

KEEPING TRACK

Official Newsletter of the Abilene Society of Model Railroaders

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The Word From the Prez

Membership Increases and Public Outreach Continue

First off, I'm extremely pleased to welcome two new members who recently joined ASMR, Donnie Cone and Nick Kenneally. We've had several visitors during the past several weeks, with some looking to join the club, and we're glad that these two "took the plunge" and signed up. If you haven't already met them, be sure and make them feel welcome to our "modest" home and layout.

We will continue our public outreach efforts at the Abilene Founders Day celebration on April 14. The Abilene Preservation League, which sponsors it, has invited us to put our trains on display during this annual downtown community affair. It will only be for the one day that weekend, but I believe the potential public exposure will be well worth the effort of setting up our modular display layout, which made its debut at this event last year to a very appreciative group of visitors. Ken England has volunteered to set up his personal portable "family" layout again, and the S-gauge guys (and former ASMR members) Rich Dunlap and Gene Linder, will have their American Flyer toy train display layout set up as well.

I am again soliciting suggestions from you for monthly programs. Remember, this applies to a program you would like to see somebody else do, or a program you would be willing to present for the enlightenment and benefit of your fellow ASMR members. *Your President, Ken Riediger*

ASMR Meeting Notes

The Feb. 3 business meeting was called to order by Pres. Ken Riediger at 10:08 a.m. Minutes of the Jan. 6 meeting were read and approved. Although a treasurer's report was not available, Riediger said he had gone over the financial record in Dan Brady's continued absence and there appeared to be a \$127 difference in the club's favor between the checkbook and the most recent bank statement. A layout status discussion centered on the need to check out some problem switches and replace the bad ones. Jim Gibson also mentioned doing something about the backdrops that are seriously warped because of ceiling leaks. He also

mentioned that his contact at Habit for Humanity has taken a job in another town which means starting over on the possibility of renting the old Habitat headquarters facility. Cody Hilliard mentioned that the DCC system can be reset to come on fully when it is turned on instead of having to get track status and the members voted to have him do it. Ken England brought in an article from "Cowcatcher" about another club's public layout that is set lower than the standard so kids can see things easier and members discussed making a set of shorter legs for ASMR's portable modular demo layout. Members discussed making a small Thomas the Tank layout, and Jim Gibson suggested having it come out from under the HO layout and disappear back under it again. Ken and Jim volunteered to check on price and availability of Thomas equipment. Cody said he has a "Decoder Pro" program and might be able to bring down an old computer and set it up for the club to use. Ken R. talked about setting up the "Rail Op" program and using it for operating sessions like the ones at Jim Norwood's layout in Fort Worth. Ken England suggested selling off the unused cars and engines from the collection that was donated by John Conley's family and members voted to do that. The meeting adjourned at 10:51 a.m. (Note: After the meeting the surplus Conley items were brought out and several were purchased by members.)

Ken R. Wins Again In February Ops Contest

The club held a monthly operations session on Feb. 17, with four members participating. They included Cody Hilliard, Steve England, Dusty Garison and Ken Riediger. Charles Chinn and a guest served as referees and checkers. Dusty and Steve drew their six cards first, followed by Cody and Ken, and the race was on. Cody debuted his new CF7 that he had just installed a sound unit in, and according to Ken, "It sounded "Sweeeeeet!" The competition was pretty close through the half-way point, but Ken managed to pull ahead enough to win in the end, followed closely by Dusty. Cody came in third and Steve was still persistently working away when the group decided to call it a day. According to Ken, our resident switching expert and guru, some of the members could

benefit from more practice to bring their switching and maneuvering skills up to speed.

(Editor's Note: As one who has had problems and frustrations in this area, I think some "expert" tips on getting yourself organized, and executing your pickups and deliveries more expeditiously and efficiently would benefit all of us who are struggling and consistently not winning. Practice is a good thing, but only if you are practicing effective techniques and habits. So there's a suggestion from me for a future program from you, Ken.)

Meet ASMR's Two Newest Members

In addition to their mutual interest in model trains, our two newest ASMR members both share a connected to aviation in their "real world" careers.

Donny Cone, who originally comes from the Kansas City, MO area, is an air traffic controller in the tower at Abilene Regional Airport. He says he has actually been more of a railfan than a model railroader up until now, but he is interested to get involved with the club's activities as much as his job will permit. He likes taking train photos and his favorite railroads include the Kansas City Southern and its subsidiary, the Gateway Western RR.

Nick Kenneally hails from Iowa, and is in the Air Force serving as a C-130 flight engineer at Dyess AFB. His pet railroads include BNSF, Rock Island, CNW, B&O and the Iowa Interstate RR. Donnie and Nick have one other thing in common: Neither is married. We welcome them both to ASMR and look forward to some good times sharing real train and model train experiences.

The Editor Speaks

Electroluminescent Signs Make Great Animations

I am really "pumped" about the idea of doing things to give the club's modular demo layout more eye appeal, especially after reading the interesting article in the "Cowcatcher" newsletter that Ken England brought to the February business meeting. The article describes all the clever animations the

ArkLaTex model railroad club has worked into the modular layout they put up for public demos and shows, and how much fun the member have showing them off and interacting with visitors. In my experience there are a couple of ways to get animation on a layout – a hard way and an easy way! The hard way is making things move mechanically with motors, gears, eccentric cams, etc. Good examples on the club layout include a windmill with a turning blade, engine shed doors that open and shut, and a water standpipe that raises, lowers and swivels. All these were cleverly engineered and built by former ASMR member Jack Gacke. Animations like these are great, but making them requires a lot of electrical and mechanical know-how and ingenuity, and the moving parts tend to wear out over time.

What doesn't have any moving parts, but can give a very effective, eye-catching effect of movement is animated lights. I have several in 0-gauge, like a flickering camp fire, and a water tower and an oil derrick with lighted bubble tubes. But the most amazing one is an electroluminescent (EL) "Route 66" motel sign with the effect of chase lights on it. In fact, am so impressed with the 0-gauge motel sign, I bought an H0-scale version of it to put on one of my modules for our club's portable layout. And I've already got my eye on an EL animated Sherwin Williams Paint sign that would look great on top of a hardware store on my Main Street scene. If you want to see examples of what these EL signs look like, just Google *Miller Engineering* on your computer and prepare to be impressed! As I said, I am excited about making improvements to our traveling layout, and I think EL signs offer one of the best and easiest ways to add crowd-pleasing animation. JG

Model RR Meets & Events

Mar. 3 – Junction & East Texas Train Society Show, Longview, TX.

Mar. 3 – Railfan Day, Temple, TX

Mar. 17 – World's Greatest Hobby on Tour, Fort Worth, TX.