



News from Houston N'Crowd



# THE ORDERBOARD

November/December 2019

# SPECTACULAR!



*Photo by Tom Marsh*



*Photo by Hugh Boyd*

## Tracking the Transcon with Hugh Boyd: Part 5

# "GREEN EYE" - CLEAR BLOCK

by Tom Marsh, President

## Time for end-of-the-year things, and to look ahead

Here we are at the end of another year and it's time to deal with seasonal matters.

**Annual Meeting:** Per the organization's bylaws, the November membership meeting is also the annual meeting of the corporation. The primary activity at the annual meeting is election of the following year's officers and one of the three board members.

**Election of 2020 officers and board member:** Once again we have not followed the bylaws precisely as regards the annual election of officers. I'll take responsibility (again) but I think this points out the need for a review and revision of the bylaws. This has not been done since 1999. The main requirement we have missed (again) is publication of the nominees' names 30 days prior to the election. The nominees for 2020 are:

President: Tom Marsh  
Vice President: James C. Senneff, Jr.  
Treasure: Eddie Aycock  
Secretary: Bill Busch  
Board Member (2022): Allan Melton

At the annual meeting I intend to move that the requirement to publish the nominees' names 30 days in advance of the election be waived. If this motion passes, we will take nominations from the floor then proceed with the election. Otherwise we'll go to Plan B.

**Holiday party and combat gift exchange:** We'll be finalizing the date and other details for our annual December party at the November meeting. We'll send out the information by email a day or two after the meeting.

**Thanks to our BC&G volunteer engineers:** Thanks to everyone who volunteered so far to man the BC&G during the holiday season. We still need to fill some slots. We need to

have two to three people committed to each slot so we can be sure to meet our obligation to Papa Ben's. The updated schedule will be emailed to members and posted on the bulletin board in the layout room on the Thursday after the November meeting. Please look it over and sign up if you can either by email to me at [tom@houstonncrowd.org](mailto:tom@houstonncrowd.org) or by writing in your name on the posted schedule. It's easy and fun: Just run trains and be nice to visitors!

**Speaking of the layout:** I've been asked to pass on a couple of recommendations for those of you who run trains on the BC&G. First, when throwing points on switches that do not have ground throws (and this includes most switches on the layout), please do not push the point rails as this can loosen them from the tiebar. Instead, always use the tiebar to move the switch points. Second, we've occasionally had a situation when all of the WiThrottle slots are connected even though not everyone is using a phone throttle. This appears to be because some people have their phones set to automatically connect to the network. If you are not using WiThrottle, please be sure you are not auto-connecting to the system.

**T-TRAK at the 2020 Greater Houston Train Show:** As most of you know, we will have space to set up a T-TRAK layout at the Greater Houston Train Show on Saturday, Feb. 15. However, I am still trying to find out how much space we will have. I expect it will be enough to accommodate both N'Crowd and NWX members who want to participate, so keep working on your modules because we want to see you there!

**How about 2020?:** It's time to put in your suggestions for activities in 2020. If you have thoughts about trips, carpools, how-to sessions, etc., just let us know!

Here's wishing you a happy and safe holiday season!

Tom



### N'Crowd Wednesday Membership Meetings:

**November 20 / December 18 / January 15 / February 19**  
Meetings start at 7 p.m. at Papa Ben's Train Place, 4007-E Bellaire Blvd. and are open to all.

**N'Crowd Test & Tune Sessions:** First Wednesday of odd-numbered months. 6 p.m. to 8 p.m. at Papa Ben's.

**N'Crowd Operating Sessions:** First Sunday of even-numbered months. Watch your email for information.



# Another MoPac gem from Walker Shops

*N' Crowd Past President Vincent Walker updates The Orderboard on his latest project, a MoPac EMD E7 flying in full Eagle colors. Vincent elaborates:*

The latest project released by my Eagle Route III Shops is Missouri Pacific E7 No. 7008. This locomotive started out as an undecorated model from Precision Craft Models, one of two I purchased. The second unit will carry number 7012. The undecorated models come with a good number of extra detail parts, including passenger or freight pilots, nose doors with or without light housings, louvers and other details.

