



News from Houston N'Crowd



THE ORDERBOARD

November/December 2022



Our own Bayou City & Gulf streamliner hit the high iron to tour the Houston Area T-TRAK Association's layout set up for the San Jacinto Model Railroad Club Annual Fall Layout Tour. For more on the HATTA layout, turn to page 3.



**Happy
Holidays!**

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Looking ahead to 2023

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exchange

2023 BC&G Photo Calendar

"GREEN EYE" - CLEAR BLOCK

by Naz Hally, President

All aboard the 2023 BC&G Express!

Back in January, my first "Green Eye" column was a boarding call for the BC&G Express in 2022. There were a few new destinations added to the itinerary like Discord, YouTube, Themed Contests and more frequent stops at Test and Tune. However, some long-needed track work on the heavily traveled route was put off until next year.

It's been said, "It's the journey, not the destination." N'Crowd's journey is to serve our members' interests in model railroading and educate the public on our hobby. So, for 2023, that journey starts with improving the usability of our club layout, presenting model railroading to the public, and using our know-how, resources, and media tools to make the trip enjoyable for all. Here are some key destinations I'd like to add to N'Crowd's itinerary for 2023:

Improving our layout: "Hey, it's a club layout!" Whether you're running DC or DCC, big steam, diesel, passenger, freight, MU-power, sound decoders, lighted cars, whatever - your club layout should work reliably for whatever you want to run. That means improving layout power distribution, ensuring proper electrical isolation between power districts and sub-districts, and fixing track work to minimize derailments and shorts. If we can get this done early in the new year, we can get back to hosting operating sessions and make casual train running more enjoyable for all members.

Exhibiting at shows/sponsoring a show: N'Crowd promotes the club and our hobby in two ways: members running trains on the BC&G and exhibiting at train shows. We share those common promotional interests with all model railroading groups. Together

with our sister organization HATTA, we should explore how we can co-exhibit at future regional shows. By pooling our know-how and resources, we should also consider sponsoring a show, perhaps sometime in the fall.

Acquainting new members with the layout: Nearly one-third of our current members joined within the past year. They represent all levels of experience from newcomers to the hobby to experienced model railroaders. To familiarize all new members with the specifics of the N'Crowd's layout, let's start a "Get Acquainted With the BC&G" program. This will cover layout startup and shut-down, use of the various throttles, using the programming track, dispatching locomotives, keeping track of turnout settings, etc. New members checked out on this program will gain access to the layout room anytime the store is open.

In addition to the "destinations" I've mentioned, we'll continue to host and update our Discord forum and YouTube channel. In the spring - before it gets too hot and humid - we're planning to host another swap meet. It's been nearly two years since we held the last one. Perhaps we can also organize a club outing for rail-fanning or a road trip to one of the train shows outside the greater Houston area.

Let me know what you'd like to see the N'Crowd do in 2023 and we'll do our best to make it happen. In the meantime... All aboard!

Naz

nazhally@houstonncrowd.org



N'Crowd Wednesday Membership Meetings:
November 16 / **December 14 Holiday Party!** / January 18
Meetings start at 7 p.m. at Papa Ben's Train Place.

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

N'Crowd Even-Month Ops Sessions: Operating sessions are temporarily replaced by Test & Tune sessions. See the calendar on the back page for information.

HATTA runs trains

by Tom Marsh



A T-TRAK layout is sort of like a puzzle when setting it up. The HATTA layout takes shape the day before it opens to the public as part of the annual San Jacinto Model Railroad Club Annual Fall Layout Tour.

N'Crowd's sister organization, Houston Area T-TRAK Association, participated in the annual San Jacinto Model Railroad Club Fall Layout Tour for the first time Nov. 19-20. HATTA members, most of whom are also N'Crowd members, provided over 60 T-TRAK modules for the event. The layout was hosted by Rusty and Debby McLaughlin at their home in Montgomery. The McLaughlins also made sure the gang was not hungry or thirsty during the two-

day gathering. Thanks to them both!

For the most part, the layout ran smoothly and multiple trains were running for the 30 visitors and friends who signed the registration sheet over the two-day event.

Making a special tour of the main T-TRAK layout was the BC&G's sleek ALCO PA-powered streamliner, seen on the cover of this issue. You can take your own tour around the layout through these photos.

Houston N'Crowd 2022 Officers and Volunteers

President Naz Hally
 Vice President John Sweigart
 Secretary Bill Busch
 Treasurer Eddie Aycock
 Board Member (2022) Allan Melton

Board Member (2023) Ray Byer
 Board Member (2024) Randy Ollett
 Immediate Past President Tom Marsh
 Layout Master Randy Ollett
 Editor & Webmaster Tom Marsh

Our tour starts at Mark Wilcox's large yard. Note the BC&G streamliner has both an A and a B unit heading the train. The B unit was bad ordered shortly before departure and the train ran with the A unit only, as pictured on the cover.



