

KEEPING TRACK

Official Newsletter of the Abilene Society of Model Railroaders

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Editor: Jim Gibson

ASMR Members Attend 2016 Plano Train Show

In what has become pretty much an annual tradition, several ASMR members got together and car pooled to Plano, TX for the train show there on Jan. 16. Included in the group were Ken England, Ken Riediger, Jim Frankenfeld, Dusty Garison, Scott Fritz and Alex Wold. In addition, Cecil Walston went on his own so he could spend some of his time helping a friend with a sale table, and Kole Trumble and his brother Kale traveled to the show with their grandparents.

Dusty said he was “struck by the incredible diversity the hobby represents” on display at Plano. Examples included all the usual scales from Z to G, plus several narrow gages. Age groups ranged from elderly adults to a number of little kids – especially those he observed enthusiastically enjoying the room full of G-scale trains. One other thing Dusty noted was the diversity of disciplines the hobby embraces, including electronics, woodworking, model building, artistic scenery, computers, etc. There was something for everybody to enjoy.



ASMR members Dusty Garison and Cecil Walston (middle and right) take a break from shopping and looking at layouts at the Plano Train Show to visit with author Steve Goen (left). Goen has written a series of popular train books about Southwestern railroads, including the T&P. According to Dusty, he has also greatly expanded his stock of videos on regional railroads from our part of Texas.

Photo by Ken Riediger

Word From the Prez

Gaining 501(c)3 Non-Profit Status Can Open New Doors

As most of you probably know, ASMR is now a 501c3 non-profit organization. You may not

know exactly what this means, so here's why this is such a “big deal” for us. The primary benefit is that anyone can now donate items or money to ASMR and be able to claim a tax write off for it. We have had generous people make donations in the past who would have liked to do that, but couldn't because of our status as a 501c4 nonprofit. Now, we can offer a donor the opportunity to write off their donation, and we will also be able to solicit other (and larger) contributions (from charitable foundations or certain government agencies, for example) that are only available to 501c3 nonprofits.

Who knows, there might be a property owner in our area who would be willing to rent us a facility at a much lower rate and write off the difference, or even donate a building outright to ASMR! I talked with a gentleman recently who told me there is money out there for the taking, but we have to know where to look and how to go about getting it. Gaining 501c3 nonprofit status was the first hurdle we had to overcome to even be eligible, and now we can proceed with seeking help from sources we previously did not have access to.

Like most things, along with the potential benefits that come with 501c3 status, there are also obligations. One of them is the need to focus more strongly and actively on our mission of educating the public about the proud heritage and economic and social impact of railroads on Abilene and our area of West Texas. We also have to watch out and be careful that we don't do anything that would jeopardize our status. With all this in mind, let's hope and dream that achieving 501c3 status will be the ticket to bigger and better things for ASMR, especially as we celebrate our 25th Anniversary this year.

Your President, Ken Riediger

ASMR Meeting Highlights

Pres. Riediger opened the Jan. 10 meeting at 10:03 a.m. Sec'y. Cody Hilliard's minutes of the

Dec. 5 meeting and Treas. Ken England's report showing a club asset balance of \$6,473.71 were both approved. Ken R. welcomed new members Tony Dicus and Kole Trumble. There was nothing new to report on layout progress. Ten members were identified as significantly

behind on dues, and three were dropped from membership.

Ken R. acknowledged the success of the club calendar fundraising project, noting that 18 were sold at the Annual Open House alone. A couple of members volunteered to buy the last eight unsold calendars. Ken said his next home layout Ops Session will be Jan. 23. Ken E. announced that ASMR's application for 501c3 nonprofit status had been approved, effective July 8, 2015. Jim G. said he would send a letter with a calendar to Larry Gill at the Dodge-Jones Foundation to let him know.

Dusty G. volunteered to make arrangements for a club trip to the train museum in Frisco sometime in May. Ken E. said that the store room project is stalled because the back room is such a mess, so members agreed to a cleanup day on Feb. 13. Ken E. also agreed to check into a club trip to Jim Norwood's in April.

Ken R. pronounced the club's recent Open House a success, and said his Dec. 18 Show & Tell at Dyess went very well. He reminded members about ASMR's special 25th Anniversary Open House event on April 9. Nine members said they would like to car pool to the Plano Train Show on Jan. 16. Dusty G. and Jim G. volunteered to make a display in July for the downtown Library display case. Members voted to order two dozen ball caps in gray at \$8.00 each. Members voted to waive the key waiting period for new member Cecil Walston because he lives in Ballinger. The meeting closed at 10:54. Next meeting will be Feb. 6.

KR&BNRR Ops Session Report

My first Ops Session of 2016 took place on Jan. 23, and we had a good group show up to run trains. Alex Wold and Cecil Walston were operating for the first time. Cecil had been to an Ops Session before, but had not run a train yet. Despite this, he was the only "engineer" to complete his manifest correctly, even after making a couple of mistakes that he corrected while doing it. Everyone else messed up by picking up or setting out at least one car at the wrong industry. And, nobody was able to complete more than one train order during the three hour session. Bottlenecks still happened, but they were not as serious or annoying as they have been in some previous sessions. The other operators included Lonnie Thompson, Dusty Garison and his son Travis, Jeff Cowen, and

Jarod Burleson. Ken E stopped by, but did not run a train.

As the session was ending, Kole Trumble and his brother Kale stopped by and ran trains for a couple of orientation laps around the layout. Overall, this was a good beginning for operations during 2016 on the Kannapolis River and Buffalo Northern Railroad. I hope to see you at the next session on Feb. 20 at 1:30 PM.

The Editor Speaks

Thoughts on Young Members And the Current State of ASMR

Recently, the number of younger members has been on a definite increase, and I think this is a very good omen for the future of ASMR and the hobby of model railroading. One thing that really stands out about our young members is how serious they are about running trains conservatively and carefully on the club layout. This is especially impressive to me because the one question I have often heard from many young visitors at open houses is, "How fast will that train go?" Another thing that has impressed me is how some of our adult members have taken the young ones under their wing. I've watched them on several occasions patiently showing these neophytes things like how our DCC system works and basic operating rules like right hand running and keeping track of your train at all times to avoid collisions or other mishaps. I think it is important for all of us to follow these examples and go out of our way to make our younger members feel welcome and encourage them in the hobby we all love.

As a very senior member of the club, its first president, and the only remaining charter member, the future of ASMR is an important concern for me. I have put 25 years of "sweat equity" into trying to do whatever I could to make the club successful and enduring. I've seen times when things were going really well, and times when I wondered if things were "going south" due to shrinking membership or the loss of our facility for building a layout and running trains. Today, I'm happy to observe that on all counts, the club seems to be in the best shape it has ever been in during its 25 years of educating the public and promoting the hobby of model railroading in Abilene and West Texas. **JG**

Wow, ASMR is 25 Years Old This Year!