While most E7s were delivered with square side windows, the MoPac units had a unique arrangement of porthole windows, which I wanted to recreate. Cutting out the original window moldings, plugging the holes then drilling holes to represent the portholes was not easy. Drilling was done by hand, with special care needed for proper placement and to prevent too much pressure being applied to the plastic shell. After drilling the window openings, I fitted 1/8-in. brass tubing to represent the porthole frames. This process worked out OK.

The *Eagle* paint scheme is complex. There are three main colors and two detail colors, followed by decals and a clear finish. I'm happy with the outcome as now I have E7s with the correct porthole windows in full *Eagle* colors.

Remember if you can't find what you want off the shelf, then try and model it yourself. It does not have to be perfect to be satisfying. When I started in the hobby I asked questions, and I'm still at it. Now you can ask me and I will do my best to get you started.

Next up out of the shop after E7 No. 7012 will be MoPac Alcos in the form of a PA-1 and a PA-2.



*Above, the starting point for the MoPac E7 project. Two below, work in progress.*



*Above, the finished E7 poses for a portrait. Below, No. 7008 poses on the BC&G with another example of Vincent's handiwork, Santa Fe E8 No. 81.*







Allan Melton got the jump on many other N'Crowd members by heading to California before No. 4014 headed to Texas. He took this fine photo at Colton.

## Big Boy on the move!

“Spectacular” was the word on people’s lips after witnessing Union Pacific’s Big Boy No. 4014 storm past them during its late October/early November tour of Texas. Many

N’Crowd members and friends could be found trackside for the big event, and here we offer some of their favorite photos of this remarkable steam giant.

Closer to home, Allan Melton grabbed this atmospheric shot in Sugar Land as the Big Boy headed into Houston on Nov. 6.







Staci Stalarow focused on the other end of the train at Houston. The lighted drumhead classes up an already class act.

Star of the show wherever it goes! Bob Folser captured the Big Boy among some of its many admirers at Spring (above) and Palestine (below). Thousands turned out trackside as the big engine made its way across Texas.







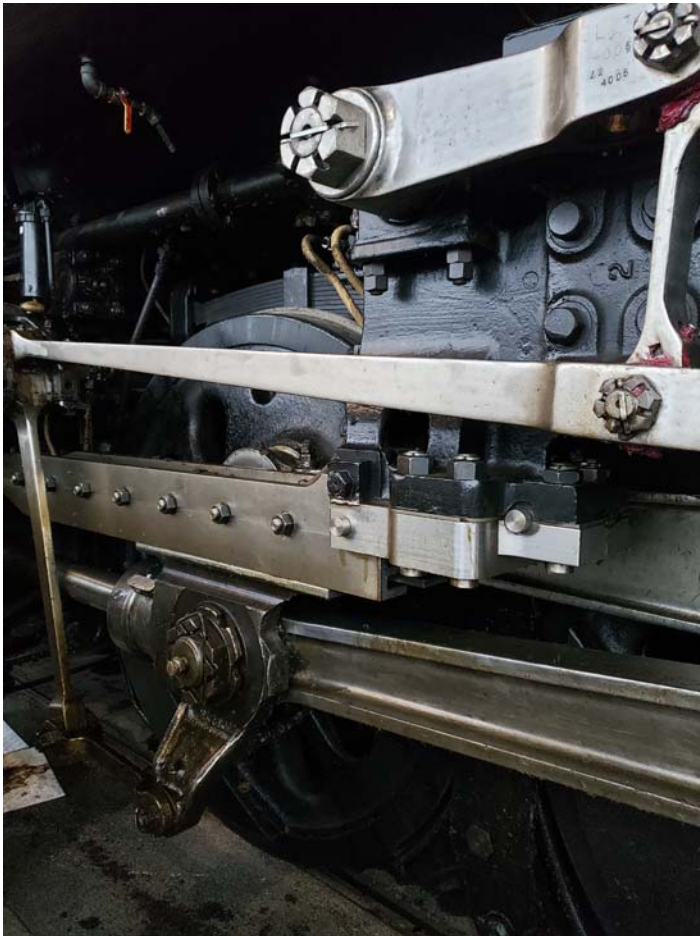
*Hugh Boyd is another N'Crowd member who got the jump on the rest of us. Hugh hit the road to catch the Big Boy in the wide open spaces of West Texas. Above, No. 4014 powers through a curve near Marathon. Below left, the Big Boy splits a set of signals in the West Texas desert. Below right, the Big Boy glides across the trestle over Eagle Nest Creek near Langtry.*



