

KEEPING TRACK

Official Newsletter of the Abilene Society of Model Railroaders

Volume 5, Issue 11

January 1, 2010

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The Word From the Prez

Last Year Somewhat Blah, Let's Make 2010 Amazing

First of all I am going to start by reflecting on 2009. In some ways, it was kind of a mediocre year for ASMR. Nothing really stands out as super good or super bad. We lost a few members, but then we gained several new members to replace them. I was very pleased to get operating sessions going on my home layout and see the interest in it grow. The club got several donations last year, and is starting 2010 off in the same manner.

What will the new year hold? My hope and goal for ASMR is to keep it going strong and help it to be even better. I plan to improve my home operating sessions and possibly expand my layout. I want ASMR to continue to educate the public and our members. A lot of the education that went on last year was done in an informal atmosphere. Our formal education will continue this year, starting with the Boy Scout model railroading badge class.

One thing I would like to ask for is for your input on programs for the club. Field trips are always fun, and if you have suggestions, let any of the officers know. We will try to plan at least one field trip this year. I am sure we will get to operate on Jim Norwood's KCS layout again during 2010, and there will probably be other opportunities for fun and fellowship that we haven't even thought of yet.

I hope each of you has a wonderful and blessed New Year, and that model railroading is a big part of it. ***Your President, Ken Riediger***

ASMR Meeting Notes

The Dec. 5 business meeting was opened at 10:05 a.m. by President Ken Riediger. Sec'y. Cody Hilliard's Nov. 7th minutes were read and approved. Treas. Ken England reported total club assets of \$3585.96, which was only a few dollars less than the same time last year. Jim Gibson gave Ken E. a \$20 bill that Honorary Member Danny McQuilkin left with him during the Open House. Ken R. observed that the local media let us down with a lack of coverage for our Open House, and running a paid

ad next year was discussed. Jim G. presented a draft outline for a presentation to be shown to prospective sources for a new club location. Ken E. had nothing to report on the train show project. Ken R. said his home layout Open House was slow on Saturday but attendance improved after the Reporter-News ran a story on him Sunday morning. He said he will have an operating session on his layout on Dec. 19. The January meeting was delayed until Jan. 9. Overdue dues for several members were discussed, as were some of the overdue layout repairs that need fixing. Cody said he will update the club website, and Jim F. said he would help. Ken R. had nothing to report on the idea of setting up a demo layout in the Mall during the holidays. The meeting was closed at 10:37 a.m. by Pres. Riediger. Next meeting is scheduled for Jan. 9.

ASMR Members Will Do Scout RR Merit Badge Class Again

For the past several years, Ken Riediger and Jim Gibson have conducted classes for the Boy Scout's Railroading Merit Badge. This is part of a Merit Badge blitz that the area Scouting Council puts on every January to give the boys a chance to earn badges by attending classes conducted by adults from the community who have expertise in various badge subjects, such as railroading, photography, first aid, etc. Previous classes have been held in separate Saturday sessions two weeks apart, but this year's will be held on Saturday and Sunday, January 16 and 17. It is an excellent outreach program for our club, and has even resulted in some new members in the past, such as the Wiley family. Classes are traditionally held on one of the Abilene college campuses, and this year it will be at ACU.

The Editor Speaks

2010 Should Become The Year We Made ASMR's Infrastructure Shine

I have mentioned this subject before, but I think it bears revisiting. We have a potentially fantastic HO-scale club layout. It is big and has a great deal

of eye-appeal for visitors and members alike, and it is complex enough to offer interesting and challenging opportunities for operating sessions. It is equipped with a good Digitrax DCC system, which promises to be even better thanks to a brand new Digitrax "Duplex" radio setup that was recently donated by ASMR member Richard Sykes. Before our Open House in November, I made an effort to clean up my modules, some of which date back to the original Railfest display layout in 1990. I also changed a few things around to try and make them look better. But it is time I did a major overhaul on the scenery, and I plan on tackling that project this year, starting as soon as the weather warms up enough so that our building doesn't feel like a meat locker.

Before Open House, I also did some serious ballast repair on an area of the layout that had suffered damage due to water leaks from the ceiling above it. I can't say I was looking forward to that job, but once I got started, I really enjoyed it and was pleased with the improvement that resulted. Learning how to install ballast is one of the model railroad scenery basics, and there are plenty of areas of the club layout that need ballasting. In addition, there are a number of other areas of the layout that require various kinds of scenic attention, and it would be great if more of the members, especially some of the newer members, started taking an interest in that aspect of layout upkeep. The Turners have adopted the mountain section of the peninsula nearest the east wall, and it looks like they are making some headway on finishing that long-neglected, half-done scenery project. They are learning as they go, and hopefully having fun along the way. Their project exemplifies the kind of involvement I'm talking about, especially by newer members.

For anyone who doesn't know how to do scenic techniques, I (and I'm sure other members) would be happy to share our knowledge with anybody who wants to try their hand at a large or small improvement project. If you have joined recently and want to get involved in a hands-on way, or

have been around awhile and feel like getting re-energized, just let me know and we'll get you going. You will be doing the club and yourself a valuable service as you expand your model railroading horizons.

On the electronic side of layout maintenance, Jim Frankenfeld and Cody Hilliard are the club "gurus", so if you have interest or questions about that aspect of a layout, they are the guys to talk to.

Regarding the subject of layout neglect, there's one other thing I need to mention. We have the start of a pretty neat N-scale layout sitting in our meeting room, mostly ignored. It was donated to the club and is in running condition, but it needs a lot of TLC and scenic attention. Awhile back, we had some N-scalers who said they wanted to build a layout from scratch, but they never quite got going. And so far, nobody with N-scale inclinations has stepped up to the plate to do something with this "gift", which could be turned into a very nice demo layout for use at the club, as well as for temporary public displays around town. With the timer I have, it could even be configured for public displays to run and stop automatically at the push of a red button, like the crowd-pleasing O-gauge setup I did the first two years at the State School Christmas Lane event. This little jewel could be a real membership recruiting tool for the club, but not unless some member or members are willing to invest the time and effort needed to make it "shine".

Potential and resources for fun, fellowship, growth, etc.? ASMR has them in abundance! What do we accomplish with all that potential in 2010? It's only limited by the level of our individual and collective interest and energy. **JG**

Model RR Meets & Events

Jan. 16 & 17 – Ken Riediger & Jim Gibson conduct Boy Scout Railroading merit badge classes.

Jan. 16 & 17 – Dallas Area Train Show, Plano, TX.

Jan. 28 - 29 – 6th Annual Southwestern Rail Conf., Dallas, TX

Feb. 20 – Greater Houston Train Show, Stafford, TX

Something To Think About

Model Railroading is *Fun*, but it is *More Fun* as a Participant than it is as a Spectator. ASMR has a lot to offer, but it is up to each of us to get involved and take advantage of the club's great potential for generating Fun. **JG**