Next down the line is Andrew Monaghan's canyon module.



Our first turn is on one of several modules provided by David Crawford.





Next on our route is Mark Wilcox's modern station. That's Mark at left messing about in his yard.



This pair of T-TRAK modules by Mark Wilcox are among the first your editor saw years ago when T-TRAK was becoming known. They are still going strong. Look closely for the Dukes of Hazard General Lee jumping a creek.



The next module along the line is a T-junction with scenery by David Crawford. The module fits in with other petrochemical modules David has created.

More of David Crawford's petrochemical complex. That's David at the right.



Bill Busch and David Crawford collaborated on this module at the end of the petrochemical complex featuring a Shell station and a small grocery.



Our next corner module takes us around a sweeping curve and into cattle country as modeled by David Crawford.





The first scene in David's cattle country features a ranch and corral.



Further down the line, cattle pens are prepared for loading stock cars.



Joel Salmons is building a three-module model of the former Southern Pacific yard in Reno, Nevada.

Debby McLaughlin provided our next curve, which offered a place for some colorful containers to rest between travels.



Overlooking the container yard are the nicely done tall city buildings on Michael Angiolillo's module.

Leaving the big city, we go past the country home on one of Bill Busch's modules that transitions to an eight-foot long crossover/passing siding. Good place for a railfan to live!



RENEW YOUR N'CROWD MEMBERSHIP TODAY!

Go to <http://www.houstonncrowd.org/join.html>

**For information about Houston Area T-TRAK Association membership,
go to <http://houstontrak.org/>**



Bill's special long siding serves two purposes, as a passing siding and as a way to move trains between T-TRAK's yellow and red lines.



Next we pass the tower on the second module that connects to Bill's passing siding. The siding also provided a place to set up and remove trains.



Bill also supplied a pair of inside curve modules, which added interest to our route compared to some of our earlier linear only displays.



Now we are passing Michael Angiolillo's garage scene and then Allan Melton's industrial siding module.



Bill Busch's bridge module is next on the line. The electronic heart of the T-TRAK layout is spread out behind the module.



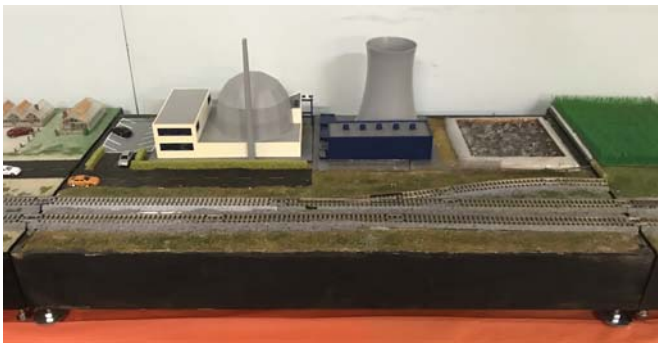
Bill also added his new mountain module to the layout. Scenic breaks like this make the layout look larger.



Our route now sweeps around the second inside curve built by Bill Busch.

Coming out of the curve, we pass John Sweigart's green house module. What's growing in there, John?





Bill Busch took some heat for building this nuclear plant between his cornfield and John's green houses.



Moving along, our tour takes us past Bob Folser's "Under Construction" module. We'll be looking for progress at the Greater Houston Train Show in February.



Next we pass your editor's four one-foot modules, which form a scene with a double track crossing, a railroad museum in an old station and tower, and a rail-served logistics company.



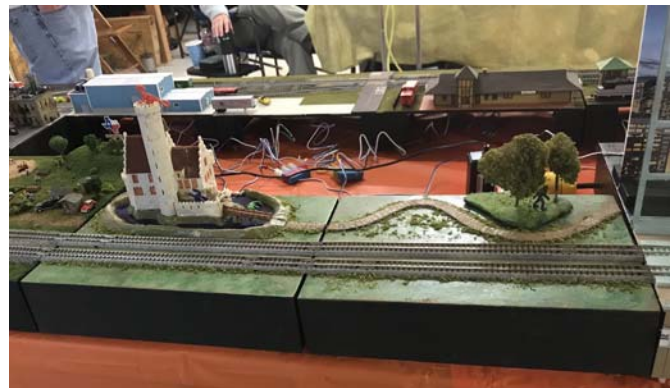
Universal Distribution Corp. always seems to have a reefer with a noisy refrigeration unit spotted in the company's siding. Today UDC is also taking delivery of a Festivus Pole. Happy holidays! (Google it if you're not a Seinfeld fan.)



