

## THE EDITOR SPEAKS – A “PARTING SHOT” FROM THE OUTGOING EDITOR, JIM GIBSON

I recently lost my wife of 58 years to cancer, and in the wake of her death I am in the process of adjusting to what I call my “new abnormal” life. I am also 75 years old, and her passing brought my own mortality into sharper focus for me. It made me come to grips with the fact that I’m not going to live forever either, so I had better prioritize the time I have and try to get all those “ducks lined up” the best I can for future considerations.

One of the things that came to mind was my editorship of the ASMR Newsletter, which I have been doing for over half the time the club has been in existence! I had two choices: 1. Continue to crank it out every month as usual until I couldn’t anymore and let fate dictate what happens after that. 2. Pass the torch to a new editor who could bring in fresh ideas and perspectives now and insure as much as possible that the Newsletter is already in good hands and continuing seamlessly, even before I’m out of the picture. I thought about it and decided that option number two was by far the best – if a new editor was available and willing to take over.



**Above** – Cecil performs switching duties on the KRBN during Ken’s October operating session.

**At right** – Dusty’s cousin, Kay Adams, sent him this picture of the Big Boy #4014 when it visited Colorado in 2022.

Thankfully, just such a person did happen to be available! The club is fortunate to have another ASMR member in addition to me with journalistic expertise, namely Dusty Garison. He has already demonstrated he is more than capable of being the Newsletter editor by substituting for me in the past on a few occasions and putting out issues when I was out of pocket. And best of all, when asked he readily agreed to step up to the plate and take on the job!

So, fellow ASMR members, as of this issue we now *officially* have a new Newsletter editor, even though Dusty really started unofficially with the previous issue. As for me, I don’t plan on abandoning the Newsletter completely myself, because I still have some ideas for articles and photographs I would like to submit from time to time for publication. I hope I have provided news, articles and photographs which have been informative, useful and enjoyable for ASMR members in the dozens and dozens of issues I’ve edited, especially since 2010 when I got a better computer and color printer and could turn out a more eye-appealing, professional-looking product. That was always my goal as editor. In closing, I want to wish Dusty all the best as he moves forward with future editions of the ASMR Newsletter. I’m very confident it is in excellent hands.

*Your outgoing editor, Jim Gibson*



## KEEPING TRACK

Official Newsletter of the Abilene Society of Model Railroaders

Volume 20, Issue 9

November 1, 2024

Editor: Dusty Garison

### Visiting the Big Boy



For my birthday last month, my sweet wife let me enjoy one of my favorite treats – train watching. We were also able to take a ride on a train, so that made the day even more special.

First, a little background. Back in the 1940s, Union Pacific Railroad had a problem. They were dealing with shortages of both equipment and manpower, and with America mobilizing for the war, they knew that both would only get worse. It was especially evident on some of UP’s trains in the Mountain West area between Ogden, Utah, and Cheyenne, Wyoming. Their solution was to create a giant steam locomotive that could single-handedly move long trains without the need for helper engines or extra crews. These behemoths were essentially TWO locomotives built on a single, articulated frame, under the control of one crew. They called it, “Big Boy.”

*(See VISITING THE BIG BOY, page two)*

### The Word from The Prez

#### Open House & RGMPS/MP Joint Meet

By our next meeting we’ll be past Halloween and only five weeks to our annual Christmas Open House. As with every Open House we have a lot of prep work to finish so we can show off all the new structures & layout details that have been added to our permanent layouts since our May Open House. Please plan on attending our meeting Nov. 2nd to get the current information on our plans for the Open House.

As there are several other important articles in the newsletter this month, I’m using this space to review a trip Cindy and I recently took to the Joint Annual Meetings of the Rio Grande Historical & Model Society and the Missouri Pacific Historical Society. It was held in Pueblo, CO. To those that were unaware, including me, the MP & DRGW had a joint agreement that created a lot of traffic interchange between them with most of it happening in Pueblo. The MP line came from Kansas City west across south central Kansas through La Juanta, CO. and into Pueblo. The Rio Grande’s line ran north & south along the front slope of the Rockies. As both line were in constant competition with the Union Pacific and Santa Fe, this was a successful partnership. Early in their agreement they interchanged a wide range of commodities including livestock, many farm commodities & manufactured goods. Later, the major revenue came from coal for power plants in the Midwest.

Passenger traffic was also important in their era as Pueblo saw up to 50 passenger trains a day hailing from the MP, DRGW, Santa Fe, Burlington Route – C&S, & Rock Island. The most famous for the MP was the Colorado Eagle, which terminated in Pueblo.

As the four-day conference touched on these and other points, including modeling of many of these trains, it’s impossible to cover everything. A lot of the presentations are on videos at the Rio Grande HMS site. One of the highlights of the conference was a ride train ride through the Royal Gorge, Canon City on the DRGW right of way. It has many spectacular sights along the Arkansas River and is well worth your time when you’re in the area. The Pueblo Historical Museum also has a GP9 and three different cabooses you can ride and on special occasions you can even run the engine around their ¾-mile loop at the Museum. Pueblo is home to the old C.F.& I. Steel Mill, still operating today under new ownership; they also have a museum that shows how closely they are tied to the Railroads for raw materials and delivery of finished products.

As you plan your next trip to Colorado, Pueblo and Canon City are two locations that you need to include among your stops for railroading interest.

**Your Prez, Dan**

*(See picture, page two)*

## Visiting the Big Boy (cont.)

Legend says that the Big Boy could haul a train five miles long, and that it could maintain a constant speed of 40 mph, uphill. I don't know if that's true or not, but what is true is that it was 133 feet long and weighed 1.2 million pounds, with a 4-8-8-4 wheel arrangement and 68" driving wheels. The thing is just massive.

