

KEEPING TRACK

Official Newsletter of the Abilene Society of Model Railroaders

Volume 4, Issue 11

January 1, 2009

Editor: Jim Gibson

The Word From the Prez

Happy New Year to All!

I hope everyone had a Merry Christmas and that your new year will be equally happy. I also hope Santa Claus was as good to you as he was to me. No coal lumps for me this year, although if I had received some I could have put them to good use filling my coal train. Hmmm...Maybe I should be bad this year so I'll get coal for my trains next time?!!

It is hard to believe 2008 is gone and we are into 2009 already. 2008 was a very busy year for me. The club had some ups and downs, and I am hoping that 2009 will see more ups than downs. We finished strong with a good showing at "Christmas Lane" at the state school. As usual we had many happy people coming to see our trains. Some were disappointed that we were stuck in the corner (as we were) and could not see all around the layout. I want to thank everyone who participated in keeping the trains rolling. I especially want to thank Jim G. and Cody for heading up and making sure there was coverage while I made my trip to Minnesota for my mother's funeral.

What will 2009 bring ASMR? Here are some things I am hoping for. I would like to see the club membership continue to grow, and we already have a couple of new people interested. I would like to see some of our former members return. I would like to see more work done to improve the main club layout and modular layout. I hope we will continue to have outings, with at least one or two being "family friendly". And finally, I would like to see more meeting programs, especially things that would help our membership grow in knowledge and help educate the public. These are some of my thoughts – I look forward to hearing yours.

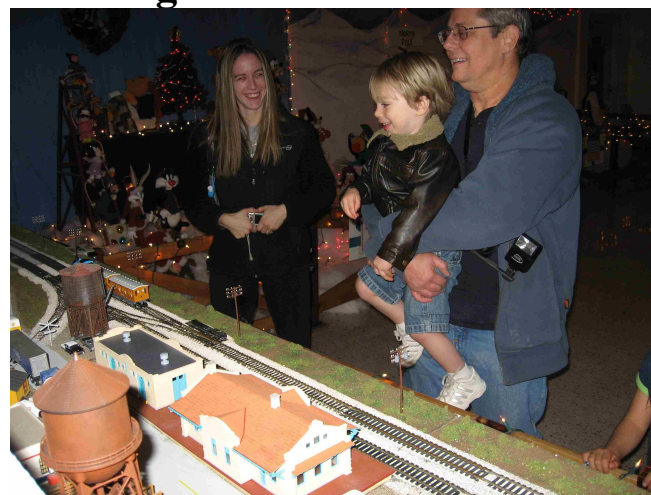
Your President, Ken Riediger

ASMR Meeting Notes

The Dec. 6 business meeting was opened at 10:00 a.m. by President Ken Riediger. Sec'y. Cody Hilliard's Nov. 1 minutes were read and approved. Treas. Ken England reported that the Dec. 1 balance in checking and savings totaled \$3626.02.

Jim Gibson gave a report on the State School Christmas Lane event, and Pres. Riediger asked for volunteers to run trains during the 21 nights the modular layout will be on display. A signup list was passed around. Ken R. said that he may have to go to Minnesota soon because his mother is gravely ill. He said the Thomas train set finally arrived and talked about setting it up. Members decided not to have an operating session during December. Mel Herwick said he has a friend who will sell things on ebay for a small commission, and that could be a way to sell the donated Pennsy set. Charles Chinn said that Lary Robinson, who donated the set, wants to join the club. Ken E. mentioned the situation with some members' overdue dues. The website and the need to update it was discussed. Nick Kenneally said that he made a trip to Iowa recently and did some railfanning while he was there. (Note: In response to a request by Jim G., Nick said he would provide information on his trip for a story to appear in the newsletter.) The meeting was closed at 10:30 a.m. by Pres. Riediger. Next meeting is scheduled for Jan. 10, at 10:30.

State School Train Layout Is Once Again a Crowd Pleaser



This little guy named Cody was one of our most avid visitors at Christmas Lane. In fact, he came back a second night with his mom and grandpa, and they had to practically drag him away both times. Here, he's watching as the Thomas the Tank passenger train ambles by.

Photo by Jim Gibson

(Story follows on back page.)

State School... (Continued)

Every night from December 4 through Christmas Eve, ASMR's portable HO-scale display layout was enthusiastically viewed by large numbers of people taking in the annual Christmas Lane displays at the Abilene State School. Some visitors even came back a night or two later to see it again, usually at the insistence of their children. Several ASMR members shared the workload and enjoyment of running trains for this labor-intensive public outreach project, including: Ken Riediger, Jim Gibson, Cody Hilliard, Ken England, Mel Herwick, Chris Thomas, Nick Kenneally, and Jeffrey Cowen. Nearly 200 of the club's tri-fold brochures were picked up by visitors, and special thanks goes to Ken England for keeping the supply replenished.

The Editor Speaks

Some Personal Thoughts

Regarding Christmas Lane

Although this year's ASMR train display for the State School's Christmas Lane event went well, I have to say that it was a success *in spite of*, not because of, the conditions imposed by some of the people running the event. The first four years ASMR participated in Christmas Lane, the club's train layout was "center stage" in the middle of the main room in Shirley's Cinema, with 360-degree access for viewing. This year, the layout was relegated to a back corner by the State School's event coordinators, and barely a third of it could be readily seen by visitors. The prime center space was given to a handful of not very impressive (in my opinion) animated figures. The first night of the event, the ASMR corner was so dark the layout could barely be seen at all. I couldn't even see well enough to program a controller! When I requested some light over the layout, I was initially told by a State School staffer that it wasn't possible because the light would detract from a display of animated figures next to the layout. Fortunately, another State School operative with some authority happened by, recognized what a sorry predicament our display was in (and how unhappy I was about it), and brought in a maintenance man to install strings of Christmas lights above the layout to provide more illumination. Before the 21-evening event was over, I lost track of the number of visitors who asked us why the layout had been relegated to a back corner instead of

where it had been during previous years. Several said they were really disappointed when they came into the room, didn't see the layout at first, and thought there weren't any trains on display. They and many others said our trains were the main reason they came out to Christmas Lane. I did an unscientific survey by casually



This view from the display room entryway at Shirley's Cinema shows why many visitors thought there was no train layout to see this year when they first came in. Photo by Jim Gibson

observing, night after night, what most people spent the longest time looking at in the display area. It seemed to me that "hands down" the club's layout held the attention of a solid majority of the visitors for a much longer time than any of the other displays -- especially the one in the center which replaced ours. After spending as much time as I have doing this event, I feel like it's not unfair to say that both ASMR and the viewing public were short-changed this year by the Christmas Lane event's decision-making hierarchy. Up until now, this has been a mutually beneficial relationship for ASMR and the State School, and I would hate to see our participation end. But I am not in favor of future participation by ASMR if the way we were treated this year is the best the State School has to offer. JG

Model RR Meets & Events

Jan. 10 & 24 – Ken Riediger & Jim Gibson conduct Boy Scout Railroading merit badge classes.

Jan. 17 & 18, 2008 – 24th Annual Dallas Area Train Show, Plano, TX.

Feb. 21 & 22 – World's Greatest Hobby on Tour, San Antonio, TX

Feb. 28 & Mar. 1 – Great Train Expo, Fort Worth, TX.