

News from Houston N'Crowd



June/July 2011

THE ORDERBOARD

What's your era?



N'Crowd member Joe Kingsberry's handiwork was on display and in operation recently on the Bayou City & Gulf. Joe detailed the SP switcher and weathered the BC&G and NW box cars. The new BC&G box cars are still available for purchase; all proceeds benefit the BC&G. Photo by Tom Marsh

Participate in the N'Crowd survey!

The Orderboard is conducting an informal survey of N'Crowd members to determine what is the most popular era to model among the group. Even if you don't have a layout, you probably have an idea of what you would model if you did!

We'll conduct our survey at the next membership meeting, but if you can't make the meeting and want to participate, send an email to

tom@houstonncrowd.org. You can be anonymous if you want (please say so), but we hope you will share your views with us all. If you want to write a paragraph or two about your choice of era, please feel free. See page 8 for a preview of the survey.

The survey results and any comments submitted for publication will be published in the next issue of *The Orderboard*.

"GREEN EYE" - CLEAR BLOCK

by Ted Davis, President

Something for everyone

In this newsletter, find all the news worth printing... and maybe some that isn't!

Since the last meeting, several people have loaned the club rolling stock, including passenger cars. In addition, Trent Iocca gave the club five surplus rail cars; of course four are centerbeam flats, his favorite type of rail car, and one is a covered hopper.

Progress on the layout had led me to believe that we might hold the gold spike celebration at the June meeting. As most of you now know, that did not happen. We will hold the gold spike ceremony at the July membership meeting, but we still have plenty of work to do after that!

The N'Crowd 2013 Event Committee has held two meetings since the May membership meeting. Minutes of the last meeting are published in this issue of *The Orderboard*.

What about the lost and now found BC&G Micro-Trains car kits? I believe that Rick Gonzalez is making good progress in adding road numbers to the remaining box cars. We had purchased some sub frames for finishing the project but we still lack a needed piece for some of the cars. The floor pan is not available, so we will need to scratch build the final piece.

We have signed up no new members nor received additional renewals since the last newsletter. I will request that the club secretary give us

a detailed report on the club membership. The information could tell us how many members we might have lost or gained from previous years.

I am requesting a volunteer to step up and rework/fix/repair the club's T-Trak modules. If no one is willing to perform this work, I suggest we consider selling them. Otherwise we will have to continue storing them for use just twice a year at local train shows in their current condition.

By the time you read this the latest order of club shirts should have been placed. We continue with the tradition of polo shirts in dark blue with the club logo on the pocket. Thanks go to Harvey Stalarow for his efforts in arranging the order with the vendor.

On a personal note, I have joined the NMRA and NSE (N Scale Enthusiast, the new name for the N Scale Collector organization). As a result, some people have suggested that I would now become active in LSR etc., as well as begin modeling in other scales. Let me assure you that I am way too busy to get that involved with other clubs/organizations. The focus of my energies will remain on managing the affairs of the N'Crowd.

I would like to hear from our readers about which part of *The Orderboard* is their favorite. For example, do you read the minutes? If you cannot make the meetings, that is the place to see what is going on in the club.

See Green Eye page 12



Next N'Crowd Meeting: 7 p.m. Wednesday, July 20

Papa Ben's Train Place, 4007-E Bellaire Blvd.
Come and check out progress on the BC&G!

Houston N'Crowd
Membership Meeting Report
May 18, 2011
Prepared by Richard Bartlett, Secretary

President Ted Davis called the meeting to order at 7:06 p.m.

• **President's Report and Announcements**

Ted suggested Wednesday, 25 May, 2011, at 6:30 p.m. at Papa Ben's for the next 35th Anniversary planning meeting. Ted gave out copies of *The Orderboard* at the beginning of the meeting. Ted offered some extra sticks of flex track for sale but there were no immediate takers. Rolf Shultz was announced as a visitor from El Paso. Ted asked Harvey to tell us about the remake of the blue N'Crowd shirts. Harvey and Ted then indicated that the shirts would be \$14 to \$18. Next came the drawing for door prizes. Joe Kingsberry won a tank car and Barry Miles won some containers. Vincent Walker was volunteered by Ted to paint and decorate two additional sets of Kato PA/PB undecorated engines for the Club layout.

