

# KEEPING TRACK

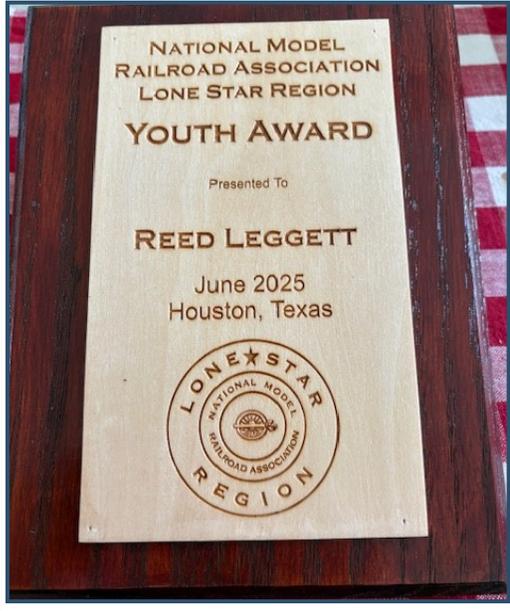
Official Newsletter of the Abilene Society of Model Railroaders

Volume 21, Issue 5

July 2025

Editor: Dusty Garison

## ASMR Member Receives NMRA Youth Award



Earlier this year the board members of ASMR entered **Reed Leggett** in the Annual contest for **NMRA Regional Division Youth Award**. This award is presented annually in each Division for active youth members under the age of 18.

This year ASMR member Reed Leggett was awarded this honor for Division 5 of the Lone Star Region. Congratulations, Reed, on this honor! We are proud of you — Keep up the great work!

## The Word from The Prez

### Ramblings from Your Prez

As we approach the middle of summer, we have seen a marked decline in attendance at club meetings. Whether it's a vacation, rail-fanning, family gatherings, or any number of reasons, I hope you're having an enjoyable time.

As an update to some of the things you might have missed –

- We had a great first experience with “Abilene Gives.”
- We continue to gain new members through the first half of the year – be sure and stop by and meet our new and returning members!
- We have acquired two new showcases for those that would like to display railroad artifacts, be they 1:1 or scale items.
- Our new security system is in full operation, 24 -7 – ask for a demo.
- We will be instituting a club room cleaning schedule that all members will be required to participate in – final details will be determined at the club meeting July 5.

**Abilene Rail Festival 2025** will be held **September 12-13**. ASMR will be displaying our modular layout again. It will be held in downtown Abilene – from The Preservation League building (where our layout will be) to Frontier Texas, along North 1<sup>st</sup> St. Many more details will be coming but the critical points now are – Sponsorships for the event are available – we have spaces on 2-3 modules that need to have scenes added – so if you or a friend would like to help, let us know. Also, we are looking for additional railroad-related vendors. The rate this year is only \$25 for a 10'x10' indoor booth. Some outdoor booths are available also – contact me if you are interested.

Cindy & I attended the Lone Star Region of the NMRA annual gathering in Baton Rouge, LA., June 26-28, 2025. This was the first time in 10+ years it was held in Louisiana. There were just under 200 like-minded Railroad Fans attending. The comradery, clinics, layout tours, non-rail agenda, banquet & model contest were all great! If you have never attended a Region event, next year we'll be in **Austin, June 18-20, 2026**. Put it on your calendar now for a great model RR weekend!

**Your Prez,**  
**Dan**

## ASMR Meeting Minutes June 2025

A meeting of the ASMR was opened at approximately 10:00 am, June 7, 2025, by President Dan Schueler. The following members were present or arrived after the meeting had started: Ken Riediger, Scott Strickler, Kent Stark, Cody Hilliard, Jonathan Scherr, Dan Schueler, Jerry Wagamon, Christopher Stephens, Terry Andrew, Fred Rogge.

### Minutes

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

### Treasurer's Report

Treasurer Ken Riediger reported that the balance of the account as of June 1 was \$444.57, with total club assets equaling \$7955.85. A motion to approve the Treasurer's report was made by Kent Stark and seconded by Cody Hilliard with all members in agreement.

### Old Business

- Dan started the meeting by introducing three new members to the club: Paul Mergolles, Cecil Walston, and Danny Haddox.
- Dan then asked if anybody had any updates on layout progress. No members had anything to report.
- Ken reported that we had one member past due for a total of \$80.00.
- Ken and Jerry have some trains for sale.
- Dan reported that we still have calendars for sale and reduced the price to \$5.00. Ken asked the club for any ideas for future pictures for the next calendar.
- Ken did not have anything to report on the signs.
- Dan reported that we received \$2285 from Abilene Gives.
- Ken reported that he was having issues with Facebook. The ASMR page was taken down by Facebook. Several members discussed solutions to this problem.
- Cody reported that we are still waiting on the fifth camera.
- Dan brought up the issue of reimbursing Chris for the camera system. The club discussed this and Cody made a motion to give Chris a year of dues and a \$50 gift certificate.
- Dan reminded everyone that we needed to do some maintenance on the Ride-On Train and could use some volunteers to help running the Train.
- Dan asked if we had any clinics planned. Kent reported that nothing was scheduled but was working on some ideas.

