

KEEPING TRACK

Official Newsletter of the Abilene Society of Model Railroaders

Volume 3, Issue 11

January 1, 2008

Editor: Jim Gibson

The Word From the Prez

Another Year Flies By Fast, Climaxed by Christmas Lane

It is hard to believe a new year is here already. Where did 2007 go? If you are like me, you have a lot of plans and projects that you wanted to do in 2007, but they are still left undone. Well, I guess we now have 2008 to work on them.

We picked up several new members in 2007, and I hope 2008 will bring us several more. We have some interesting things already planned for the new year.

As I look back at what has transpired since my last column, the main event was "Christmas Lane". We were once again one of the major attractions of this event, and so many of the workers and visitors to Shirley's cinema thanked us for being there and enhancing the displays that were set up for visitors to enjoy. Those of us that participated really enjoyed it -- especially the public interaction. To see the big eyes of the toddlers as they came in and saw the trains running was just priceless. Then there were the few that just didn't want to leave, begging or fussing to stay a little longer as their parents tried to drag them away. Even Santa is not as strong an enticement as our trains are for some. If you have not participated, you are really missing out. Till next time,

Your President, Ken Riediger

ASMR Meeting Notes

The December 1 business meeting was called to order by Pres. Ken Riediger at 10:07 a.m. Minutes for the Nov. 3 meeting were read by Cody Hilliard and approved. New Treas. Mel Herwick said he wasn't ready with a treasurer's report yet, but promised one for the next meeting. Pres. Riediger said the recent Open House was a great success and the best in several years, and thanked everyone for their participation. He also noted that the Reporter-News ad probably helped a lot, and said several visitors commented favorably on the new paneling around the layout. Dusty Garison offered a thank-you to Jim Gibson for

doing the O-gauge layout display at the Reporter-News during Abilene's Nov. 27 City Sidewalks Christmas parade event. Gibson acknowledged Jim Frankenfeld's help in transporting the layout modules. Pres. Riediger discussed club participation in the Abilene State School's Christmas Lane event, including some operating guidelines. He also circulated a signup sheet for volunteers, and suggested having some kind of a button-actuated horn or something for the kids to interact with. Mel brought up the subject of issuing keys for members. Ken England said he has talked to our landlord, Bill Smith, about renting the room next door for an additional \$50 per month, to gain space for meetings, storage, and possibly an N-scale layout. Members were favorable to the idea, but Jim Frankenfeld asked what kind of obligation we might incur, and Prez. Ken tabled the idea pending clarification on that issue. Pres. Ken said that he and Jim Gibson have agreed to do the Boy Scout Railroading merit badge classes again this year, and noted that the Jan. 5 meeting start time will be delayed until 10:30 a.m. because of that. He closed the meeting at 10:30.

Dusty Garison Upgrades and Improves the ASMR Website

For awhile, the ASMR website suffered from a lack of attention, but Dusty Garison has voluntarily jumped in and is making wholesale improvements. Two complete years of the Newsletter are now installed, and numerous photographs of the club's layouts and activities are organized chronologically and by events for easy visitor accessibility. Also included is background on ASMR's history and activities, and information on membership. A new area that Dusty plans to install is a section where members can post photographs and information about their home layouts and railroad-related activities and adventures. Our website is a good way to expose ASMR to widespread public attention, and Dusty is working hard to make it the kind of showcase that will do a great job of "selling" all that we have to offer as a model train club. Thanks, Dusty!

The Editor Speaks

Christmas Lane Visitors' Reactions Run the Gamut

This is my fourth year to do the Christmas Lane event at the Abilene State School, and I still continue to be entertained, amused and sometimes puzzled by the kind of reactions people have to our model train display. The most common and persistent adult question is: "How long did it take you to set this up?" Another frequent adult query on my modular townscape is, "Does this represent Abilene?" From kids we continually get questions like: "How fast can the trains go? Why aren't you running the trains parked in the switching yard?" Or, "Can you run a train *there* (pointing to the dead-end cattle pen siding on my module)?" Oh, and, one other question seems to be on the minds of many young males around 10 to 12 years of age, namely, "Can you crash the trains into each other?" I had some fun this year with several people who noticed and commented on the utility poles around the perimeter of the layout. I would ask them if they could see the wires connecting the poles, and they would immediately get as close as they could and peer intently. After they searched in vain for a few seconds and then looked up at me in puzzlement, I'd milk the joke a bit more by asking again, "You don't see them?" Following

another round of intense peering and spotting no wires, they finally realized they were being "had", and good-naturedly acknowledged being victims of a "gotcha". Although my new animated, electro-luminescent Motel 66 sign got a lot of attention, I was really surprised that a tiny orange Lamborghini sports car not far from it on the highway also drew a huge amount of crowd interest. Watching various visitor reactions to the layout and interacting with them makes the evenings at Christmas Lane pass by in a hurry when you are out there in Shirley's Cinema running trains. Two things that really make it worthwhile are the smiles and the excitement on the faces of kids of all ages when they see the layout, and the times when people notice and comment on a subtle detail that you've included on your module, like my "emergency in progress." But best of all are the gracious and sincere complements and "thank-you's" from so many visitors expressing their appreciation for our display. As I've said before, if you haven't participated in one of our public outreach events like Christmas Lane or the others, you are missing out on one of the real benefits of being an ASMR member. JG

Model RR Meets & Events

Jan. 19 -20, 2008 – 23rd Annual Dallas Area Train Show, Plano, TX.

BROWNWOOD RAILROAD MUSEUM LOOKS LIKE A WINNER



Former member Rich Dunlap recently visited the new Martin & Frances Lehnis Railroad Museum in Brownwood (near the Santa Fe depot), and came away with a very favorable impression of the facility. He talked with the curator and a volunteer at length, and found them to be quite friendly and informative. The main building has classy displays of many of the numerous railroad memorabilia items that were collected by Mr. Lehnis and his wife and donated to the city upon their death. A shed roof on one side covers a caboose and executive observation car, both scheduled for restoration. Nearby is the Kress depot, which Dunlap was told will be available for use by Brownwood's model railroaders. The railcars and depot were all moved to the museum site from the Lehnis property in Early. Dunlap says that the museum is definitely worth a trip to Brownwood, and it offers the unique advantage of an opportunity to eat a hearty meal at Underwood's Restaurant while you are in town. *Photos courtesy of Rich Dunlap.*