

# KEEPING TRACK

Official Newsletter of the Abilene Society of Model Railroaders

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## ***The Word From the Prez***

### **ASMR Calendar Still Full As We Move Into Spring**

Welcome to another month. It seems like I just wrote last month's column yesterday! April was busy with the Founder's Day Celebration and the preparations needed to get the layout ready for it. The weather may have been a bit cool, but we had fun and picked up another new member. It was nice to see three different scales represented among the four layouts on display. Add one more if you want to count the 12-inches to the foot track outside the back door of the depot!

May looks to be about as full as April with our operating trip planned for May 19 at Jim Norwood's layout. For those who have never run trains on Jim's layout, don't miss this opportunity. It should be a lot of fun and the camaraderie is always an added bonus. Who knows, we may even take a side trip to one of the local hobby shops.

Be thinking of things you would like to see as a program, or something you might like to present yourself, and let me know. Also, if you would like to see the club do a special project, bring it to my attention for consideration. A good example of this is the layout we just built for the Abilene State School.  
*Your President, Ken Riediger*

## **ASMR Meeting Notes**

The Apr. 7 business meeting was called to order by Pres. Ken Riediger at 10:06 a.m. Treasurer's report was read by Dan Brady and approved. Minutes of the Mar. 3 meeting were read by Cody Hilliard and approved. Pres. Riediger noted for the record that the new sign has been made and is installed on the outside door of the building. He also noted that the new vacuum cleaner has been purchased and is in the layout room ready for use, and that club announcements have been running regularly again in the *Abilene Reporter News*, thanks to Jim Gibson. He discussed the setup for the club's 12 X 14-foot modular layout at the Founders Day event on April 14. Those with modules agreed on Tues. night (April 10) for a trial setup of the layout modules in Ken Riediger's garage. Ken said he will check on the time the Abilene Depot will be available for setup on Friday

and let members know. Ken England said he has been checking on buildings with potential for club occupancy and discussed several. He also suggested that we sell railroad related items at the Founders Day event like we did several years ago. Everybody liked the idea but had to acknowledge that it was too late to order the items and get them delivered in time for this year's event. Ken R. discussed a request from Barbara Reid at the Abilene State School for a small layout to be used as a training device, and members voted to build one and donate it to the School. Ken said he will get specifications from school representatives and have them ready. The meeting closed at 10:30 a.m. It was followed by an informative presentation by Cody Hilliard on how to make inexpensive connectors out of integrated circuit sockets for installing decoders in HO-scale locos

## **New Members Join ASMR At Founders Day Event**

One of the reasons we do public displays is to try and expose the fun of the hobby to people who might be potential new members for the club. This concept worked so well at the April 14 Founders Day event that Kristi Newton signed up for herself and her son Louis while they were there! Kristi is a fifth grade teacher at Jane Long Elementary, and Louis is a very bright six year old who got his first train, a "Thomas", at the age of 10 months! He now has a 4 X 8 HO-scale layout at home in addition to his Thomas trains. The Newtons, who are native Abilenians, have been friends with Ken England since Louis was a baby, and we are pleased to welcome them to ASMR.

## **Club Volunteers Build Layout for State School**

In response to a request from Barbara Reid, a State School employee, several ASMR volunteers got together on Saturday, April 21, and constructed a special HO-scale layout for use as an interactive training aid for clients at the School. It consists of a circle of track mounted on cork roadbed on a 4 X 4-foot board and wired up to be powered by a conventional transformer. In use, State School personnel will connect the layout to a large button with a timer that permits a train to run for a

prescribed time and stop automatically each time a client pushes the button. Layout materials and also a locomotive and several cars are being donated by ASMR members as a public service. As soon as it is painted, a time will be set up to turn the layout over to the State School. Participants in the project included Ken Riediger, Cody Hilliard, Nick Kenneally and Charles Chinn. On hand to lend moral support were Ken England and Mel Herwick.

### The Editor Speaks

## ***What Makes Model Trains Such a Great Hobby for Me?***

At various times I've been asked why I like to "play with trains" by visitors to both my home layout and the club's. After giving the question some thought, I came up with several reasons the hobby appeals to me, just as it has ever since I was a youngster. Maybe it's in my genes because my grandfather, who I was named after, was a railroad man all his life. At any rate, I got my first model train, an American Flyer S-gauge set, when I was about ten years old, and I was hooked! Because I needed the money for college, I reluctantly sold my Flyer trains, which I had really loved and enjoyed, when I went off to Texas A&M.

I was out of the hobby until I bought an H0-scale train set for my young sons nearly 20 years later and was once again hooked. With me in the Air Force, though, we moved around a lot, and the first time I had a chance to build a layout was when we bought a house in Dover, Delaware that had a big basement. I met other model railroaders there who had great home layouts in their basements, and for the first time enjoyed the special benefits that come from sharing the hobby with fellow train enthusiasts.

While stationed in Illinois, I had no room to build a layout, so I had to keep my trains packed away while we were there. But when we came to Abilene, our first house had a building in the back yard that was perfect for a small H0 layout, and I was back in business. Later on, a friend gave me some Lionel trains he bought at a yard sale, and before long I was making space to run 0-gauge trains as well.

In 1990, I joined a group of model railroaders that eventually formed ASMR, and for the first time I got seriously into doing scenery (landscaping) on the modular layout we built for the first Abilene

Railfest. Up until then, I had enjoyed building lots of structures, but never had tackled scenery. Laying down realistic ground cover and making mountains and other terrain features proved to be a lot of fun for me, too.

In 1996, we moved to a country house out by Lake Fort Phantom, and my wife surprised me with a 14 X 24 foot portable building for my trains. I decided to use the whole space for an 0-gauge layout and it has been a work in progress ever since. I couldn't bear to part with my H0-gauge trains, and the ASMR club layout has been a perfect place for me to keep running them, as well. In the past couple of years the club started operating sessions, and that opened up a whole new aspect of the hobby for me. Doing modules for the new club display layout has also been fun.

Perhaps you are wondering at this point, "Well, what exactly is the big attraction about model trains for Jim Gibson?" The answer is it's all the things I've mentioned. There is always the basic, unexplainable attraction of watching miniature trains run around on rails. Then there are all the various enjoyable elements of the hobby like building structures, designing a home layout and club modules, making scenery, belonging to ASMR and doing operating sessions and public events with other club members to promote the hobby, and the fellowship of just hanging out with other people who like model trains. About the only part of the hobby that doesn't appeal to me very much is wiring, but there is even a perverse satisfaction for me in hooking things up and having them work right.

In my opinion, there are so many interesting and creative aspects to model railroading I don't see how anybody could fail to find something to enjoy in this great hobby. It appeals to me on so many levels I just can't imagine anything I'd rather devote my spare time to. JG

## **Model RR Meets & Events**

May 5 & 6 – Cotton Belt Historical 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.