American Locomotive Company built 25 Big Boys and delivered them between 1941 and 1944. Number 4014 went into service in December 1941, running over a million miles before its retirement in 1961. It was one of eight of the engines that were donated to rail museums, ending up at the RailGiants Train Museum in Pomona, California, where it remained until 2013.

Meanwhile, UP was looking ahead to the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Golden Spike Ceremony – May 10, 2019. Union Pacific, of course, was one of the two railroads that were part of that ceremony in 1869, and they wanted to do something suitable for the anniversary. They began scouting around among the Big Boys in various museums before settling on #4014, and asking the owners if they could, pretty please, have it back.

The railroad had to pull the giant across parking lots, over temporary tracks, to get it to the main line – and then the real work started. It was towed to the UP Steam Shop in Cheyenne, Wyoming, and then five years and an estimated \$5 million dollars later, Big Boy was moving again under its own power.

These days, Uncle Pete (UP) brings the Big Boy out a couple of times a year for cross-country exhibition and publicity tours. It has been converted to burn #5 fuel oil instead of coal, and retrofitted with all the latest computer and safety gear, included Positive Train Control (PTC). On one of its trips through Nebraska last year, it even had to help push another train up a hill, after that train's modern diesel engine had stalled out!

For this trip, 4014 left Cheyenne on August 28, headed for Chicago, then south through Arkansas, down to Houston, then back up to Fort Worth, which is where it was on my birthday, October 11. I figured since UP had gone to all the trouble to bring the engine to Texas for my special day, the least I could do was go over to Fort Worth and see it. (Insert eye wink here!)

Kathy and I caught the Trinity Railway Express from Hurst into Fort Worth. This was very convenient, because 4014 was parked right next to the old Texas & Pacific station there in Downtown Cowtown.

I have seen two other Big Boys before, at the rail museums in Frisco (Dallas) and St. Louis, but this time was different – it was "alive." And when the engineer reached up and took the whistle cord and that gorgeous, haunting, deep steam whistle sounded, echoing off the skyscrapers and piercing into my soul, it was the best birthday present I could imagine.

## ASMR Meeting Minutes

A meeting of the ASMR was opened at approximately 10:00 AM, October 5, 2024, by President Dan Schueler. The following members were present or arrived after the meeting had started: Dan Schueler, Ken Riediger, Fred Rogge, Cody Hilliard, Scott Strickler, Charlie Chinn, Kent Stark, Jon Prestridge, Jonathan Scherr, Dusty Garrison.

### Minutes

The minutes of the September meeting were read by Secretary Cody Hilliard. A motion to approve the Secretary's report was made by Ken Riediger and seconded by Kent Stark with all members in agreement.

### Treasurer's Report

Treasurer Ken Riediger reported that the balance of the account as of October 1 was \$790.25 with total club assets equaling \$8008.17. A motion to approve the Treasurer's report was made by Cody Hilliard and seconded by Jonathan Scherr with all members in agreement.

*(See MINUTES, page three)*

### From the Prez (cont. from page one)



*We visited Greg Long's HO/HOn3 D&RGW Montrose Division Layout while in Pueblo. Here, two operators discuss a switching move.*

### Wayne Smith Estate Sale

**Wayne Smith's daughter Alicyn has informed the club that they will be having an Estate Sale on Sunday, November 10, beginning at 1:00 PM. She adds that there are "a lot of trains."**

**The address is 2790 Victoria.**

## KRBNRR Ops Session Report

We held the October OP Session on the 19th. We had four operators and two railfans. The four operators were Cecil, Reed, Dusty and Jonathan. The two railfans were Billy Barrow and Amanda Leggett. The four operators ran five trains. Reed got to run two, both with little switching. All four operators did a good job on their manifests with no mistakes made. Well, one train had an extra car in its consist upon completing its run, but found out where it was supposed to be and returned it to its proper place.

The only other problem that was found was a couple of siding switches that were left open. That seems to be an ongoing problem. There will be no OP Session in November. Instead we will have my annual Open House on the 23rd and 24th. The next OP Session will be on Dec 21st, if there is enough interest and I don't get overruled by my wife for Christmas family stuff!!

KR



*Ken helps Reed align the switches for the correct route in the yard at East Kannapolis.*



## ASMR Meeting Minutes (Continued from page two)

### Old Business

Dan started the meeting by mentioning that Josh Black had joined the club, and that he had volunteered to help us with Abilene Gives.

Dan brought up the renovation of the layout. It was reported that Terry was working on new signals and Scott is working on new buildings.

Dan then moved on to past dues. We had three people on list for a total of \$450. Ken made a motion to drop Correna, Will, and Herbert Hill, along with Carlos and Dragon Chacon from the roster due to late dues. This was seconded by Fred Rogge with all members in agreement.

Dan reported that Ken's operating session would be October 19.

Ken still had CT Kelly and Ken England Items for sale.

Dan also reported that we have the calendars and we have sold 64 copies and counting.

The signs were tabled until next meeting.

Cody mentioned that he had not heard anything from Chris on the Camera system but he would reach out again.

Dan then moved on to election of new officers. Fred made a motion to keep current officers and Jon seconded it, with all members in agreement.

### New Business

Ken mentioned that his Open House would be November 23-24.

The club discussed the date of the next club's open house. It was decided that we would have it on December 7 through 8.

Dusty mentioned that when Jim is ready to pass on the newsletter that he would be willing to take it over. The club seemed to be in favor of this when Jim was ready.

Dan mentioned that we should start having clinics for the members and Kent Stark volunteered to help with scheduling.

Dan asked that the club help keep the bathroom clean.

With no further business the meeting was closed at 11:00 by President Dan Schueler.

**Respectfully submitted,  
Cody Hilliard, Secretary  
Abilene Society of Model Railroaders**