*Below, of the many pictures taken by your editor during the Big Boy's Texas visit, this is his favorite. The locomotive, whistle in fine form, is loping through the Tower 71 interlocking north of downtown Houston. At far left, a father holds his small child, come to witness the passing of a giant. It's raining, cold and wonderful.*







*Staci Stalarow, daughter of N'Crowd member Harvey Stalarow, caught the Big Boy in a cloud of steam as it approached the Houston Amtrak station, and then captured some unique views of the locomotive at rest.*







Even at rest a steam engine can seem alive and draw a crowd. Phil Poirier captured the faithful gathered around at Houston, enamored of the smell of steam and dripping grease and oil. The UP crew has made sort of an effort to capture the runoff with oil-absorbant cloths.



Busted! According to his mother Kerry Anne, N'Crowd member Michael Cianciolo has never missed a day of school except when ill, but exceptions have to be made in extraordinary circumstances. Who knew the truant would be caught on live TV! Michael and his dad Brian, seen here with CW39 reporter Maggie Flecknoe at Houston's Amtrak station, started their Big Boy day at 5 a.m.



Above, David Crawford found the right place to be for a classic wedge shot of the Big Boy in action on the high iron.

At right, Phil Poirier recorded the gritty reality of working steam with a close look at No. 4014's builder's plate.

**Thanks to all of our Big Boy photo contributors!**





# Tracking the Transcon *Part 5* story and photos by Hugh Boyd



*A BNSF autorack train rounds a curve on the Transcon not far from the Texas/Oklahoma state line on St. Patrick's Day 2012*

In Oklahoma, my railfanning is mostly twenty miles or so north of US-60 on the parallel OK-15 and US-412, but I still consider this part of the US-60

corridor. Moving east, Gage is the first sizeable community encountered in Oklahoma. Interesting views of the Transcon can be had from near the post office on



*An eastbound BNSF Transcon trailer train meets a westbound stack container train in Gage, Okla. in May 2008. I think photos of advancing trains are more interesting than photos of receding trains, but we got both this time.*



Main Street.

Further east is Woodward, where a huge elevator on the north side of the Transcon provides a great backdrop for views of eastbound trains. The elevator operator uses a small red yard locomotive to move cuts of covered grain hoppers during the loading process. I was here one summer Sunday morning when all the boom trucks in town were busy placing welcome signs for the next weekend's rodeo.

About thirty miles east of Woodward is a really interesting Transcon location. This is red dirt country where the low prairie transitions into the high prairie. The tracks follow the base of the resulting red dirt bluff. It's called red dirt, but really the hue is closer to BNSF orange, so the locomotives and Schneider containers seen on many trains blend well with the bluff rising behind them.

This is Curtis Hill and most times I have visited I have seen trains meet here. Views of the trains are available from a country road designated North CR 2280. At one point, the Transcon crosses this dirt lane on a surprisingly rickety-looking timber bridge.

A better location is up the bank at a turn in East CR 360 going west from CR 2280. The tracks are some distance off, so this is another time for my 400 mm lens and tripod. CR 360 continues westward following the Transcon as the tracks ascend Curtis Hill. Two bridges cross the tracks. From the westernmost bridge a tangent

track is visible and a cut along a former alignment exposes more red dirt.

After CR 2280 goes under the tracks it continues some distance north following the Cimarron River towards its source in New Mexico. Along the way there are numerous fascinating, even grotesque, red rock formations.

When I'm watching trains in the Curtis Hill area, I often hear the roar of ATV engines as riders work the sand dunes of the nearby Little Sahara State Park.

