

KEEPING TRACK

Official Newsletter of the Abilene Society of Model Railroaders

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The Word From the Prez

Schedule is Busy This Year, And Time Seems To Just Fly

Where is the time going? It seems like I just wrote last month's column and here it is time for a new one. Between work and family demands, I feel like I am not having as much time for trains as I used to. Is anybody else having this problem?

Eleven of us got to go to the "World's Greatest Hobby Show" in Ft. Worth on the 17th and we had a lot of fun. While we were in the area, we also went by and saw Jim Norwood's KCS layout. It impressed some of our number who had never seen it, and even those of us that had already seen it were impressed with the changes Jim has made and is planning to make. We have a date set up for a group from ASMR to go over and operate Jim's layout on May 19, 2007. If you've never had the chance to do this, plan on coming with us and I promise you will enjoy it.

We will set up the modular layout for "Founder's Day" April 14th, and we have a new opportunity in conjunction with the State School which I will fill you in on at our next meeting. So long for this month,

Your President, Ken Riediger

ASMR Meeting Notes

The Mar. 3 business meeting was called to order by Pres. Ken Riediger at 10:11 a.m. Minutes of the Feb. 3 meeting were not available because Secretary Cody Hilliard was absent. Treasurer's report was read and approved. Pres. Riediger said that some of the troublesome old Atlas switches had been replaced, but a few others still need to be done. He welcomed two new members: Donny Cone and Nick Kenneally, and said that Larry Mann had sent in a letter of resignation. Riediger talked about the downtown "Founder's Day" event on Feb. 14, at which there will be three model train layouts on display, including the club's modular one, Ken England's and an S gauge display. Setup will be Friday, the event on Saturday, and cleanup on Sunday afternoon. Ken said he hopes that after this event, the Abilene Preservation League (which now has a new director) may be able to help ASMR find a new "home" downtown. He also said those doing modules need to get together some time

before Founder's Day to set up and check out the modules that will be used during that event. Dusty Garison told the group he is building an N-gauge coffee table layout and may have it ready to show by April 14. Ken noted that ASMR's meeting notice isn't appearing in the Abilene Reporter-News anymore. Dusty volunteered to submit it, and Mike Ziegenhagen suggested that perhaps Jim Gibson, who does the monthly newsletter, should be the one to do it. It was also noted that the club's web site needs updating, and Dusty volunteered to get with Cody Hilliard and take care of it. Nick Kenneally suggested trying to get something into the Dyess AFB newspaper to let military people know about the club. Ken England talked about getting a new outdoor sign made for the front of the building. He said Fast Signs would do one for \$75, and members approved the purchase. England said the club also needs a new vacuum and he could get a suitable one for \$24.99. Members approved the purchase. Dusty asked about getting together to go to the World's Greatest Hobby show in Ft. Worth on March 17. Ken E. said those wanting to car pool should meet at ReMax at 6:45 a.m. for a 7 a.m. departure. Mel Herwick suggested making an effort to get Bill Rister to rejoin the club, and Ken R. said we should try to stay in touch with *all* of our former members and encourage them to rejoin. Mike Ziegenhagen said that he has put together a new ringbinder to hold a file of ASMR newsletters. The meeting closed at 10:50 a.m.

ASMR Group Attends Ft. Worth Train Show

Bright and early on St. Patrick's Day (Mar. 17), two carloads of avid Abilene model railroaders departed ReMax for the "World's Greatest Hobby on Tour" event at Ft. Worth's Convention Center. Riding with Ken Riediger were Dan Brady, Charles Chinn, Steve England, and Mel Herwick. Traveling with Ken England were Donny Cone, Jim Frankenfeld, Dusty Garison, Jim Gibson and former ASMR member Bill Rister. Chris Thomas went in his own vehicle with his family and met up with the group at the show. The ASMR contingent arrived just as the doors to the "World's Greatest" were opening and spent several hours shopping and checking out the train club layouts, manufacturers'

displays and other attractions. About 2 p.m. they departed the convention center and went to see Jim Norwood's H0-scale layout, which takes up most of the upper floor of his large, two-story home in North Richland Hills. During the visit, Ken England made arrangements with Norwood to bring over a group of ASMR members for an operating session on May 19. Before heading back home, the group detoured by Angelo's Hobby Shop for a little last minute shopping. By any yardstick, the trip measured up in every way as a great occasion for model railroading fun and fellowship.

