

KEEPING TRACK

Official Newsletter of the Abilene Society of Model Railroaders

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The Word From the Prez

All of ASMR's "Indicators" Seem to be Very Positive

Well, 2007 is half gone, but there seems to be a lot going on in ASMR. We have several new members, and I want to personally welcome each and every one of them to the club. It is probably not too early to start thinking about this fall and the election of next year's officers, and also our annual open house for National Model Railroad Month in November. On various occasions, I have talked about our public outreach activities and the potential benefits of them, and I believe our new members are living proof that they are worthwhile. I would like to see us continue our efforts in this area, and maybe even step them up a notch or two. I am also excited to see new members that are interested in N-scale. I would love to see an N-scale Modular layout built someday for club display events.

For the benefit of our new members I want to ask again if anyone has Ideas for programs they would like to see, or if they have a subject they would like to present one on. If so, please let me know and we'll get something set up.

I have been very pleased to see the attendance at our last couple of business meetings. I would like to see an effort made to entice some of our former members to return to the club by letting them know the club is not only still around, it's growing and becoming more vibrant and fun all the time.

Your President, Ken Riediger

ASMR Meeting Notes

The June 2 business meeting was called to order by Pres. Ken Riediger at 10:10 a.m., with a total of ten members present. Cody Hilliard's minutes of the May 5 meeting and Dan Brady's monthly treasurer's report were both read and approved. Pres. Riediger reported that the Abilene State School teaching layout was painted, and as soon as some ground foam is applied it can be delivered to the school. He mentioned that feedback from members indicated they had a good time operating on Jim Norwood's layout, and that they also enjoyed visiting the Santa Fe yard at Saginaw and seeing a real live switching operation.

A member brought up the idea of the club looking into setting up a tour of the railroad facilities in Ft. Worth. Members discussed this issue but nothing was decided. Pres. Riediger asked new member Jeffrey Cowen to introduce himself and explain his interests in the hobby, which he did. Ken England brought up the idea of having a family membership plan/dues rate for the club. Members discussed the idea briefly and then decided to table it for further discussion at the next meeting. This meeting closed at 10:25 a.m., and the next meeting is scheduled for July 7.

New ASMR Member Profile

Although Jeffrey Cowen has been dabbling in model railroading for awhile, only during the last couple of years did he begin seriously collecting the "ingredients" for a home layout he plans to build in his garage. He intends to model the 1950s era, and wants to run N-scale trains so he can maximize the space he'll have available. Originally from Brownwood, Jeffrey is currently employed as a pizza delivery person in Abilene, and enjoys life here with his wife, Gina, who is a nurse. He says he likes "old stuff", and collects all sorts of memorabilia related to his favorite railroad, the Santa Fe. He looks forward to sharpening his skills in areas of the hobby like weathering and DCC decoder applications as a member of ASMR, and running HO trains on the club layout.

The Editor Speaks

Period Layout Scenery

Vs a More Up-to-Date Look

For as long as I can remember there has been a strong bias in the hobby toward modeling the so-called "golden age" of railroading on layouts, the 1950s. During this "transition period" steam power was being phased out in favor of diesel-electric locomotives. One big advantage of choosing this era is that you can justify running both steam and diesel locomotives on your layout and be "prototypical". However, a major drawback to golden age, or any other "period" layout themes, is the limits they impose on what can be included in the styles of buildings, vehicles, etc., in order to remain prototypically correct and consistent. While a "modern" layout theme can include virtually any combination imaginable of new and old "stuff", a

period layout is limited to only structures, vehicles, signage, and even details like people's attire, that aren't any newer than the era being modeled. I don't know how many times I've seen a serious "transition era" layout modeler pass up a really neat vehicle or other item just because it was one model-year newer than the time frame their layout represented. With rare exceptions, up until fairly recently, structure and vehicle kits representative of the "golden age" period dominated the market, and about the only way you could portray a modern look on your layout was to resort to scratch-building. Today, there are numerous prototypically correct modern era industrial structures, businesses, houses and scenic items available for those interested in having a layout with an "up-to-date" theme. There are also plenty of die cast modern vehicles available at places like the major discount store toy departments that are finely detailed, *very inexpensive*, and they come ready to place on your layout's roadways. Don't get me wrong, I'm still fascinated by the intricate architectural details of a "period" storefront or gingerbread house, and any layout of mine will include plenty of structures and vehicles with nostalgic visual appeal. But after seeing some layouts recently which feature scenic examples of the modern era, I think that structures, vehicles, etc., that represent what's going on today really generate a lot of "eye appeal". For example, if you include models with accurate signage and the distinctive décor of popular fast food places like

Domino's Pizza or Burger King, or a gas station and convenience store like an Arco, *Texaco* or *7-11*, or a motel like *Travelodge* or *Best Western*, I'll bet they will get more attention and comments from visitors than the vintage-looking structures on your layout. I was really surprised at the way miniature examples of what I'm used to seeing every day in real life grabbed my attention, considering how much of a nostalgia buff I've always been, and still am. Maybe an "old dog" can learn new tricks after all!
JG

Note: The best examples I've found of modern layout scenery are those being created by a model railroader named Pelle Soeborg. He has written several articles for Model Railroader. (See March, 2005, pg 48 for a great one.) He also has a book out on his layout, published by Kalmbach. The most amazing thing is he captures modern America to perfection, even though he is Danish and lives and models in his homeland! Just do a Google search on "Pelle Soeborg", and all sorts of amazing hits will come up, including one on Al Mayo's "SoCal Desert Rail Division" another interesting modern era layout. JG

Model RR Meets & Events

Sep 15 -16 – Centra Mod 25th Annual Model Train Show, Temple, TX