- Ken let the club know that we were out of business cards. Cody volunteered to order a box.
- Cody received a call from a real estate agent asking if anybody would be interested in a layout that he needed to remove from house he bought. Cody passed images around but nobody seemed interested.
- Dan discussed Railfest which would be the second weekend of September.
- Kent reminded the group that Charlie was still bedridden and if anybody wanted to visit with him he was at 2917 South 12<sup>th</sup>.

### New Business

- Ken asked if anybody had a blank membership form. Cody volunteered to make a new form. Several members requested that we include some info about club rules and By-laws.

With no further business the meeting was closed at 10:51 by President Dan Schueler.

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



### KRBN RR June OP Session by Ken Riediger

June 21<sup>st</sup> was the KRBN RR OP Session. We had four crew members present and one railfan. The crew were Cecil, Reed, Billy and Jonathan. Our railfan was Amanda. Billy worked with Cecil.

Our crews got three trains run with a fourth started but ran out of time and was parked in a siding until a "dog catch" crew could arrive to complete its work. The three trains completed their work without any errors to keep our customers happy. The dog catch crew arrived on 6/30/2025, to complete the two trains that were left waiting to be completed. Lonnie (our dog catch crew) finished the train in the siding first before grabbing power from the service track and heading to the Hill City branch to finish that train. That crew is working as I am writing this note. We are always needing more crews.

Hope to see you at the next session on July 19<sup>th</sup> at 1:30 pm!

## 13<sup>th</sup> Year CALF Event Keeps ASMR Busy During June by Jim Gibson

The annual **Abilene Cultural Affairs Council's Children's Art and Literacy Festival**, or "CALF," in mid-June is usually a busy time for the ASMR members who volunteer to run the **Storybook Express Street Train**, but this year it was especially demanding. First of all, the Cub Cadet lawn tractor's gas motor that provides train power, as well as the "locomotive" itself and the tender and four passenger cars, all needed to be serviced. So, about 3:00 p.m. on Wednesday, June 11, a handful of ASMR club members congregated at the building in the 600 block of Oak Street where the train is stored and got busy. The work crew included **Dan Schueler**, **Ken Riediger**, **Jim Gibson**, **Cecil Walston**, and Cecil's friend, **Billy Barrow**. After an accumulation of West Texas dust was removed from the locomotive, the boiler was unbolted, tilted up, and the 25-horsepower motor received an overdue oil and air filter change. An exposed view of the front tires showed excessive wear on the outside edges of both, especially the right, so the wheels were removed and Dan took them to a tire shop, had the tires reversed on the rims, and reinstalled them the next day. Dan also had an extension pipe made and attached it to the short exhaust pipe on the muffler to help direct fumes and heat away from under the cab and make driving conditions more comfortable for the "engineer." Ken brought his portable air compressor and pumped up low tires on the tractor and several cars.

On Thursday at 3:10 p.m., with everything shipshape, Jim drove the train, with Ken and Dan escorting in their vehicles, down to North 6<sup>th</sup> Street and parked it in front of the new Storybook Garden that's being built on the west side of the Civic Center, to be on display until its special mission at about 7:00 p.m. At that time, following a dedication ceremony for part of the new **Storybook Garden** and some other activities, the featured CALF event children's book illustrator **Matt Phelan** and his family, along with a number of youngsters decked out in storybook costumes, boarded the train and "engineer" Jim drove them down to the **Paramount Theatre** for another event. After dropping them off, he drove the train to the **Grace Museum** and parked it inside a secure outdoor patio area for the night.

Bright and early Friday morning, Jim moved the train over to Everman Park and positioned it on the east side of the T&P depot, ready to provide rides every 15 minutes for CALF participants, and in many cases their parents, too. From 9:00 a.m. until 4:00 p.m., with only a noon hour lunch break, Jim and Dan shared engineer and ticket collecting duties. Cecil, decked out in his tux and top hat, gave his seriously humorous safety briefing to passengers before every departure, and his similarly-attired friend Billy helped

board and offload riders. And, Mr. Grinch in a furry green costume and full face mask, popped up at various points along the route during each ride to "menace" the passengers and give them a refreshing squirt from a spray water bottle he kept handy. Incidentally, Mr. Grinch is actually Jerry Ivey, who also volunteers and drives an electric street train at the Abilene Zoo that's similar to the Storybook Express.