The Editor Speaks

What's Really Important In A Model Train Display?

One of the impressive features of the "World's Greatest Hobby on Tour" event in Ft. Worth was the number of layouts brought in by various model train clubs. I was surprised and a little disappointed there were no O-scale layouts in two or three rail, and only one S-gauge setup. I was also surprised to see more N-scale and Z-scale layouts than I've seen at any show I've been to. Of course, I wasn't surprised there were several H0-scale layouts, including the one I wanted to see the most, the ArkLaTex train club's. It was much lower than usual, which made it great for viewing by youngsters (or height-challenged adults). It contrasted rather dramatically with one of the N-scale layouts that was taller than normal, set on legs that brought it almost up to eye level for a normal sized standing adult. As expected, the ArkLaTex layout had numerous animations, including an accident scene with flashing police and ambulance lights that was quite eye-catching. But, the module that grabbed and held my attention the most was a very detailed swamp scene, complete with the sounds of croaking frogs emanating from it!

For impressive size, nothing could compare with the N-scale layout assembled by at least four train clubs in and around the Metroplex. It must have had 50 or 60 modules in it, and they went off in all directions in a random sort of configuration the likes of which I've never seen before. There was every kind of scenery from towns to mountains to open country, and it ranged from very detailed to nearly bare. There was only one problem with this amazing mixture of modules – the trains weren't running very well, and sometimes not at all. This brings me to the question in this column's headline about what's important in a model train display. Although I tend to study a layout's scenery and details because I think they are important and

interesting, and they often give me ideas for things to do on my own layout; whenever I see tracks I look for moving trains. Regardless of how elaborate the scenery on it is, the quality that keeps a model train layout from being merely a diorama is *moving trains*. Without moving trains, a train layout is pretty much just a static display and its visual appeal is significantly reduced. Almost equally important is this – the moving trains need to be moving smoothly and dependably or it would probably be better if they didn't move at all. Trains that stall, jerk or derail, especially if they do these things very often, draw negative attention to themselves and the layout, disappoint viewers, and frustrate and embarrass the model railroader(s) responsible for them. So, what's most important on a model railroad display layout? In my opinion scenery and trains are both important, but if the trains don't run well, most visitors are likely to go away with a negative impression of the layout, regardless of how huge it is or how attractive the scenery, animations or other features on it are.

JG

Model RR Meets & Events

Apr. 14 – Jamboree 2007, New Braunfels, TX.

Apr. 14 – Founder's Day Celebration, Abilene, TX. (ASMR club & member layouts on display)

May 5 & 6 – Cotton Belt Hist. Society TCC Annual Train Show, Tyler, TX.

May 19 – Lone Star Div. TCA Spring Meet, New Braunfels, TX.

May 19 – ASMR operating session at Jim Norwood's layout in North Richland Hills

Jun. 6 - 10 – Lone Star Region Hill Country Special, Round Rock, TX.

Model Train Legend Dies

Bobbye Hall, who operated a premier hobby shop in Dallas for 55 years, died on Jan. 27. She was 97 years young! One of very few women in the model train business, Mrs. Hall partnered with the Japanese to create the *Hallmark* line of quality brass locomotives and rolling stock. She earned the highest honors awarded by both the Hobby Industry and the National Model Railroad Associations, and the friendship and loyalty of her countless customers. Fortunately, Bobbye Hall published her autobiography (*Tracks from Texas to Tokyo*) last year, and preserved her very personal account of her long, productive and fascinating life for future generations.