

# KEEPING TRACK

Official Newsletter of the Abilene Society of Model Railroaders

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Editor: Jim Gibson

## ASMR members help others and run trains more on club layout

July just flew by this year. Seems like it was only yesterday that I was watching fireworks. I am glad to see that members of our club are helping out with different railroad-related events in other places. For example, Cecil Walston went to Brownwood on July 27 to help with Harry Potter Day at the Lehnis Railroad Museum. Cecil said they sold 350 tickets to ride on the 7.5"-gauge train. There's an article about it elsewhere in this newsletter.

I am looking forward to cooler temperatures soon. Meanwhile, it's nice seeing lots of members, including some new ones, running trains on Saturdays, and even more lately on Tuesday nights, in our climate controlled indoor environment. If you have an area on the layout you plan to put scenery on, but have been procrastinating, you might think about getting with it. The less bare spaces we have on the layout for Open House, the more attractive it will be for visitors. And, if you aren't sure how to get started, or are stuck on a scenery problem, don't hesitate to ask one of the "older" members for help or advice.

*Your President, Scott Fritz*

## ASMR Meeting Notes

Pres. Scott Fritz opened the July 6 business meeting at 10 a.m. Sec'y Cody Hilliard read the June 1 meeting minutes, and Treas. Ken England reported a club account balance of \$6,599.56. Ken Riediger said he had brought a list for the C. T. Kelly train items he's selling, along with some samples. He also announced his next home layout Ops Session will be July 20, and noted that the club recently gained two new members, Allen Goff and Cliff Horton, who both work as U.P. engineers. Ken E. said nine members are overdue on dues for a total of \$523.

Club layout renovations, problems and progress were discussed, including areas where trains are frequently shorting out, stalling or derailing. Ken R. said he has been adding new drops in some areas, and reminded members that he is having a special Ops Session on his layout on Aug. 17 for U.P. railroaders. Pres. Fritz read a thank you note from

Cultural Affairs Council's Lynn Barnett for our club driving the Storybook Express train at CAC events.

Wayne Smith said he has donated historic VHS tapes and photos of club activities and events for the club's archives. Ken E. asked members to refrain from sticking stuff in front of the filing cabinet in the storage room. Former member Dusty Garison said he is working on resettling in Abilene and rejoining the club. Pres. Fritz closed the meeting at 10:20 a.m. Next meeting will be Aug. 3.

## Cecil Walston lends a hand at big Lehnis Museum event



Above: ASMR member Cecil Walston gives passengers a ride on the Lehnis Museum's 1/8-scale outdoor railroad during the July 27 Harry Potter Day event in Brownwood. Photo by Marshal McIntosh

When ASMR member Cecil Walston was visiting the Lehnis Railroad Museum in Brownwood recently, he discovered they were in need of help with their 1/8-scale outdoor train for their upcoming annual Harry Potter Day event on July 27. He jumped right in to lend a hand. First of all, they had issues with some bad track that needed to be repaired, and he helped get that problem fixed in relatively short order. Then he learned that all three of their regular engineers were going to be unavailable, so he volunteered to come back the following Saturday, and run the train for all the riders that had signed up.

When the event was over, Cecil had driven the museum's 2-6-2 (battery-powered), 7.5"-gauge steam locomotive pulling three cars and a caboose nearly all day. (One of the regular engineers showed up

unexpectedly during the day and drove some.) According to museum curator Crystal Stanley, about 350 adults and children got rides. Cecil said there were only three minor derailments that were easily fixed, and overall he had a great time running the 8,500-pound "Tom Bee" American-made locomotive, which is controlled by a hand-held throttle on a cable and has a full steam sound system. **JG**

## KRNBRR Ops Session Report

The most recent Ops Session on the KRNBRR took place on July 20. We had seven people on hand, including four operators and three "railfans". The operators were Allen Goff, Chris Bisset, Robert Wiley and Travis Garison. The railfans were Cliff Horton, Cecil Walston, and a friend of his named Adam. Traffic flowed smoothly with operators having to wait very little on other operators' trains. Only one person made any mistakes and that was because he did not know where some of the correct sidings were for some of his car pickups or setouts. Overall, it was a very good session. Since I've had a little vacation time, I used some of it to make upgrades on the layout. I added five new sidings and extended another one. As I have been preparing for our special "Day of Operations", I am already seeing these sidings put to use. I hope you will be able to join us for the Operations Day on August 17 with several "real" railroaders, starting at 10 a.m. We'll take a break for lunch and resume at 1 p.m., continuing until 3 or 4 p.m. -- or until we run out of trains to operate!!! Hope to see you then.

### The Editor Speaks

## A tale of two train depots, and a haunting question

While I was on vacation this month, I happened to pass through two small Texas towns, each of which had a vintage railroad depot beside the road running through it. The contrast between the two was so dramatic it made a big impression on me and started me thinking, and I would like to share my thoughts with you.

One depot is in Bertram, on Hwy. 29 between Burnet and Liberty Hill. This 1912 station was donated to the Austin Steam Train Ass'n, in 1997 and moved in 1998 from Orange Grove, TX to the site of the original (1882) Bertram depot, which had been demolished in 1964. In five years, ASTA volunteers

completely restored it, and it's now used as a rest stop for Austin & Texas Central RR's Hill Country Flyer scenic train riders. The first time I saw the depot in 2017, it took my breath away. I stopped to take photos, and I even did a newsletter story on it. How lucky the citizens of Bertram are to have such a wonderful railroad showplace in their town!



Above: This beautiful depot at Bertram is what a successful restoration project looks like -- when hard-working volunteers and enough money come together at just the right time. Photo by Jim Gibson

Then there is the other depot, and what a sad comparison it presents. Situated beside Hwy. 183 in Lometa, north of Lampasas, it has been gradually surrendering to the ravages of weather and time since 1985, when it was relocated a short distance from its original site by the Santa Fe tracks in town. We've been going by it for many years on the way to visit our oldest son in the Austin area, and the circa 1910 structure looked great at first, sitting on a nice concrete slab with all its window panes intact, yellow paint reasonably fresh looking, and the town name and Santa Fe logo clear and sharp. Now the broken out windows are covered with sheets of plywood, and the paint, name and logo are almost all weathered away. The original plan (whatever it was) for the relocated depot has apparently been abandoned, and prospects for restoration look dim for this once proud, historic train station.

What makes the difference in the status of these two depots? I suspect it is mainly two things: people who care enough to take action, and the availability of sufficient money to pay for restoration and upkeep expenses. I can't help wondering if those miracle-working factors will materialize in Abilene in time to save the fading Burlington depot? **JG**