

KEEPING TRACK

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The Word From The Prez

At Home or Away From Home, Model Railroading is Exciting

Moving our July meeting to the 11th because of the 4th of July makes it seem like an even shorter month. Be that as it may, I have been having more fun the last several months in Model Railroading, both at the club and at home. I have especially enjoyed participating in the post-meeting clinics the last three months, and I must commend Cody Hilliard for stepping up and presenting two of them. I also look forward to expanding our traveling HO-scale modular pike. I get excited to see new members who are enthusiastic about what they are learning and experiencing as ASMR members. Model railroading is fun and exciting. Where else can you create a whole world, or at least a little part of it, in miniature, and make it to suit yourself?

I am also having fun at home getting ready for operating sessions on my home layout. Sometimes I feel like a little kid with a new toy. I now have my Rail-Op program up and running, and for the next operating session we will be able to run trains using computerized manifests. I still have a few "bugs" to work out, and I'd bet others will creep up that I am not aware of yet. But, it seems the more I get done the more I want to do. It has been fun sharing my home layout with a group that is interested in operating on it. Also, having Rail-Op working on my layout gives me a better appreciation for how Jim Norwood's layout works and what he has accomplished, and I look forward even more to our next operating session on his layout.

Your President, Ken Riediger

ASMR Meeting Notes

President Ken Riediger opened the July 11 meeting at 10:03. Sec'y. Cody Hilliard's minutes were read and approved. Ken England's treasurer's report was read and approved, and showed a club assets balance of \$3,899.77. Pres. Riediger expressed disappointment that visitor numbers for the Baird Trade Days event were low, and suggested that three reasons were probably the out-of-the-way courthouse

location, extremely hot weather, and a lack of advertising by the Baird folks. He said he was glad that attendance at his home operating session had increased, and commented that installation of Rail-Ops should be complete by the next ops session on July 18. The club operating session was cancelled for July. The next operating session at Jim Norwood's has been set for Aug. 22, with a 7 a.m. departure from Remax for the carpool. Costs for new power equipment to prevent slowdowns on the club's HO layout were discussed and noted. Jim Gibson discussed the idea of making a new proposal to the city in an effort to secure better club "housing" downtown. The idea of the club sponsoring a local train show was discussed and members indicated a desire to pursue it. Cody H. mentioned the need to send one of the members a delinquent dues letter. Jim G. asked about the apparent lack of interest in the donated N-scale layout, which needs to be fixed up. Pres. Riediger noted that the club needs to set aside a work day to spruce up the club's layouts. Former member Wayne Smith brought in a giant, 42 X 96-inch historic photo of an Abilene street car and loaned it to the club for display. The meeting was closed at 10:55 a.m. by Pres. Riediger. Next meeting is Aug. 1. Note: After the meeting another "hands on" program was put on by Cody Hilliard, this time a lesson on quick and easy weathering, using chalks.

Ken Riediger Home Ops Sessions: The Ongoing Adventure Continues

It was another typical HOT July day, with just three people initially showing up for my Ops session, and a fourth appearing a little later. I had been working hard since the June session to get all the necessary data entered into my Rail-Op data base. Not having set up a session on Rail-Op before, I did not know exactly how close or how far I was from having everything ready to print manifests for operating the KRBN RR. Things had gotten in the way of spending more time on getting ready. Like most things, especially with computers, it always takes more time to get set up than it does to run. Those who came were disappointed it was not ready. Jim G. requested I demonstrate how a train

might run with the program, so I took an Eastbound local from “East Staging” to “Kannapolis”, to show roughly how a train could operate. One thing I wasn’t sure of was whether it would be better to use *Autobuild* or *Manual Build* for making up my trains? This was because I wasn’t certain how *Autobuild* would choose cars for my initial run. I already had about 20 trains already set up in staging. Well, after everybody left I went back to work setting up Rail-Op. I decided to try using *Autobuild* on one of the trains in staging and was pleasantly surprised with the result. After that, I went about building the remainder of the trains, and I only was dissatisfied with two or three that Rail-Op built. I found out I had to make several changes, including reducing the number of cars in the Kannapolis yard, because I had no room for incoming trains. This also presented a problem for building outbound trains. I will also have to set a schedule of which trains run in which order, and keep a balance of incoming and outgoing trains so the yard does not overflow. I have also since built or extended three sidings to hold more cars. As a result of all this, in August WE WILL BE ABLE TO RUN!!! **KR**

The Editor Speaks

Evidence of Railroad History Can Be Found All Around Us

Coming back to Abilene recently from a short vacation in the Hill Country of Texas, several things related to railroading caught my eye as we motored along on Highway 83. Seeing them reminded me of just how pervasive railroads used to be in rural Texas, and how much of our railroad heritage we have lost or let go of. Two things in particular stand out in this regard. The first is the historic Abilene & Southern RR depot in Ballinger. Opened for passenger service in 1909, this fortress-like, stone block structure with two distinctive crenellated turrets on the side that faces the highway, is the less well-known of the two railroad depots in that town. The other one is the impressively restored 1911 Santa Fe station, with three Spanish mission-

style facades in front, a couple of blocks to the west. The A&S station still appears to be in fairly good shape, but from what I could see through the dusty windows, it looks like it is currently being used as a storage warehouse for items like highway barricades – an ignominious fate for a once-proud railroad station, in my opinion. The second thing I noticed that got me thinking was the abandoned railroad right of way that is still apparent alongside Hwy 83 in various places, and especially the area north of Winters. Even though it is mostly covered by weeds and the tracks are long gone, you can still easily see evidence of the elevated roadbed, and occasional abutments where railroad bridges used to span creeks and draws. It made me think of how prevalent rail travel once was in Texas, where nearly every small town was served by a railroad. And in many cases, like Ballinger, two came through town and had substantial depots with regular passenger and freight service. First the passenger service went away in the late ‘50s, and later on freight service disappeared, too, followed eventually by removal of the rails. I can recall seeing the A&S tracks being pulled up in the Winters -Tuscola vicinity around 1989, one day when I was out driving through that area. I also remember the tracks between Abilene and Wichita Falls being taken up, and a lot of buzz in the train club about railroad memorabilia items like signs and signals being for sale from a salvage company in the area. It still amazes and dumbfounds me that something as important as the railroads were to the development of so many communities throughout Texas and the U.S. could just disappear to the extent it has, leaving only scattered reminders like those I discussed. **JG**

Model RR Meets & Events

Aug. 15 – New Braunfels Summer Model Train Show, New Braunfels, TX.

Aug. 22 – TCA Lone Star Division Show, Plano, TX.

Sep. 19 – 27th Annual Temple Model Train Show, Temple, TX.