

THE ORDERBOARD

Special Edition



2019 Highlights

Test & Tune Startup



N'Crowd Rides in Style



Houston Railfan Caravan



T-TRAK First Run



Photo by Allan Melton

Hearne Museum Visit



N'Crowd Chases 4014



First Test & Tune session a success

Around a half dozen N’Crowd members took part in the club’s first Test & Tune session, which was held at Papa Ben’s Train Place on Wednesday, Jan. 2. The focus was on DCC issues, and with the assistance of our resident experts Gordon Bliss and Ray Byer, several members were able to resolve issues with decoder-equipped locomotives. Most of the issues revolved around the questions “Why is it doing this?” and “Why is it not doing that?”, and for the most part, everyone went home with their locomotives in better fettle than when they arrived. Thanks Gordon and Ray for helping out!



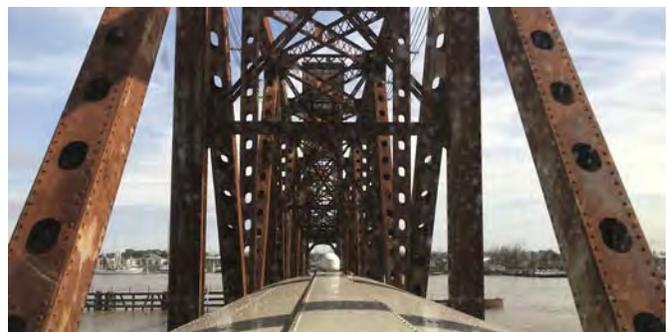
N’Crowd rides the rails in style

Several N’Crowd members experienced first class private railroad car travel in early February when they took advantage of an opportunity to ride from New Orleans to Houston on cars owned by Houston-based Patrick Henry Creative Promotions. The Feb. 9 trip was sponsored by Gulf Coast Chapter - National Railway Historical Society, Inc., and featured dome/lounge/observation car *Warren R. Henry* and

sleeping car *Evelyn Henry*. The cars were carried on the rear of Amtrak’s Train No. 1, the *Sunset Limited*. The train departed New Orleans on time at 9:00 a.m., but despite running at speeds of up to 79 mph during the course of the day, arrival in Houston at 7:54 p.m. was a little off the advertised 6:18 p.m. However, no one was complaining as this gave the group more time to enjoy the journey!



Above, Bliss times two: Happy campers enjoy the observation car’s rear platform. Photo by Allan Melton



Top, dome lounging means seats with a view. Bottom, crossing the Atchafalaya River. Photos by Tom Marsh

N’Crowd Houston railfan caravan

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



N’Crowd visits Hearne Depot for “Trains at the Crossroads”



The restored Hearne Depot, relocated a long block away from its original location, was built in 1901 by Southern Pacific. It served as a “Union Station” for SP and Missouri Pacific subsidiary International-Great Northern. Photo by Tom Marsh

Houston N’Crowd members visited the Hearne Depot Museum on a hot August 18th for “Trains at the Crossroads”. In addition to the museum’s usual displays, the AustNTrak group set up NTRAK and T-

TRAK layouts. AustNTrak is a long-established N-scale club with members from the Austin area and other parts of Texas, and it’s always an inspiration to see their handiwork.



An effective scenic treatment for a T-TRAK end cap module. Photo by Randy Ollet

At Hearne, the NTRAK layout was set up in a dark wing of the depot that was not conducive to photography. The T-TRAK layout was in a well lighted space on the sunny side of the building. As a result, all of our photos show the T-TRAK layout.



This overview of the T-TRAK layout illustrates the variety of scenes that can be modeled in a small space.. Photo by Tom Marsh



Nicely done models of the mission style Santa Fe station at Albuquerque, N.M., and the modern T&P station at Shreveport, La. Photos by Tom Marsh



A compact T-TRAK engine servicing facility. Photo by Randy Ollet



Below right, a little rail-fanning took place during the day as well. At Hearne, a lease unit waits for its next duties. This EMD GP38-2 was originally built for Penn Central in 1972, carrying the PC road number 8019. Photo by Tom Marsh



At bottom, the answer to the question on the front cover: Member Gordon Bliss snaps a photo of a UP light engine move near Hearne during the N' Crowd's visit to "Trains at the Crossroads". Photo by Tom Marsh





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.





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!



T-TRAK Division makes first run

T-TRAK trains running

N'Crowd's new T-TRAK Division had its first run at the August 21 membership meeting. The layout was set up on a small table and consisted of two club-owned corner modules, four small single modules and an end cap. The corner modules were assembled by club volunteers Mauricio Varon and Phil Poirier, the end cap was built by Bill Busch, and the four singles were put together by Tom Marsh. Other members brought in modules to show, and it appears we are off to a good start on this new model railroading venture.

T-TRAK confirmed for 2020 show

San Jacinto Model Railroad Club, organizer of the annual Greater Houston Train Show (GHTS) and co-sponsor of the 2020 NMRA Lone Star Region Sunset Limited Convention, has confirmed that space will be available for a T-TRAK layout during the February show. The group had earlier said no space would be available for T-TRAK as 2020 convention-related activities had displaced some of the usual train show activities. For 2020, the T-Trak layout will be set up in the foyer of the Stafford Centre, home of the GHTS. N'Crowd will coordinate the T-TRAK layout with our friends from the Northwest Crossing Operating Model Railroad Club. The show takes place Saturday, Feb. 15, 2020.



THE ORDERBOARD *News from Houston N'Crowd*

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

Visit our Web site:

www.houstonncrowd.org

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Congratulations!

Our congratulations go out to N' Crowd member Michael Cianciolo, who recently completed his Eagle Scout Project. Michael writes:

“I am looking forward to getting involved with the N' Crowd once again! Happy to report I have completed my Eagle Scout Project. There are a few more small things I have left, but the majority of the project is completed.

“I'd like to sincerely thank all my N' Crowd friends for their support. There were so many good wishes and donations and each and every one of them meant a lot to me and gave me the encouragement to get the job done. Here you can see a photo of my completed project. It is located on the church grounds of Mary Queen Catholic Church in Friendswood. We added the entire paver path to get to the flagpole and the beds and plants around it. If you are ever driving down FM518, the church is one block behind Perry & Son's Market and Grill. You are welcome to check it out!

“Thank you all once again and I look forward to the next available ops session.”



We partied again!

And that partying had nothing to do with politics! Here are a few photos from our well-attended 2019 holiday bash and combat gift exchange at the Spaghetti Western Restaurant. We had a lively combat this year; unfortunately your editor was too involved in getting what he wanted to take any photos of the actual battle!

