



News from Houston N'Crowd



THE ORDERBOARD

July/August 2019

N'Crowd Houston Railfan Caravan



Photo by Allan Melton



Photo by Hugh Boyd

Tracking the Transcon with Hugh Boyd: Part 3

"GREEN EYE" - CLEAR BLOCK

by Tom Marsh, President

N'Crowd launches T-TRAK Division

The new N-Crowd T-TRAK Division held its first meeting at Papa Ben's Train Place on June 27, and based on the attendance, interest in T-TRAK modular model railroading is running higher than expected.

N'Crowd members Cameron Barratt, Mike Boehnke, Phil Poirier and Mauricio Varon volunteered to assemble the four corner module kits that have been donated to the club. We expect to have these completed by the August membership meeting.

Also attending the meeting were two of our friends from the Northwest Crossing Model Railroad Club, John Hunt and Mark Wilcox. These two have a lot of experience with T-TRAK and they brought several modules and their expertise to share with our group. Together, we hope to have a T-TRAK layout operating February 15-16 at the Greater Houston Train Show. The Lone Star Region NMRA annual convention will also be taking place at the show venue the same week. To maintain interest in our T-TRAK activities, we'll also be looking

for other events and venues to showcase T-TRAK operations.

We'll have more to say about the T-TRAK Division at the July 17 membership meeting.

Truck Pin Color Chart: Many of you are probably aware of the club's "Truck Pin Color Chart", which has not been updated since 2014. The purpose is to have an easy way to identify club-owned and member-owned locomotives and rolling stock by painting two colored dots on the truck pins or some other usually unseen part of the equipment's underbody. This has been less of an issue with a permanent layout, but now that we are getting back into modular railroading and may be taking equipment to other venues, we need to update the chart so people who want to mark their equipment can do so. Given how many truck pins I have stepped on in the layout room, I recommend painting the dots on some more permanent part of the underbody. We'll discuss this at the next meeting.



Richard J. Bartlett
1948 - 2019

Long-time N'Crowd member Dr. Richard J. Bartlett passed away June 30, 2019, in Houston at the age of 70. Richard was born on Oct. 20, 1948, in Berwyn, Ill. Richard will particularly be remembered by his N'Crowd friends for his willingness to help his fellow model railroaders and his work on the club layout, including the Austin passenger station and the kitbashed roundhouse for the BC&G engine facilities. He is survived by his wife of 51 years, Marjorie Scott Bartlett, his sons Will and Scott, his granddaughter Charlotte Jewell, nephew Jesse and brother Bradley.

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



N'Crowd Wednesday Membership Meetings: July 17 / August 21 / September 18 / October 16

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 prototype inspiration spotted

N' Crowd member Barry Miles spotted another prototype boxcar in our area that has served as inspiration for a Micro-Trains N-scale model. This time the car is WLO boxcar No. 505179, which has been tagged by "artists" top to bottom on at least one side. Micro-Trains released the car in April; Barry spotted the car in May in Pearland. Check the July/August 2018 issue of *The Orderboard* to see Barry's previous find.

Top: The prototype car on a siding in Pearland in May. Photo by Barry Miles

Right: Barry's Micro-Trains model on the Bayou City & Gulf. Photo by Tom Marsh



New life for old SD70MACs

Here's something unexpected but not unprecedented: Chicago's Metra is buying 15 remanufactured EMD SD70MAC locomotives for passenger service. The contract with EMD parent Progress Rail Locomotives of La Grange, Ill., includes options to buy up to 27 additional locomotives if funding is available. The 15 big six-axle units will replace some of the oldest locomotives in Metra's current commuter fleet.

According to a Metra statement, Progress Rail will take existing EMD SD70MAC freight locomotives and upgrade and configure them for passenger use. All components will either be refurbished, upgraded or new. The remanufactured locomotives will be designated SD70MACH. Metra solicited proposals for either new or remanufactured locomotives, choosing remanufactured locomotives primarily because it can buy more of them than new locomotives. Will a Kato N-scale model of the rebuilds be in our future?

Metra will not be the first railroad to use the big SD70MAC in scheduled passenger service. Alaska Railroad rosters 28 SD70MACs, twelve of which are dual mode for use in both passenger and freight service. The locomotives were purchased new at various times between 1994 and 2007. The final four purchased by Alaska Railroad in 2007 were the last of the model produced by EMD. Kato has produced an N-scale model SD70MAC painted for Alaska Railroad.