• **Vice President's Report**

Vice President Charlie Aselin had no report.

• **Treasurer's Report**

Treasurer Tom Marsh filed the franchise tax forms with the state. At the beginning of April, the bank balance was \$12,199.77; at the end of April the balance was \$12,926.13.

• **Secretary's Report**

15 people were in attendance with one being a visitor from EL Paso. Members present were: Richard Bartlett, Barry Miles, Joe Kingsberry, Robert "Doc" Moore, Dan Gutierrez, Ted Davis, Gordon Bliss, Vincent Walker, Tom Marsh, Steve Lancaster, Tom Wayburn, Rolf Schroots (visitor from El Paso), Eddie Aycock, Charlie Aselin, and Harvey Stalarow.

• **Layout Master's Report**

Tom Wayburn presented the report, and stated that two rail joints are left to work on, but for now there will be no more track laid. Just a few electri-

cal drops need to be made. Ted announced that the Golden Spike ceremony will be next month. Doc Moore showed a small portion of gold that could be used for a spike, but no one volunteered to make the spike from the gold.

• **New Business** (None)

• **Old Business**

Tom Marsh reported that the making of the new BC&G decal sheets had shown no progress. Tom also reported that the filing of forms to make the N Crowd a tax-exempt club had not progressed any further due to time commitments.

• **Rail Ops Training Session for Members**

Gordon Bliss described the Rail Ops session that was held at his layout on Saturday, May 14, from 1:00 p.m. to almost 11:00 p.m. Gordon, Eddie and others taught the visitors what the Rail Ops paperwork was like, and how to assemble and run both passenger and freight trains. As an example, a complete run from Barstow to Chicago on Gordon's layout took an entire hour. Charlie assembled a train, transferred the cars to different yards, switched cars in and out. Members present included Tom Wayburn, Richard Bartlett, Rick Townsend, Charlie Aselin, Joe Kingsberry and several more. Gordon indicated he was pleased with the turnout from the club, and stressed that the session was designed to slow things down a bit to give the newbies some one-on-one time with an experienced person.

Eddie Aycock indicated that the club's Golden Spike ceremony next month would be an opportunity to run some Rail Ops on the layout. The first sessions will be simple trains with very little switching and printouts would be made ahead of time for several train runs. Members could sign for a printout, assemble trains as needed using club or their own engines, and run the trains to the designated destinations. Ted asked when we have the layout trains for a session staged, that the Saturday sessions will not use these for the loop runs for visitor displays. On Saturdays, we will keep the show loop open for display purposes using either other or member trains brought in for the day.

Eddie and Gordon indicated that fine-tuning for running cars using Rail Ops would occur with progressive member experience. The club's Rail Ops system will only track the cars on the layout for now, with the understanding that some time in the future engines will also be tracked. Now that most construction is done, Charlie, Eddie, Tom and Gordon voiced the opinion that people should not set things on the layout except locos. Folding TV tables will be made available to minimize damage to the rails and scenery on the layout. As Eddie indicated that the club was deficient in passenger cars and engines, Richard Bartlett offered Wabash and Pennsylvania sets of cars and engines for the club's use until more permanent rolling stock could be obtained.

After the May membership meeting, Doc Moore is amazed at the progress on the Bayou City & Gulf. Photo by Tom Marsh



• Houston Railroad Museum update

Tom Marsh told us about the Houston Railroad Museum's progress toward getting the KCS observation car *Good Cheer* outfitted with Amtrak viable trucks. These would come from an ex-KCS passenger car which was vandalized. He also indicated that there are several possibilities for the new site for the museum when the existing site lease is expired. A site downtown was described and one off of US 90. A prewar Santa Fe diner is available for just \$18,000 that the museum was interested in acquiring, so any donor who has \$18,000 burning in their pocket and would like to purchase this, it would be greatly appreciated.

• El Paso Visitor

Dan Guterrez asked our visitor from El Paso, Rolf Schoot, to tell us about what is happening in El Paso. Rolf indicated that their local club has only 20 members, but they own their own building, an Old Scout Troop building, despite their club having limited resources. Two members are building N scale layouts, but progress is slow. One old HO layout is still used, but no operating sessions are conducted.

