Walter suggested we do a display at this year's Taylor County Fair, and Mel said he will check into the possibilities for a train exhibit of some sort. Pres. Riediger read a letter from a club in Duncan, OK requesting help to fund the rehab of a Rock Island steam locomotive. Some of the members contributed money on the spot for Riediger to send to the "Save 501" fund. Jim Frankenfeld said he is about ready to start painting and decaling the engines that Mike Ziegenhagen donated to the club. The meeting was formally adjourned at 10:45, but Pres. Riediger remembered that we had previously talked about buying some new DCC throttles, and brought up the issue. The meeting reconvened just long enough to take a vote authorizing Riediger to purchase two UT4R throttles at approximately \$100 each. Next meeting will be August 5.

The Editor Speaks

Some Tips For Scenic-ing

All Those Club Modules

I don't mean to imply that I'm some kind of an expert when it comes to making realistic modules, but I have learned a few things about this subject during

the several decades I've been a model railroader. I can't resist passing some of them along in anticipation of us getting busy soon on the modules for the club's portable layout. First, pick an idea or a theme (town, farm, industrial area, etc.) for your module and coordinate it with Ken Riediger to make sure somebody else isn't doing something similar, and that it fits in with the overall scheme of the portable layout. Second, do some research, and there are plenty of resources available. The internet can be especially helpful, and there are plenty of model railroad publications available. For many types of scenery, popular magazines and picture books can provide realistic examples to follow. Third, make rough plan sketches of the terrain, structures, roads, etc., that you are thinking about including on your module, and play around with them. Trial and error rearranging on paper will help you figure out the best fit for the elements. Three tips here: A. Don't try to include too much or you'll probably end up with an overly "busy" jumble. B. You can achieve more realism and "eye appeal" if you don't line things up exactly parallel or perpendicular to the edges of the module. C. Don't forget to include details like sidewalks, parking lots, etc., in areas around businesses or industries where they would be appropriate. Once you have a solid idea of what you want to do, it helps to make a scale drawing of the ground plan using the actual "footprint" dimensions of the structures and scenic items to make sure that everything will really fit into the space you have available. Transfer this to your module and start scenic-ing! This is by no means a comprehensive outline, but it does cover some of the basics that I have found very helpful to me. One closing tip on ballasting – Less is Best. The tops of the cross-ties should be showing, and you only need enough on the sides of the cork to cover it. Too much ballast not only looks unrealistic, it's wasteful and (worst of all) it doesn't stay glued down very well either. You can see examples of both situations for yourself on our club layout. Some of the well-laid ballast has been down for over 15 years and is still solid. Of course, the main and overriding rule for this or any other model railroading project is: Have fun!

JG

Model RR Meets & Shows

Sept 16 & 17 – Centra Mod 24th Annual Model Train Show, Temple

Note: This is a revised copy of the August *Keeping Track* newsletter. It corrects a major printing problem and a minor editorial mistake that were in the original issue. **JG**