

KEEPING TRACK

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The Word From the Prez

2018 starts with fun, nostalgia

January was filled with both great memories and a little sadness. Some of us were able to enjoy a fun trip to Plano for the 2018 Dallas Area Train Show. I was happy to pick up some train cars to add to my collection. We also had the nostalgia of visiting Jim Norwood's widow Mary and obtaining several structures she wanted ASMR to have from his layout, which is now only a memory, for our club's layout.

On another subject, being able to make good friends with other model railroaders is one of the benefits of this great hobby. Working together to create something better for everyone to enjoy is what makes a club like the Abilene Society of Model Railroaders so valuable. Each and every one of us has talents that we can apply to making everything better for all members. Teaching and helping others learn new skills is another advantage. I continue to learn things from others in our club, and I hope I can share some of my skills as well.

Your President, Scott Fritz

Eight ASMR members attend Plano train show, six carpool

Leaving the new club building for Plano shortly after 7 a.m. with Ken Riediger were Jim Gibson and Robert Wiley. Traveling with Ken England were Scott Fritz and Jeff Cowen. Jared Bursleson and Pate Albin each went to the show at different times on their own, and met up with the carpoolers there.

Around noon, the "poolers" had pretty much seen everything they wanted to see and bought what they wanted to buy. They decided to go somewhere for lunch and then head for Discount Model Trains, which has become somewhat of a tradition after attending the Plano show. Afterward, both groups drove to Jim Norwood's home in North Richland Hills, and that event is covered in the following story. **JG**

Jim Norwood's widow Mary donates structures to ASMR

One of the premier ASMR activities for many years was club outings to Jim Norwood's fantastic, KCS-themed, HO-scale home layout in North Richland Hills, for operating sessions. Jim and his wife Mary were always gracious hosts, making certain that we had our fill of not only trains, but also pizza and soft drinks, during the obligatory break at some point during each operating session.

Every time we went we were amazed to find significant layout changes, including sometimes a whole new track level. There were as many as five levels in some areas, plus countless intricately detailed scenic dioramas everywhere you looked, on a very complex layout that filled every room in the entire upper floor of the spacious, two-story Norwood home.

Needless to say, those of us in ASMR who knew Jim were saddened when he passed away in September of 2016. Jim's widow Mary was left with the daunting task of disposing of his huge layout and immense collection of structures, rolling stock, etc. But with help from a model railroader friend, she has met the challenge admirably. This includes making sure that some of Jim's items have gone to worthy recipients (now including ASMR) at little or no cost to them.



Top: Mary Norwood (middle) presides over the donation and sale to ASMR members of some of the buildings from her late husband Jim's layout. It was hard for those of us who had spent many fun hours running trains in this room to get over the fact that his huge layout was completely gone! Below: This is just one of the six 'buildings' Mary donated to ASMR. Although it is six structures all by itself, she generously counted it as only one because all six are joined together as a block. Photo by Jim Gibson

Fast forward to the Plano train show time frame and a call to Ken England from Mary with a very thoughtful and generous offer. Following up on it, both carpool groups traveled to the Norwood home from Addison, where Mary greeted us warmly and led the way upstairs to where Jim's layout used to be. To our amazement, it was now totally gone! But Mary had kept some of the buildings, and told us to pick any six and she would donate them to our club. She said she would also sell any others that we wanted to buy for the club or ourselves (at extremely reasonable prices, it should be noted), all because of the special relationship our club members and Jim had enjoyed for so many years. This was an overwhelming occasion which stirred up our emotions and brought back fond memories of times gone by in the company of a true model railroading

giant, Jim Norwood. Now, thanks to his thoughtful and generous wife, Mary, ASMR will have visible reminders on our club layout of Jim, his amazing layout, and our many times running trains with him and enjoying his fellowship. **JG**

KRBNRR Ops Session Report

We held the first Ops Session of 2018 (and the first one since October), on the KRBNRR on Jan. 27. On hand were four operators, with one being a trainee. The regulars included Dusty Garison, Jared Burlison and Chris Bisset. The trainee was Chris's nephew William. We also had a couple of railfans show up: Ken England and Tom Rutherford. Some of you may remember Tom as a former member. He's back, and wants to get involved again.