Rolf feels that the future of the hobby is diminishing due to the lack of "new blood" taking up the hobby. He also pointed out that in Europe the passenger traffic is the major rail operation, while there is almost no freight. This is the opposite of what we have here in the US where freight rules the rails. Discussion of the differences and similarities between European and US railroading continued for some time, and members forgot to propose adjourning the meeting until 8:29 p.m.

'New' BC&G power delivered

Longtime N'Crowd member Vince Walker has made a lot of progress painting some of the locomotives acquired by the club in recent years into the "early" Bayou City & Gulf paint scheme. The project was made possible by the discovery of some old BC&G decal sheets, which Vince rehabilitated for the project.

El Presidente Ted Davis took the pictures when Vince delivered the loco shells to the BC&G. Once DCC decoders are installed and the mechanisms tuned up, the locomotives will be a big boost to the BC&G roster. Thanks, Vince!

More power to the BC&G! Vince Walker with his latest efforts in support of the BC&G roster expansion. Photos by Ted Davis



Another layout tale

by Steve Lancaster

Hello friends! I have returned from the layout building hinterland with tales of hope and progress. I haven't submitted to the last few *Orderboards* because A: I'm lazy, and B: my current project is quite large and ambitious, and the work has been slow going.

However, there has been plenty of progress so far, and I hope to have this one scratched off my list in about a month.

This layout is a three-foot by five-foot mountain pike built to fit the home office of Eric Behmer in Katy. The route is basically a point to point with reverse loops at either end, folded along the length of a graduated ridge line.

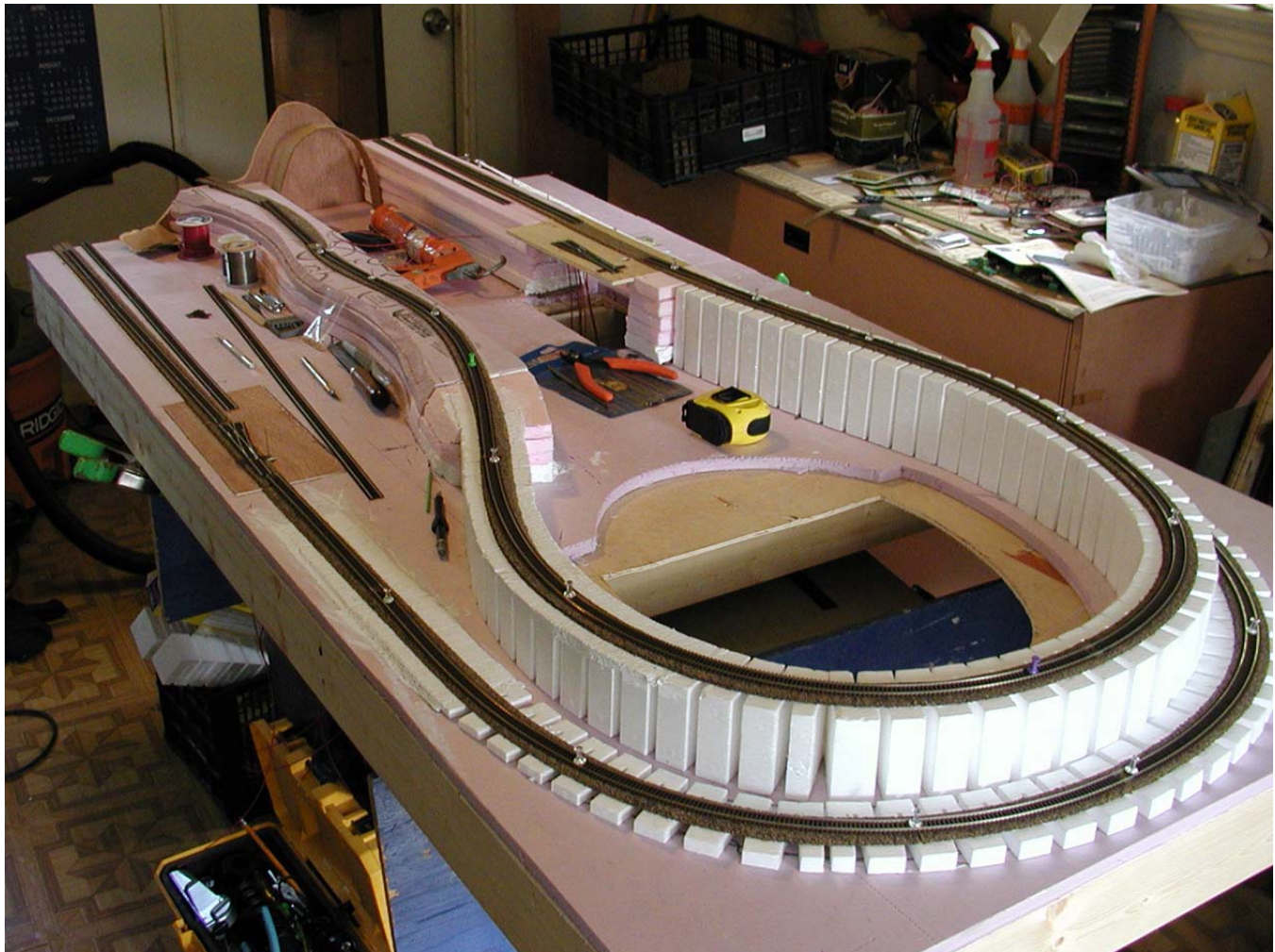
The grades are on the curves at either end and are concealed by two mountains. The larger of