David Crawford livens up the scene on his corner modules with lit structures and vehicles. This is the curve into the final stretch of our T-TRAK tour.



Russell March's trackside park and playground make a good spot for train watching.



Debby McLaughlin's two modules form a castle and creature scene.



Michael Angiolillo's module recreates a part of Minute Maid Park, home of the World Champion Houston Astros. Before the naming rights were sold, Minute Maid Park was called The Ballpark at Union Station.



Bob Folser's house on a hill module is the last scene before we return to our starting point (below). The next HATTA event will be the Greater Houston Train Show in Pasadena this coming February.





Joel Salmons, at left, displayed his nicely-detailed Civil War-era T-TRAK modules.



Consists (or parts thereof) you can model

by Tom Marsh

As some of you know, I believe that if we want our model trains to represent prototype railroading, some effort should be made to use locomotives and cars that could reasonably be found in combination on real trains. This is relatively easy with passenger train consists, particularly in the Amtrak era

since N-scale models of many prototype cars used by Amtrak and U.S. commuter railroads have been produced by Kato, Rapido, Atlas and others.

Modern freight trains are somewhat different. Many are too long to model in terms of total number of cars included in a consist. Coal, oil, double-stack

and autorack unit trains are prime examples of trains that we need to scale down for operation even on a relatively large layout like our Bayou City & Gulf Railroad.

However, a little railfanning can turn up real-life examples of trains - or parts of trains - that can fit our N-scale space and money budgets.

A consist for those who like lots of locomotives on their trains

Many railfans are mourning the loss of Fort Worth's 80-plus year old Tower 55, which stood charge over one of the busiest junctions in the U.S. for decades. Although inactive as an interlocking tower since 1995, by virtue of its location, the three-story brick structure was probably one of the most photographed towers in North America. The tower was demolished in mid-November, an event that was streamed live online by Virtual Railfan.

I was watching the feed off and on on the second day of the three-day demolition project when I heard the bell of a train off-screen approaching the tower. The lead locomotive, a Union Pacific EMD SD70M, trundled past the remains of the tower, followed by three more big six-axle road units. I settled back to watch a bit of the train roll by, figuring with that many locomotives, the train would be long and the view of the tower would be blocked for a while. However, I was surprised. The entire train consisted of only seven cars, a reefer, three tank cars and three boxcars.

A screen capture of the lead unit passing the tower rubble and a record of all engine and car numbers appears at right.



11:49 a.m., Nov 15, 2022 during demolition of Tower 55, Fort Worth

Source: Virtual Railfan

Consist

UP 4164 EMD SD70M (built 2000, flat radiator, lightning stripes)
 UP 4658 EMD SD70M (built 2001, flat radiator, "Building America" flag)
 UP 4776 EMD SD70M (built 2001, flared radiator, "Building America" flag)
 UP 5427 GE ES44AC (built 2005, "Building America" flag)
 ARMN 170772 mechanical reefer
 GBRX 711581 tank car
 KLRX 243014 tank car
 GBRX 712079 tank car
 UP 355405 boxcar
 CP 220285 boxcar
 CP 220408 boxcar

Reasonable N-scale stand-ins for the four UP locomotives of three different models and two different paint schemes are available, as are appropriate cars to model the rest of the train. Keep an eye out on the BC&G for this train; it may be coming through soon.

No room for 100-car double-stack trains? Try this instead.

There are few things more impressive in modern railroading than a long stack train moving at speed along a stretch of well-maintained track, wheels singing. However, few of us have the space, time or money to model these icons of modern rail freight.

For years, I rolled my eyes but bit my tongue when I'd see a model railroader dispatching a train with only one or two double-stack cars in the consist. It ain't prototype! Now, having recently taken the picture at right of the sole container car on this UP train, I repent. And, I even recreated the scene in N-scale for this story. It is prototype!



Heritage without the fancy paint

These photos of a westbound UP train passing through Richmond, Texas, were taken July 23. In tow behind the lead KCS and UP units were a few surprises.

First of these was a Chicago & North Western boxcar in full CNW paint (and graffiti). CNW was absorbed by Union Pacific in 1995, so this car apparently has not been painted in 27-plus years.

But wait, there's more: Not one, but three 50-ft. double-door boxcars in full SP paint were travelling together. This is not a common site! UP took control of SP in 1996.

The rest of the consist was typical: boxcars, tank cars and covered hoppers. The train also had a mid-train UP DPU in the form of GE ES44AC-H No. 8122. While not super-rare, UP does not seem to favor mid-train DPUs in our area. Finally, UP 7926, a GE C45ACCTE, was handling the rear-end DPU duties. You can closely model the "heritage" boxcars and the train's newer components with readily available N-scale equipment.



