

KEEPING TRACK

Official Newsletter of the Abilene Society of Model Railroaders

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The Word From the Prez

It's Time Once Again for the Election of New Club Officers

This is a very important time for ASMR. This month we elect new officers for the coming year. First, I want to thank my co-officers Mike and Cody for the great job they did. It has been a pleasure to serve with you. I feel that we have made a lot of progress during the past year. Our membership is growing and I believe we are having a lot more fun as a group. We are also educating more and more people about railroads and model railroads. I see this continuing in the coming years. Last December, at the State School's Christmas Lane exhibit we had a good representation of club members and an excellent reception from the public. Then in April, we debuted our new modular layout at Abilene Heritage Days with excellent public response again. I am hoping our open house this November will be much better attended than in previous years, and I believe strongly that it will be. For one thing, we have been getting some positive signs in the way of better publicity about our club from the local newspaper.

I believe that with the weather starting to cool down now, attendance will pick up at our club events. By next summer we will either have the existing AC fixed (per the owner) or we will bring in our own AC and mount it. That is barring finding a new location.

Again, I want to express my appreciation to each member for making ASMR the enjoyable club it is. Thank you, ***Your Prez, Ken Riediger***

Sept. 2 Meeting Notes

Pres. Ken Riediger opened the meeting at 10:12. The previous meeting's minutes were corrected to reflect that he did not cancel the original DCC throttle order, as reported, but elected to give the supplier a little more time to ship them. Riediger said that the supplier, "Wig Wag", assured him ASMR was first on the list for two UT4 throttles, and we should have them soon. Riediger reiterated that officer elections are next month, noting that Mike Ziegenhagen's stated desire not to serve as club secretary again should be taken into consideration. Cody Hilliard said nothing had been coordinated yet as far as the modules for the new display layout. There was also nothing new regarding relocation prospects. After a brief discussion, members decided to hold a module

workday at Cody's house on Sept. 23. Riediger mentioned the issue of courtesy during operating sessions, suggesting that club ground rules need to follow prototype practices, especially in the Abilene Yard. One prime example would be that the first operator in the yard has the right of way and others must work around him or wait their turn. The meeting adjourned at 10:55, and afterward Riediger told the group about a large lot of HO-scale train items he is inventorying for a widow in Abilene, and a much smaller lot from another widow that he and Jim Gibson inventoried.

Cody Hilliard Still "Top Op", But Win Margin Was Closer

Four members participated in the Sept. 16 Operating Session, including Cody, Dan, Ken E. and Dusty. Ken R. served as referee and started by setting out ground rules. To try and make the playing field more even, Ken pre-sorted several stacks of six car-cards each, making sure no two cars in a stack were to be picked up from same location. Least experienced got to draw first. "We didn't seem to have the grouping we've had in past sessions," said Ken. For his first time out, Dusty did real well, according to Ken, who said he was coaching Dusty some because of his inexperience. Cody beat Dusty by less than 60 seconds, and Ken said he thought Dusty was going to win right up till the end. Ken E. and Dan finished third and fourth. Ken R. observed that the event seemed to be more fun and less frustrating this time, probably as a result of the closer competition.

The Editor Speaks

Looking Back or Ahead Gives Reasons for ASMR Optimism

The early years of ASMR were heady times. The club had a good location provided by the Preservation League and we were key participants in a variety of downtown activities and events. There seemed to be strong civic and community support and interest in having an organization like ours in Abilene. Then came some rough patches, where we found ourselves at times without a "home" and barely able to stay on track. Support that had been promised by the City and one of its key foundations in better times never materialized, and things looked grim for awhile as membership

also dwindled. But a core of model railroaders hung on and things picked up again when we found a nice, affordable location on North 1st and thrived there for a couple of years. When that “home” was taken away, it looked grim again, but again the hard core folks hung on and the club stayed on track, even though that track was bumpy at times. About a year and a half ago, in the wake of a leadership crisis, we elected a new president named Ken Riediger, and under his able leadership, I have once again felt the kind of vitality that characterized the club in its early years begin returning. ASMR is now 16 years old, and has weathered some pretty rough storms while getting to be a “teenager”. With good leadership, good members having fun, and perhaps some Divine intervention thrown in for good measure, there’s no reason to anticipate anything but ongoing success. Whether you’ve been a member for a long time or a short time, I hope you feel as good as I do about our club, as we prepare to see what ASMR’s 17th year holds in store.