these, which I call Mt. Surabachi, is circled by a loop of Z scale track. The track plan includes two long sidings just before the reverse loops at the top and bottom.

The scenery potential is great, but I'm leaving most of that to Eric. He initially asked for just the plaster and rock work, but I offered to do the basic grass and dirt covering and color the rocks. That is, after all, the only part of the building process that I really like.

I've only encountered one problem so far, but it's a big one. Eric wanted the turnouts at the reverse loops to throw automatically as the train circled back, so we purchased two PSX-ARs from DCC Specialties, which are designed to do that. Of course, when instructions are misinterpreted and

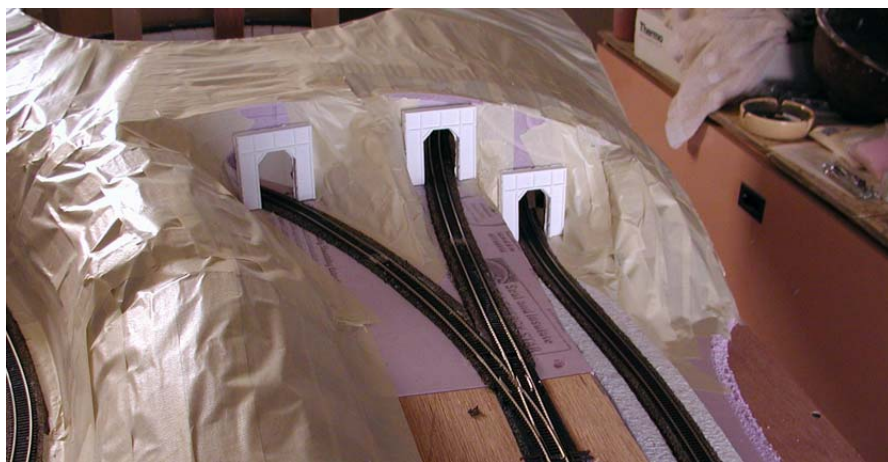
Below, a look at the latest project layout in its early stages.



the wiring is crossed, what you get is a wisp of smoke and a ton of heartache.

I kept the two damaged boards, which still reversed track polarity, and replaced them with two new ones. An expensive lesson indeed. I carefully tested them for shorts and powered them up... and nothing happened. The new boards and corrected wiring still won't throw the switches. I still have some experimenting to do, but if anyone has any ideas they would be appreciated.

If I can work out this problem, I should be finished in about a month. I hope so anyway, because I have two Lionel layouts to build over the summer, and I'm planning a few more in N scale to sell at the store. At six and a half, I'm still a long way from my goal of 12 layouts by August.