For me, Curtis Hill has been a friendly place where I've met some interesting people when just hanging around. I met a BNSF locomotive engineer on his day off, a techie with the county water utility, a guy who was pushing Sony camera gear (which I ignored at the time, but later followed big time) and the local rancher. The rancher graciously granted my request to go onto his property the next day to get closer to the railroad action. Unfortunately I had a camera malfunction and my results were not so great. But I did get close to the BNSF fence line and got welcoming honks from the passing engineers.

The Transcon continues for a long way east from Curtis Hill, and train watching further east is on my bucket list. Over the last twenty or so years I have made numerous excursions to the New Mexico, Texas and Oklahoma portions of the Transcon. That said, I still have a lot more trips to make.



*An eastbound double stack train headed by BNSF No. 7284 passes the elevator in Woodward, Okla., on March 16, 2012.*





*Above, an eastbound BNSF five locomotive lash-up hauls a double stack train along the red bluffs of Curtis Hill, Okla., on March 15, 2012.*

*Below, a BNSF eastbound double stack train passes a westbound JB Hunt stack train under the red bluffs at Curtis Hill, Okla., on March 16, 2012.*



### Houston N'Crowd 2019 Officers and Volunteers

President ..... Tom Marsh  
 Vice President ..... Joe Kingsberry  
 Secretary ..... Bill Busch  
 Treasurer ..... Eddie Aycock  
 Board Member (2019) ..... Allan Melton

Board Member (2020) ..... Samuel Townsell II  
 Board Member (2021) ..... Randy Ollet  
 Immediate Past President ..... Samuel Townsell II  
 Layout Master ..... Joe Kingsberry  
 Editor & Webmaster ..... Tom Marsh



# LCL

*Less than Car Load: a few notes from your editor*

**Thanks again to all contributors:** This is the last issue of *The Orderboard* for 2019 and I want to take this opportunity to thank everyone who contributed to the newsletter over the course of the year. Your articles and photos helped make *The Orderboard* both informative and interesting, so much so that other publications frequently ask to republish *Orderboard* items. I hope to see more from each of you in 2020. I also hope to see articles from some of you who have not contributed in the past. Our club works best for everyone if we all participate!

**Updated truck pin color chart:** The "Truck Pin" Car Owner Color Chart has been updated and will be posted on the layout room bulletin board. There are plenty of slots available; if you want to identify your

equipment this way, fill in your name in one of the empty spaces. By the way, someone selected a color combination recently but the name was not written legibly enough to be read. If you sign up for a color combination, please print your name clearly.

**iPhone WiThrottle issues:** Several Apple iPhone users, including me, recently experienced problems with the WiThrottle app after installing an iOS update. I contacted WiThrottle support online via the WiThrottle website and learned that an Apple security update caused the problem. The WiThrottle app was updated within 24 hours and worked fine once reinstalled on my phone. If you experience WiThrottle problems after an iOS update, remove the app and download and install the most recent version.

## HOUSTON N'CROWD 2019/2020 TIME TABLE - SUBJECT TO CHANGE

### November 2

Flatonia Fall Railfan Party, Flatonia Photo Pavilion

### November 6

N'Crowd Test & Tune, Papa Ben's Train Place, 6 p.m.

### November 20

N'Crowd Membership Meeting at Papa Ben's Train Place, 7 p.m.

### December 1

N'Crowd Operating Session

### December 14

NMRA LSR Div 8 Clinic, Bayland Park

### December TBD

N'Crowd Holiday Bash and Combat Gift Exchange

### December 18

N'Crowd Membership Meeting at Papa Ben's Train Place, 7 p.m.

### 2020

### January 2

N'Crowd Test & Tune, Papa Ben's Train Place, 6 p.m.

### January 15

N'Crowd Membership Meeting at Papa Ben's Train Place, 7 p.m.

### February 2

N'Crowd Operating Session

### February 15

Greater Houston Train Show, Stafford Centre

### February 19

N'Crowd Membership Meeting at Papa Ben's Train Place, 7 p.m.

### March 4

N'Crowd Test & Tune, Papa Ben's Train Place, 6 p.m.

## THE ORDERBOARD

*News from Houston N'Crowd*

### Tom Marsh, Editor

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tom@houstonNcrowd.org.

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to edit submissions for clarity

and length.

Visit our Web site:

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