JG

Model RR Meets & Shows

Oct 7 & 8 – Southwest O Scale and Oklahoma Narrow Gauge Meet, Oklahoma City, OK.

Oct 7 & 8 – Alamo RR Engineers Train Show, Live Oak, TX (San Antonio area)

Oct 14 & 15 – Lockheed-Martin Rec. Assn. RR Show, Fort Worth, TX.

Oct 21 – Brazos Valley Model RR Society Open House, Bryan, TX.

Oct 28 & 29 – Cotton Belt Rail Historical Society Train Show, Tyler, TX.

Nov 4 & 5 – T&P Rwy Museum Model Train Show, Marshall, TX.

Nov 11 & 12 – Fort Worth Train Show, Fort Worth.

Had any neat model railroading or rail fan experiences lately? Share them with your fellow ASMR members by letting your editor know so we can get them in the Newsletter. All I need is the who, what, when and where.

The Crash at Crush

I was working the Sunday paper’s “Texas Crossword” and the clue for 32 across was: *TX Scott Joplin musical composition “___ ___ ___ Crush”*. Answer: the “Crash at [Crush]”. Out of curiosity, I looked up Crash at Crush on the internet and discovered some cool Texas railroad trivia. Turns out the Joplin tune was inspired by a head-on collision of two, 35-ton, 4-4-0 steam locomotives staged by William G. Crush, a passenger agent for the MKT (Katy) RR, on Sept. 15, 1896. The site of the event was a shallow valley 15 miles north of Waco, near milepost 881 on Katy’s Waco to Dallas line. A special 4-mile long section of track was laid, and a viewing stand for dignitaries, a depot, and a carnival midway were set up. Two obsolete but well-maintained locomotives were painted bright red and green for their “duel”, and a third was kept in reserve in case either of the two primaries failed. The crash was widely publicized for a couple of months in advance, and on the big day some 30 Katy passenger trains fanned out in all directions to bring in spectators. By crash time, a crowd estimated at around 40,000 people had assembled in the valley, which formed a natural amphitheater. Three hundred special police were on hand to maintain order, and all sorts of food and pre-crash diversions were offered by a host of vendors. At 5 p.m., with agent Crush officiating on a white horse, the engines each backed a mile from the planned impact point on the temporary track. Behind both were seven box cars plastered with advertising and chained together. On Crush’s signal, the engines started forward simultaneously with throttles cocked wide open. Once underway, the crews jumped off and both locos quickly picked up speed. It only took a couple of minutes for the doomed duo, each traveling at 45 to 50 mph, to come together. The crowd-pleasing impact was awesome and noisy, followed by a moment of stark silence before the unplanned explosions of both locomotive boilers! Spectators had been kept back a safe enough distance for a head-on collision, and KATY mechanical experts had given confident assurances beforehand that the loco boilers would not explode. But for unknown reasons both boilers let go almost simultaneously in the wake of the initial impact, sending a deadly barrage of iron and steel shrapnel into the crowd. Two men and a woman were reportedly killed, and several others were seriously injured. Large pieces of the wreckage were picked up the day of the event by Katy wrecking crews, and souvenir hunters from the crowd quickly scavenged up the rest of the pieces that were small enough to be carried off by hand. By evening the temporary facilities at Crush had been dismantled and carted away, and the short-lived “town” was once again an empty field. In the initial aftermath of the disaster, Katy summarily fired agent Crush. But they quickly rehired him, and he went on to retire with 57 years of otherwise unremarkable service! To MKT’s credit, the railroad quickly settled all claims from victims and their families in terms that were considered equitable and fair for that time. So there you have it, the story of the “Crash at Crush”, another tidbit of Texas railroad trivia. If you want to find out more about this event, or see some old photos of it, just Google “Crash at Crush” and enjoy.

JG