Above and below, scenery in various stages. Photos by Steve Lancaster

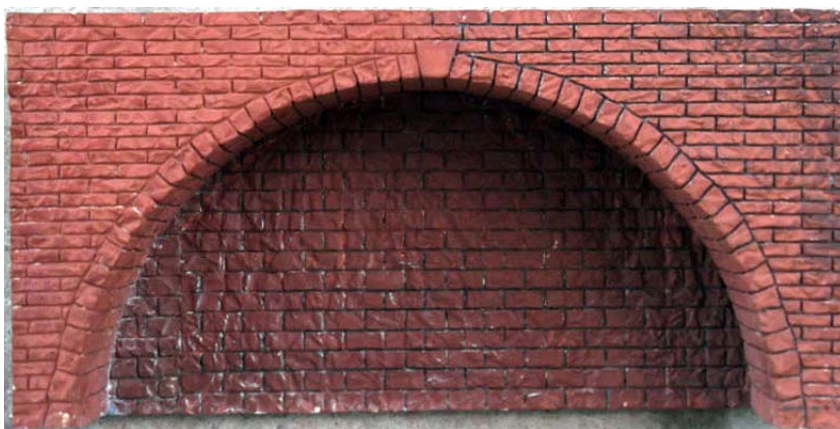


Better living through lead

by Richard Bartlett, Ph.D.

For those of you interested in bringing out the detail in cut-stone walls, here is a simple tip: Use a fine mechanical pencil with a 0.5 mm lead.

As seen in the picture, cover the cut stone face with a coat of flat color such as red oxide or rust from Floquil. Alternate colors include dull barn red, caboose red or Sand colored "Make it Stone!" spray paint by Krylon.



With the Krylon Stone paint, I let it set for about five minutes, then smear it with a wide brush or paper towel to spread out the dark spackling colors to give a weathered look. I use this paint as a base coat for all of my rock formations.

Let the paint dry for 24 hours, then just trace the mortar joint with the mechanical pencil lead both across and vertical to color the mortar joint with the contrasting carbon from the lead. In the photo, the right half of structure has been traced, left has not.

Make certain to advance the lead frequently

in the pencil as it will be used up quickly as you go along. This outlining will produce a dull sheen when viewed with the light source behind you. As most layouts have vertical lighting sources, this will be a dull gray in most cases.

I have used this trick on all sorts of pre-built bridge supports, buildings and walls on my layout. The materials range from plastic to Hydrocal.

In addition, graphite dust can make a great weathering substance for these and other structures and the bottoms of rolling stock, as illustrated on the right side of the structure in the picture.

What's your era? Survey Preview - see page 1!

Here's one way to break down modelling eras. What's yours? If you can't attend the July meeting, please participate in the survey by emailing your choice(s) to the editor at tom@houstonNcrowd.org.

No.	Era	Years	Your Era?
1	Antebellum	1826 - 1859	
2	War Between the States	1860 - 1865	
3	Transcontinental Expansion	1866 - 1883	
4	Golden Age	1884 - 1900	
5	Early 20th Century	1901 - 1913	
6	World War I	1914 - 1918	
7	Heavyweight	1919 - 1933	
8	Early Streamline	1934 - 1940	

No.	Era	Years	Your Era?
9	World War II	1941 - 1945	
10	Steam to Diesel Transition	1946 - 1960	
11	The 60s	1961 - 1970	
12	The 70s	1971 - 1980	
13	The 80s	1981 - 1990	
14	The 90s	1991 - 2000	
15	Early 21st Century	2001 - 2010	
16	Modern	2011 -	

PCCs and Sequoias

N'Crowd member Rick Gonzalez sent these photos taken recently while he was in California.

The PCC car is operating on one of the San Francisco Municipal Transportation Agency's lines that employ historic streetcars. No. 1077 is painted in the scheme carried by PCC cars of the Birmingham Electric Company. According to several online sources, No. 1077 was built in 1947 for the Twin City Rapid Transit Co. of Minneapolis-St. Paul. The car came to SF Muni by way of the Newark, N.J., subway and New Jersey Transit.

The Sequoias probably need no detailed explanation.