LCL: A final note from your editor

Who wants the job?: After 12 1/2 years and 82 issues as editor of *The Orderboard*, I have decided it is time for me to step down from the position. This will be the last issue that I edit and publish.

It has been a privilege and my pleasure to serve as your editor. I want to thank everyone who contributed over the years to the success of *The Orderboard*. I am proud of the fact that a number of our articles and photos have been picked up by other publications, including *Cowcatcher Magazine* and the digital publications of the UK-based N Gauge Society World Wide Group.

Multiple factors figured into my decision to relinquish the position, including time constraints and other commitments; the question of the relevancy of a newsletter published every other month in this era of instant electronic content distribution; and my perception of the level of interest in *The Orderboard* on the

part of members with their own shifting interests and time constraints.

I will continue to maintain the N'Crowd website and I will publish the annual BC&G Photo Calendar. In addition, I hope to get more active on our Discord platform and use that over time as an outlet for items that I think may be of interest to members.

I started this missive with the question, "Who wants the job?" If anyone wants to take over as editor, I of course will assist. Just let me or President Naz know of your interest.

Finally, I would like to close as I have many times in the past: As always, let me know if you have any questions or comments.

Happy - and safe - railroading!

Tom

HOUSTON N'CROWD 2022/2023 TIME TABLE - SUBJECT TO CHANGE

November 2

N'Crowd Test & Tune, Papa Ben's Train Place, 4007-E Bellaire Blvd, Houston, 6 p.m.

November 6 - December 31

Trains will run on the BC&G every Saturday and Sunday except Christmas day. Volunteers needed!

November 16

N'Crowd Membership Meeting, Papa Ben's Train Place, 4007-E Bellaire Blvd, Houston, 7 p.m.

November 19-20

HATTA T-TRAK layout on the San Jacinto MRRC fall layout tour. Layout will be set up in Montgomery. Additional details will be in the SJMRRC tour guide.

December 7

N'Crowd Test & Tune, Papa Ben's Train Place, 4007-E Bellaire Blvd, Houston, 6 p.m.

December 14

Annual holiday bash and combat gift exchange. See attached flyer for information.

January 4

N'Crowd Test & Tune, Papa Ben's Train Place, 4007-E Bellaire Blvd, Houston, 6 p.m.

January 18

N'Crowd Membership Meeting, Papa Ben's Train Place, 4007-E Bellaire Blvd, Houston, 7 p.m.

February 5

N'Crowd Test & Tune, Papa Ben's Train Place, 4007-E Bellaire Blvd, Houston, 2:00 p.m.

February 15

N'Crowd Membership Meeting, Papa Ben's Train Place, 4007-E Bellaire Blvd, Houston, 7 p.m.

THE ORDERBOARD *News from Houston N'Crowd*

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Tom Marsh, Editor

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Send newsletter contributions to:

tom@houstonncrowd.org.

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

Visit our Web site:

www.houstonncrowd.org

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All aboard for fun!

Houston N'Crowd members, spouses, family and friends are invited to join us for our 2022

Holiday Party and Combat Gift Exchange

Hosted by your N'Crowd Officers and Board of Directors

Mark your calendar! We'll meet and greet Wednesday, Dec. 14, 2022, right next door to Papa Ben's at the Silver Palace Chinese Buffet. (The address is 4005-H Bellaire Blvd.)

We'll be gathering in the Silver Palace party room at 7 p.m. for dinner. The buffet costs \$14.49 per person; drinks are not included. You do not have to partake in the buffet, but we urge you to do so as the restaurant is providing the space at no charge to the N'Crowd.

We'll finish the evening with our annual Combat Gift Exchange. Rails and non-rails are invited to play! Here's how it works: Bring a wrapped gift, \$15-\$25 limit. We'll have exchanges for both rail and non-rail; anyone can participate in either or both exchanges. Everyone who brings a gift pulls a number. No. 1 selects the first gift, then No. 2 has the choice to take that gift or select another, and so on, and the combat is on! Note that any one gift can only be stolen once in each round. The process continues through all the numbers until everyone playing has a gift, then the last selection is made by No. 1, who can exchange for any gift he or she wants. Good strategy or good luck will win the day!

So we can be sure to have enough seating, please RSVP by telephone or text to 281-468-3276 or by email to tom@houstonNcrowd.org.

We look forward to welcoming you to our final event of 2022!



Bayou City & Gulf Railroad • 2023

N'Crowd Model Railroad Society • Houston • www.houstonNcrowd.org

January

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November

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31						

Red = Membership Meeting Dates **Green** = Test & Tune Dates **Blue** = Op Sessions (temp suspended) **Black** = US Federal Holidays