The gremlins came out early and in force this time! When Dusty went to operate his train the two consisted units in William/Chris's train started up. And when William started his train, Dusty's was also activated. Once I reconsisted each train things started to run a little smoother. It was priceless to hear William's first impression of the KRBNRR: "Woooooww!!!" We moved six trains during the day and all had fun once we calmed the gremlins. Hope to see you at the next session: Feb. 17 at 1:30. **KR**

The Editor Speaks

Some random thoughts on the Plano club outing

Usually the Plano carpool trips are routine, with a couple of exceptions like the year we didn't even make it to Clyde before turning back because I-20 was too icy and dangerous to even consider traveling any further east. This year's trip came close to being "problematic" because of a bad wreck just east of Cisco that occurred early Saturday morning. Both lanes of I-20 were blocked, but our vehicles were able to circumvent the traffic backup and proceed east on the service road with only a short delay.

One unpleasant surprise this year was finding the admission fee had been raised to \$10! With all the dealers there are at the Plano show, you would think they could charge visitors less. But the convention center was packed, so I guess people interested in model trains aren't turned off by what I personally consider a "pricey" entry fee – at least not yet.

There were familiar faces among the dealers, like Brad's Trains and others, along with new ones, and many of the same layouts were on display with minor changes and improvements. My personal favorite among the layout "regulars" is the one put together by the Texas Outlaws On30 modular club. A former ASMR member, Byron Davie, who now lives east of Dallas, belongs to this group, and he says they don't even know themselves beforehand what their mostly rustic, 1940s, steam era layout will look like. They just hook together whatever modules members show

up with and start running. These guys all seem to be excellent modelers with well developed funnybones, and I've seen different, highly detailed, off-beat scenes on their layout every year. This time a swamp diorama caught my eye. It featured an unusually well dressed guy in peril from 'gators and a "plug" dangling from a chain attached to a dead limb to allow for "draining".



Above: *The gentleman seated on a log is probably hoping the plug he's pulled will drain the swamp in time to save him from all the 'gators in this cute scene on the Texas Outlaws On30 modular club layout at the Plano train show.* Photo by Jim Gibson

Several ASMR members who said they intended to carpool to Plano canceled out for one reason or another, and all I can say is anyone who didn't go missed a great club outing. **JG**

ASMR Meeting Highlights

Pres. Fritz opened the Jan. 6 meeting at 10:00 a.m. Sec'y. Cody H. read the Dec. 2 minutes. Treas. Ken E. reported a club assets balance of \$3,594.07, and also gave an annual finance report showing monthly income and expenses for all of 2017.

Members discussed the Open House, proclaiming it overall a "very good" event. Cecil W. was commended for bringing in wooden trains that were a big hit with young visitors (and their dads) who played with them in the atrium. A couple of suggestions for next year included more diverse advertising, and outreach to youth groups. One member complained that he was "bullied" by another member during the Open House, and the matter was discussed but not resolved during the meeting.

Ken R. said he still has two vests ordered by members that need to be picked up, and reminded everyone that his Ops Session will be Jan. 27. Chris B. received special thanks for providing and installing surveillance cameras. Members who want to attend the Plano train show in the car pool were reminded to meet at the club building for a 7 a.m. departure on Jan. 20.

Issues like fixing up the back room and repairing track problems on the layout were discussed, and members approved ordering a plaque featuring the Open House newspaper feature story for \$169 on speculation. Dusty G. was praised for the railroad memorabilia he put in the new display case for the Open House. The calendar project was mentioned, but no specific action was taken. The meeting closed at 10:50. Next meeting will be Feb. 3. **JG**