Houston N'Crowd Truck Pin Color Chart

	Purple	Brown	Gray	Silver	White	Green	Blue	Yellow	Orange
Red	Vincent Walker	Eddie Aycok	Mike & Leslie Bodak	James Senneff	Steve Redd	Rick Gonzales	Steve Lancaster	Vince Walker	Gordon Bliss
Orange									Joe Kingsberry
Yellow			Ray Byer	N/A		Frank Wyatt	Tom Wayburn	Ted Davis	
Blue			Charlie Aselin	Richard Bartlet	Tom Marsh	Kirk Poorman	Sven Engdorf		
Green			Doc Moore	Dominic Valdez	Al Hague	Marty Giesecke			
White			N/A	Dan Gutierrez					
Silver			N/A	Terry Hooks					
Gray			Rick Townsend						
Brown									
Purple	N'Crowd Club Eqpt.								

Close encounters of the Alco kind

by Tom Marsh

The former Santa Fe Alco PA passenger locomotive that has been given to the Museum of the American Railroad in Dallas has arrived in Frisco, Texas, future home of the museum.

The locomotive, one of two PAs returned to the U.S. from Mexico through the efforts of locomotive restorer Doyle McCormack and the Smithsonian Institution, is in rough condition. McCormack is in the process of restoring the other PA to operating condition in the colors of the Nickel Plate Road.

The Museum of the American Railroad hopes to

raise funds to cosmetically restore the former ATSF No. 59L to its original colors for display at Frisco. The locomotive was built in 1948, and was one of the four ex-Santa Fe PAs acquired in December 1967 by the Delaware & Hudson for passenger service. They were sold and moved to Mexico in late 1978 (via the SP through Hearne and Victoria). Two of the units remain in Mexico and are in the collection of the Museo Nacional de los Ferrocarriles Mexicanos.

The photos shown here, with the one obvious exception, were taken May 29, 2011, in Frisco.



Above, your editor with the Alco PA at Frisco. This was my second encounter with this locomotive: I took the picture below of the engine in 1976 at Amtrak's Albany-Rensselaer, New York, station. At right, the ex-ATSF 59L/D&H 16 is in rough shape, and the proposed cosmetic restoration will be a challenge. Above by Howard Laker; others by Tom Marsh



**Houston N'Crowd
2013 Event Committee Meeting
May 25, 2011
Prepared by Tom Marsh**

1. Meeting called to order by Ted Davis at 7:30 p.m.
2. Committee members in attendance: Ted Davis, Ray Byer and Tom Marsh
3. Committee members absent: Richard Bartlett and Gordon Bliss
4. Discussion of Richard's TSRR excursion proposal
 - a. Ray noted that in addition to the projected \$85 to \$120 cost per person estimated, people wanting to participate in the TSRR excursion would incur the cost of an additional hotel night.
 - b. Tom commented that at 112, the minimum number of people needed for the event to break even was too much of a risk. Houston Railroad Museum has run six similar events at TSRR, and even with a national advertising campaign and double-headed steam locomotives at a lower cost than proposed for the 2013 event, attendance reached only 125; for most of the other HRRM events, attendance ranged from 85 to 105.
 - c. Ted noted that the proposed schedule made for a long day, and participants most likely would be returning relatively late for the planned Meet 'N Greet.
 - d. No one proposed a motion in favor of the TSRR event, and as a result the committee decided not to take the proposal to the wider membership, citing the cost and potential risk to the club, cost to the participants, logistics and time constraints on the proposed day.
5. The committee discussed souvenirs and special run cars. It was noted that most souvenirs do not sell well, except possibly T-shirts and polo shirts.
 - a. The consensus was that if shirts are offered, they will be pre-sold with early registrations and only the number pre-ordered would be purchased. No motion concerning shirts was made.
 - b. The consensus was that if a special run car is made, it should be based on a prototype rather than a fantasy or commemorative car. No motion concerning special run cars was made.
6. The committee discussed the tentative schedule of events and cost of the convention to participants.
 - a. It was agreed that every effort should be made to keep the registration cost below \$90. This cost would include the meal event.
 - b. Some discussion centered around whether or not the meal event should be an awards/speaker type event on Saturday evening, or a manufacturers' breakfast type event on either Saturday or Sunday morning before the Big Texas Train Show opens to the public.
 - c. Ray wanted to know when N-Trak operating sessions outside of the public train show hours might be possible. Depending on the setup schedule, this should be possible on Friday evening, Saturday morning, for a short time Saturday evening and Sunday morning.
 - d. Tom wants the group to recruit an experienced N-Trak layout coordinator, possibly from NWX as they have the most experience.
 - e. Possible revisions to the tentative event schedule were discussed, with the general schedule now taking shape as follows.