Above: Artist's impression of Metra's "new" SD70MACH. Andrew Monaghan, is your paint shop ready to tackle one of these? Image courtesy Metra

Below: An Alaska Railroad SD70MAC leads the Aurora Winter Train. Photo courtesy Alaska Railroad



N'Crowd hits Houston hotspots

Webster's defines "intrepid" as one "characterized by resolute fearlessness, fortitude, and endurance". And so it was as a group of intrepid N'Crowd members took to the streets caravan fashion on Sunday, June 9, battling heat and Houston drivers to check out the railroading scene in the nation's fourth largest city.

Leading our merry band was N'Crowd's own Gordon "Santa Fe - All the Way" Bliss, who laid out a big circle itinerary around the city which included

stops at Eureka Jct./Tower 13; Settegast Yard; Englewood Yard; BNSF Milby Street Roundhouse; Tower 26 (near downtown and possibly the busiest junction in the city); Basin Yard/North Yard; South Yard/Produce Row; and other locations of note.

Seeing the "real thing" up close can inspire one's model railroading efforts, so we'll undertake more railfan caravans in the future. Meanwhile, here's a small photographic taste of June's adventure.

Top: Gordon discusses the day's plan with some of the gang prior to departure from Papa Ben's. Photo by Allan Melton



Right: BNSF's Milby Street Roundhouse. This originally was a Houston Belt & Terminal Railway facility. Photo by Randy Ollett



Below: The Houston skyline looms in the background beyond UP's Englewood intermodal terminal. Photo by Allan Melton





Top two: Seven locomotives power a manifest freight past the location of Tower 13. Today the tower is marked only by a simple signboard. Photos by Tom Marsh

Right: Warbonnets live! The group spotted saw two war-weary GE C44-9W locos working different trains in the iconic - if faded - paint scheme of BNSF predecessor Santa Fe. The locomotives were delivered in 1994, Santa Fe's merger with BN took place in 1996, yet these two sport what looks to be their original paint in 2019. Photos by Allan Melton



Below: Stored at Produce Row are three BNSF oldies. In BN paint is EMD SW1200 No. 3545, built in 1957 for Northern Pacific. Next is EMD SD40 No. 6367, built in 1968 for Colorado & Southern. Finally, a gem of a find: BNSF No. 6300 in yellowbonnet paint, built in 1966, was the first SD40 delivered to Santa Fe. The locomotives have been sublettered for BNSF predecessor Great Northern (GN) to clear their numbers for use on units on the BNSF active roster. The MoPac Eagle sleeping car in the background is owned by Gulf Coast Chapter - NRHS, Inc. Photo by Allan Melton



Bottom: An EMD SD40N switches Settegast Yard. UP No. 1745 was built in 1979 as SD40-2 No. 3324, then was rebuilt in 2012. Photo by Tom Marsh



Tracking the Transcon *Part 3*

by Hugh Boyd

Continuing on my Transcon adventure, Yeso, N.M., is next on the eastbound US-60 journey. This somewhat derelict town with many abandoned buildings was laid out when the railroad reached this point in 1906. Both eastbound and westbound trains are readily visible when looking at the distant mountains on the horizon. In several areas of New Mexico, abandoned farm homes with sagging roofs, broken windows and falling doors have been replaced by larger new farmsteads with big pickup trucks parked nearby.

Soon after Yeso the Transcon swings off to the south not to reappear again until approaching Fort Sumner and the Pecos River, al-

though it is possible to get closer to the distant tracks on local dirt roads. One such dirt back road can be found by using a microwave tower as a landmark.

Fort Sumner is where a former Transcon single track bottleneck was eliminated in 2016 by the construction of a second bridge across the Pecos. It appears BNSF spent some big bucks on this project. The new bridge is similar to the original structure, with the same number of spans and parallel pier placement, but the new bridge primarily uses concrete decks rather than the older bridge's steel. Over the years a lot of upstream water projects have resulted in the abstraction of large

volumes of water from the Pecos so nowadays the river under the bridges is a mere trickle.

After crossing the Pecos River highway bridge and entering Fort Sumner, Meadow Avenue on the city's northwest side leads to the twin bridges at river level, where in addition to the bridges and trains, there is a small forest of interesting trees.

