

KEEPING TRACK

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The Word From the Prez

Operations and ASMR Dreams Occupy Riediger's Attention

Those who did not get to go to the operating session at Jim Norwood's in Ft. Worth missed a lot of fun. Everyone got to run at least one train, and a few of us had time to run a second one. Afterward, several of us made the trip over to Discount Hobbies in Addison to find some new "goodies". These are the kind of things that really make being an ASMR member fun. We even had some former members tag along this time. Speaking of operating sessions, I want to try and get a group of people together who would be interested in an operating session on my home layout in the near future. I will be bringing this up at our next business meeting.

On the way home from Ft. Worth, Cody Hilliard and I had a "dream session" regarding some of the things that we would like to see happen for the club. We also had some personal "dreams" that we spent some of our time discussing. One of those dreams was for ASMR to somehow find a permanent location that included more room and also had full climate control and a cleaner "environment". We even tossed around several ideas on how to achieve this. One of the other things we discussed was having a "program director" to facilitate programs each month as part of our monthly meetings. While I was a member of the Lubbock Model RR Ass'n., we had a program director as an officer of the club and it worked well. One roadblock to this we noted was the trouble we've had at election time when it comes to finding people willing to serve. We might have trouble finding someone to fill the position. In the meantime, please give me your ideas for programs you'd like to see, or would be willing to do yourself and share with the club.

Your President, Ken Riediger

ASMR Meeting Notes

The April 4 business meeting was called to order by Pres. Ken Riediger at 10:04 a.m. Minutes for the March 7, 2009 meeting were read by Sec'y. Cody Hilliard, and approved. Treas. Ken England gave his report, including a

total club asset balance of \$3,818.77, and it was approved. Ken started the meeting by reporting on our portable layout setup at the Trinity Baptist Church event on March 28, to help the West Texas Food Bank. He said it was a success and that we may have even recruited a new member out of it. He also said we helped the food bank raise 2,609 pounds of food, plus cash donations. Ken England then asked the club for feedback on the event, and John Turner said he had "a great time." Ken E. reminded everyone about the operating session at Jim Norwood's on April 18, and asked that anyone intending to go let him know before April 16. Ken R. then reported that he had come up with two choices for the power supply the club authorized him to obtain. He asked the club to decide which one they wanted to purchase. The choices were a Loy's Toys 5 amp model for \$42 or a 10 amp model for \$35. Ken E. moved that the club buy the 10 amp unit, and the members approved. Ken E. reported that a 3 x 6-foot N-scale layout built from a Woodland Scenics kit had been donated to the club. Everybody seemed interested in getting it running for the club's N-scalers. Ken R. reported that Clyde Gayoso was back in the hospital with health problems. Brenda Turner said that maybe in the summer she would like to organize a car wash to raise money for the club. Some of the members expressed concern that she might not get enough volunteers to work it. Ken R. asked her to determine how many volunteers she could get, and the issue was tabled for later consideration. The meeting was closed at 10:37 am by Pres. Riediger. Next meeting is set for May 2.

Norwood Operating Meet Draws Large ASMR Group

On Saturday, April 18, Jim Norwood and his wife, Mary, once again graciously opened their home in North Richland Hills, and welcomed ASMR members to another challenging and fun operating session on Jim's ever-expanding HO-scale layout. A dozen current and past club members showed up to operate, and president Ken Riediger also brought his wife, Carla, along for the event. Included in the Abilene contingent, along with Ken and Carla, were Ken England, Cody Hilliard, Mel Herwick, Jim

Gibson, Keith Savage, Walter Gramh, Bryan Grow, Jeffrey Cowen, Dusty Garison, Dan Brady, and Bill Reister. Activities on Jim's Kansas City Southern-themed layout, which meanders throughout the upstairs rooms of his large house, got underway a little after 10 a.m. There was a break around noon for pizza, which was generously paid for by Ken England, and everybody completed their computerized train order assignments and checked out with "dispatcher" Jim by around 2 p.m. A couple of Jim's "regulars" were on hand during the session to offer assistance, including Ole Melhouse, who was especially helpful to those of us who got lost or had trouble locating any of the assigned businesses or sidings listed on our train orders for pickups and setouts. After the ops session, it was off to Discount Model Trains in Addison, for most of the group, to do some serious hobby shopping before leaving the Metroplex.

The Editor Speaks

Old Model Train Magazines Provide Window to the Past

At the March 28 fundraiser for the local food bank, Ken England thought it might be a good idea to try and sell some of the donated 1950s vintage *Model Railroader* magazines that have just been taking up space in the club's layout room for awhile. We put some out next to the club's modular layout, and I was drawn to them like a moth to a bright light. Thumbing through the old *MRs*, I was fascinated by the ads, articles and photos. The first thing that jumps out in the ads is what seems like ridiculously low prices on HO-scale stuff. But if you take a closer look and give the matter some thought, I don't think things actually were that inexpensive, considering what you got for your money then, versus now, and inflation. For example, an average rolling stock kit from that era was pretty crude and basic. Many were comprised of wood and cardstock or lithographed tin pieces, with a few stamped or cast pot metal details. Some required you to provide trucks and couplers yourself. Today, you can buy a ready to run, finely detailed plastic freight car with sharp graphics, knuckle couplers, and quality trucks with metal wheels, and the price (adjusted for inflation) is about the same as what an average kit car would have cost in the '50s -- \$1.00 to \$3.00 then, versus \$15 to \$20 now. With regard

to the articles, it seems like there was a big emphasis on "do it yourself" then. For scratch-building, excellent scale plan drawings were provided, and there were good ideas and examples for kit-bashing something unique or different for your layout from the limited number of kits that were available then. A lot of the structure kits cost from \$2.00 to \$4.00, but were very basic plastic, or wood and cardstock with texture or details printed or embossed on it. The \$20 to \$40 you pay for an average kit today may seem way more expensive, but you get a lot more quality and detail for your money, especially when you factor in inflation.

People must have taken their leisure time more seriously in the '50s, judging by the men in the layout article photos who are often shown wearing a dress shirt and tie, and sometimes even a suit. It is amazing how "dated" those pictures look by today's standards. Part of it is the way people groomed and dressed then, and part of it is the quality of the photography and printing. Many of the black and white photos seem grainy and not very sharp, and the rare "full color" feature picture in a '50s copy of *MR* wouldn't hold a candle to the multitude of brilliant color photos throughout a copy today. Back then, *MR* cost 50 cents and averaged 75 to 85 pages, while a copy today costs \$5.95, and averaged about 115 pages during the past 12 months. The size increase is about in line with the increased cost, adjusted for inflation, plus the quality is much better. My only complaint is that there aren't as many scratch-building articles as there used to be.

That's about enough of my unscientific analysis. Somebody once said, "A magazine is still new for you as long as you haven't seen it before," so if you want some cheap, interesting reading, check out the vintage copies of *MR* at the club. Our treasurer, Ken England, will be glad to sell you as many as you want for the great low price of only 25 cents per copy, or five for a buck. That's a real bargain, and it will put a few dollars in the club coffers, as well. I'm sure enjoying the ones I bought, and I plan on going back for more. 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.