Thursday:
Registration
Prototype Tour - local tour, late morning/lunch time start
Meet 'N Greet/Swap Meet

Friday:
Registration
Clinics
N-Trak/BTTS setup
Layout Tour - Self Guided

Saturday:
Contest
Clinics
N-Trak at BTTS
Layout Tour - Self Guided
Dinner/Awards/Manufacturers' Talk?

Sunday:
Manufacturers' Breakfast/Awards?
N-Trak at BTTS
N-Trak tear down
7. The committee discussed the timing of preparations for the event, with the goal being to have planning complete and everything in place by January 2013.
8. The meeting adjourned at 8:35 p.m.

Green Eye from page 2

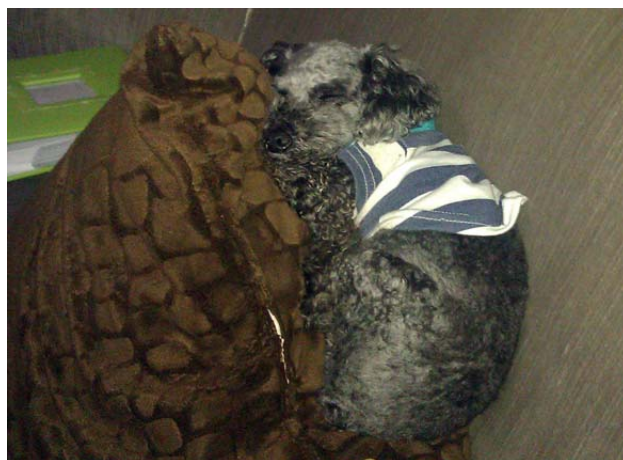
Many members have met our unofficial mascot during one of his visits. However, some who have not were under the impression that "Train Dog" was the nickname of one of our members. For your information "Train Dog" is a toy poodle belonging to Dominic and Ginger Valdez. See his picture below; note that it looks like he is asleep on the job.

Rick Gonzalez was planning on joining Gordon Bliss and Jason Smith on their visit to the California State Railroad Museum and Union Pacific's Donner Pass. Rick was traveling with friends and family and hoped to join the guys for a while. However, he misjudged the demands of his companions and was unable to make the railroad connection. All was not lost as can be seen from the photos he sent to *The Orderboard*.

Several members attended an operations training session at Gordon Bliss' Santa Fe All the Way layout. The goal of the session was to introduce members to the basics of using the Rail Ops software, which we will be using on the BC&G in the near future. Gordon and the members who attended reported that the session was a success.

Vince Walker has completed some of the diesel locomotives he has painted in the early BC&G livery. The next step to returning them to the club roster is to install decoders. Photos of the results of Vince's efforts appear in this issue.

Finally, thanks to everyone who contributed articles and photos for this issue of *The Orderboard*, and we extend happy birthday wishes to Steve Redd, Steve Lancaster and Dan Gutierrez this month.



Train Dog in action.



TIME TABLE

Mark your calendar now for these upcoming events!

June 15

N'Crowd Membership Meeting
Papa Ben's Train Place

July 3-9

NMRA National Convention,
Sacramento, California

July 20

N'Crowd Membership Meeting
Papa Ben's Train Place

July 23

Division 8 Airbrush clinic with Bill Reid, Houston Railroad Museum

July 30-31

San Antonio Model Railroad Association 9th Annual Summer Family Train Show
Live Oak Civic Center

August 17

N'Crowd Membership Meeting
Papa Ben's Train Place

September 21

N'Crowd Membership Meeting
Papa Ben's Train Place

THE ORDERBOARD *from Houston N'Crowd*

Published as close to monthly (but no promises!) as possible for members and friends of N'Crowd Model Railroad Society, Inc., Houston, Texas.

Tom Marsh, Editor

Send newsletter contributions to: tom@houstonNcrowd.org. We reserve the right to edit submissions for clarity and length.

Visit our Web site:

www.houstonNcrowd.org

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