On Saturday, Ken ran the train from 9:00 a.m. till noon, then he and Dan and Jim shared cab duties from 1:00 p.m. till 4:00 p.m. Nearly every car was full nearly every ride both days, and around 1,300 CALF participants got rides altogether. They weren't all just local folks either. Some said they were from as far away as Dallas, Fort Worth, San Angelo, and even the Waco and Temple area! All in all, it was a busy, fun (even though hot, as usual) CALF event. Running the Storybook Express for it is a rewarding way to spend some time volunteering for a worthy cause, and as an added bonus it gives ASMR public exposure that lets a lot of folks know our club is around and active in the community.



**Above** – Cecil giving his serious/humorous "safety briefing" to the passengers.

**Below** – "The Grinch" playfully interacts with the riders, occasionally spritzing them with a little water.

*Photos by Jim Gibson*



*The Editor Speaks –*

## A WEEKEND RIDING TRAINS

My dad used to say, “Every man needs a hobby.” For him, for most of his life, it was hunting and fishing. Later it became golf and birdwatching from his back porch.

For me, it’s always been trains. I’ve been a railfan for as long as I can remember. That’s one reason why I was so thrilled recently to be able to ride four different trains over two days.

I’m a member of the Wichita Valley Chapter of the National Railway Historical Society. Although based in Wichita Falls, it includes members from across this part of Texas, and celebrates railroad history along the former Wichita Valley system, including Haskell and Abilene. Our local chapter sponsored a trip to Oklahoma City, for the purpose of cramming as many rail adventures as we could into a weekend.

Most of our group met in OKC on Thursday evening, where we gathered for a delicious meal at the famous Cattleman’s Steakhouse there, but the real main event began the next morning at the former Santa Fe passenger depot, now the Amtrak station. We boarded the daily *Heartland Flyer* train, and left on time, headed south for Ft. Worth.

I have taken Amtrak many times – from Ft. Worth on the *Texas Eagle*, to St. Louis and Chicago, then changing trains to go to Cincinnati on the *Cardinal*. I’ve also ridden south from Ft. Worth to San Antonio on the *Texas Eagle*, before boarding the *Sunset Limited* to go to Beaumont. My brother David and I rode Amtrak from Houston to Lake Charles, Louisiana, on former Southern Pacific trackage near our old home place in Orange County. For an anniversary trip one year, Kathy and I took the famous *Crescent* train from New Orleans all the way up to New York City.

Some things about riding trains are always the same. The (usually) gentle rocking and swaying of the cars. The spacious coaches, with lots of leg room to spread out and be comfortable. The beautiful scenery as it changes from rural countryside and rolling farms; to small towns, each unique in its own way; to urban centers, past warehouses and industrial areas, to a downtown metropolis. And on most trains, the wonderful meals which are served in the dining car. All of these are part of the Amtrak experience.

But each is different, too. Our train to FTW, the *Heartland Flyer*, did not have a full-service dining car, but it did have a café coach, staffed by a guy who was part bartender, part comedian. He was definitely entertaining, as he served up hamburgers, hot dogs, grilled cheese sandwiches, plenty of cold drinks and more “adult” beverages. I had a hot dog, which I thought was pretty tasty.

In Ft. Worth, we went over to the Stockyards District and enjoyed some good BBQ, then we climbed aboard the Historic Grapevine Vintage Railroad, from the Stockyards Station across the Trinity River, providing a beautiful panoramic view of Downtown Cowtown. We kept heading west, crossed the Trinity again and went through lovely green Forest Park, before heading back to the Stockyards.

We returned to the Amtrak station and boarded the *Flyer* for the return trip to OKC. We left on time but soon began running into one delay after another, and we were over an hour late arriving. This wasn’t Amtrak’s fault – it’s what happens when passenger trains use rails belonging to freight railroads: freight trains usually have the priority.

The next morning, we met up at the Oklahoma Railway Museum. This facility is built on tracks that were part of the Missouri-Kansas-Texas Railway, also known as the M-K-T, or the Katy. They boast an impressive collection of locomotives (both steam and diesel) and other equipment; they also operate a passenger train, which they call “History in Motion.” It runs along for several miles, including rolling through a beautiful golf course – making it one of the few courses where cart paths include railroad crossing signs!

From there, several of us drove over to El Reno, Oklahoma, where we rode on a restored streetcar. El Reno was a major hub of the former Rock Island Railroad, and the residents there have restored the depot and turned it into a county historical museum. The refurbished 1913 Brill streetcar rolls along a mile and a half of tracks through that city’s picturesque downtown area.

It was a great weekend of riding trains, and I’m ready for the next one, when schedules and finances permit. All aboard!

*Dusty*



*Here’s our group at the Ft. Worth Amtrak Station, in front of historic “Car 25.” From left – Rod & Marilyn Bennett, Steve & Marsha Goen, yours truly (in the back), Chuck Woodward, Julia & Mike Eriksen, Corrender Taylor & Maddie Price.*