Moving on from Fort Sumner, US-60 shares the highway with US-84 and together they pass through dry grazing country on the way to Melrose. At Melrose, the Santa Fe depot is again fenced off, but this time there is a For Sale sign. Good views of eastbound trains can be had from the grade crossing on NM-267

A westbound BNSF train on the original Pecos River bridge at Fort Sumner, N. M., in September 2006. See the March/April 2018 issue of The Orderboard for Hugh's picture of the second bridge built in the recent double-tracking project.





An eastbound BNSF train with ten locomotives passes the elevator at Melrose N.M., as viewed from NM-267 on the eastern limits of town, November 2018.

on the east side of town. The view includes a large nearby elevator. I was here one cold windy morning when I missed a lot of the action, but I did get the main event for the day when an eastbound train with ten locomotives went by.

On to Clovis: First is Cannon Air Force Base with frequent fighter planes taking off and landing. On those occasions when NASA flew a 747 cross-country with the Space Shuttle on board after a west coast landing, refueling stops were made here on the return trip to Florida.

Immediately east from the base access road, beside US-60 there is a Korean War-era fighter plane mounted on a pedestal and a little further east there's an old Santa Fe steam locomotive on static display. Clovis is a bigger town than is apparent from the east-west US-60. North and south the city has a lot more to it, with quite a selection of accommodation and restaurants, including a classy steakhouse. Clovis is interesting in its diversity of industry; a major railroad yard, significant oil patch activities, cattle feed lots, large disk irrigation projects, the air force base and the

usual retail and commercial establishments. The railroad yard is on the south side of US-60. Trains are constantly arriving, being classified, awaiting a crew change and departing. City streets with sidewalks cross over both the east and west yard throats.

Clovis is about 20 miles from the New Mexico/Texas state line, which is straddled by Texico on the New Mexico side and Farwell on the Texas side. At Farwell, the Transcon and

US-60 swing to the northeast while US-84 and the BNSF line to Lubbock and Fort Worth swing to the south-east. There is extensive cotton propagation in this area of Texas, but the production stops abruptly at the state line. The line also marks the point where we leave Mountain Time behind and change to Central Time.

We'll track the Transcon in Texas in the next issue of *The Orderboard*.



The BNSF yard at Clovis, N.M., as seen from the S. Prince St. overpass in September 2006. This is a busy place; it seems like something is always going on.

LCL

Less than Car Load: a few notes from your editor

Looking ahead to 2023: The National Model Railroad Association announced in early July that the 2023 NMRA National Convention and Train Show will be held in Grapevine, Texas, under the sponsorship of NMRA Lone Star Region Divisions 1 and 3. Grapevine, which is north of Fort Worth and Dallas, is home to the Grapevine Vintage Railroad and is situated to access the many sites in the area that are of interest to model railroaders and railfans. This should be an excellent event, and I urge everyone to consider joining the NMRA and taking part in the fun!

Other fun, sooner: While you are thinking about 2023, don't forget our own upcoming events. See the

Time Table below for a quick reference to upcoming meetings, clinics, operating sessions, members' layout tour, train shows, Test & Tune sessions and more. Watch your email for updates, and of course feel free to contact any N'Crowd officer or volunteer if you have questions.

Another silent auction: We have received several donations from members and friends and will be holding a silent auction at the July 17 meeting to find new homes for these items. Among the items are some built-up Sievers benchwork assemblies along with some loose pieces, as well as two helix kits for anybody with ambitions to build a double-deck layout.

HOUSTON N'CROWD 2019 TIME TABLE - SUBJECT TO CHANGE

July 3

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

July 13

NMRA LSR Div 8 Clinic, Bayland Park

July 17

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

August 4

N'Crowd Operating Session

August 10

NMRA LSR Div 8 Clinic, Bayland Park

August 21

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

August 25

N'Crowd Members' Layout Tour

September 4

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

September 14

NMRA LSR Div 8 Clinic, Bayland Park

September 18

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

September 21-22

37th Annual Temple Model Train Show, Mayborn Civic & Convention Center.

October 6

N'Crowd Operating Session

October 12

NMRA LSR Div 8 Clinic, Bayland Park

October 16

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

October 26

N'Crowd carpool to Galveston Railroad Museum and Texas City Train Festival

THE ORDERBOARD *from Houston N'Crowd*

Tom Marsh, Editor

Published fairly regularly for members and friends of N'Crowd Model Railroad Society, Inc., Houston, Texas.

Send newsletter contributions to: tom@houstonNcrowd.org.

Please note: We reserve the right to edit submissions for clarity and length.

Visit our Web site:

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