

# THE ORDERBOARD

News from Houston N'Crowd



January/February 2012

## The Busy Season

*by Steve Lancaster*

'Twas a month before Christmas and the phone just kept ringing, with requests for some layouts, and hassles they're bringing.

I built them in O scale, repaired them in G, even some HO, and N just for me.

There were tall snowcapped mountains and bright fertile plains. Most were quite simple, though some were a pain.

Now the season is over, the rush has slowed down. It's time to go troubleshooting, and remove a few frowns.

Have a wonderful New Year. I hope it's a 10. I have to go now, the phone's ringing again.



***Happy New Year from Houston N'Crowd!***

# "GREEN EYE" - CLEAR BLOCK

*by Ted Davis, President*

## Red vs. Green

On Dec. 3-4, we held our annual open house as part of the Fall Layout Tours sponsored by the San Jacinto Model Railroad Club. We had 42 visitors on Saturday and 29 on Sunday, a near match for attendance in 2010, when we had 41 on Saturday and 25 on Sunday. We were wondering if we should continue to participate as it is hard to measure how many of our guests were simply shopping at Papa Ben's and just wandering in. Every year I try to ask the visitors if they were there for the tour. In any case the tour of the BC&G featured the tradition of issuing "train tickets" for the kids, which are then punched by the conductor. Also, we never have a shortage of corny jokes. Saturday's tour was staffed by Your President, Harvey Stalarow, Joe Kingsberry, Tom Wayburn, Richard Bartlett and several others. Richard brought his prize-winning homemade chili and Joe brought tortillas, and no one was interested in going out to lunch! Sunday was a smaller crew of Ted, Harvey and Joe. No one brought in a free lunch.

On Saturday, Dec. 17, Papa Ben's held their annual customer appreciation buffet. The menu featured Allyn's famous brisket, cole slaw and apple/cherry cobbler! With all this dining in, I do miss my Chinese buffet.

Speaking of eating, last month we held our Annual Holiday Party at a previously untested location. The committee had been hard-pressed to find a restaurant with a party room. After asking several members for suggestions and making some phone calls, the field was narrowed to the Golden Corral on the South Loop. The buffet offered all the partiers plenty of choices and a separate dining area.

We had 22 people in attendance at the party, including members and families. Of these, 18 took part in the combat gift exchange. Things looked to be unexciting as it was not until the eighth round that blood was finally spilled!

Caleb Walker had the most steals, which meant everyone kept stealing his gift. We also had a door prize donated by Hugh Boyd. This was an Athearn "runner pack" of five Commonwealth Edison coal gondolas. These were won by Harvey's wife Shelly and were highly sought after even though

they were not "on the table"! The Walker family has offered their home as the site for next year's party, which will be potluck style. Vince said he will have trains running but warns that his rolling stock will not be part of the combat gift exchange!

During December's membership meeting, we hosted 12 Boy Scouts from Troop 549. This is the troop Doc Moore has been associated with for 54 years! We presented a program to help qualify them for their Railroading Merit Badge. See the back page for more about this event.

I have appointed Harvey to be Quartermaster as he has already dealt with vendors for the latest round of club shirts. I have also requested that he manage our eBay sales. In addition, he will maintain the inventory of club sales items. As a result of our renewed eBay listings we have sold four more of the LSR cars.

With this issue we say welcome to the New Year. Please note that with the New Year comes the time to renew your membership, and amazingly enough, dues are still only \$15 a year! See the renewal application enclosed or download from the N'Crowd web site. We already have had five early renewals and a new member join.

Webmaster Tom Marsh has updated the N'Crowd website with new photos of the ongoing BC&G work, a zip file with the 2010 newsletters and an updated events calendar.

I hope the outgoing officers have had time to "train" the newly elected and turn over materials and lessons learned from their time in office. Thanks go out to all for helping manage our club.

This issue sees the continuing series titled "Waste Not, Want Not" but by a different author. This time around Richard is the author. Anyone with a similar idea may submit an article under this banner. Also this issue, Steve has written another of his layout articles.

Finally, we welcome our new members Brian Luney and Travis Wright, and we wish Tom Marsh a belated December happy birthday!



**Next N'Crowd Meeting:**  
7 p.m., Wednesday, January 18

**Next BC&G Operating Session:**  
7 p.m., Wednesday, February 1

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



**Houston N'Crowd  
Membership Meeting Report  
Dec. 21, 2011  
Prepared by Richard Bartlett, Secretary**

President Ted Davis called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. He announced that as we would be having a scout troop try for their merit badges in Model Railroading, the meeting would be brief. No door prizes were offered. A moment of reflection was held for the exactly one year remaining before 12/21/12 when the Mayans believe the world will end.

will be newly-painted sometime after Jan. 1. Ted asked for old business - Eddie said we needed couplers on some of the layout engines replaced with Micro-Trains couplers.

Meeting adjourned at 7:20 p.m.

President, VP and Treasurer Reports were omitted. Secretary Richard Bartlett reported 13 members present, including our newest member Brian Luney. Members present were Ted Davis, Steve Lancaster, Richard Bartlett, Gordon Bliss, Harvey Stalarow, Joe Kingsberry, Ray Byer, Vince and Caleb Walker, Dan Gutierrez, Robert "Doc" Moore (who was bringing the Scout Troop 593). Tom Wayburn left early along with Amy Wayburn.

Eddie announced that the next layout OP session is Wednesday evening, Jan. 4, 2012.

The next newsletter will be published before the next meeting so get your articles in before Jan. 5.

Gordon announced the Dallas Area Train Show that is worth visiting in Plano. He proposed a one-day trip to Plano on Saturday, Jan. 21. Admission is \$8; the show runs Saturday and Sunday.

Ray announced a month-long presentation by the Smithsonian Institute of the "Journey Stories" exhibit at the Southern Forest Heritage Museum at Long Leaf, La.

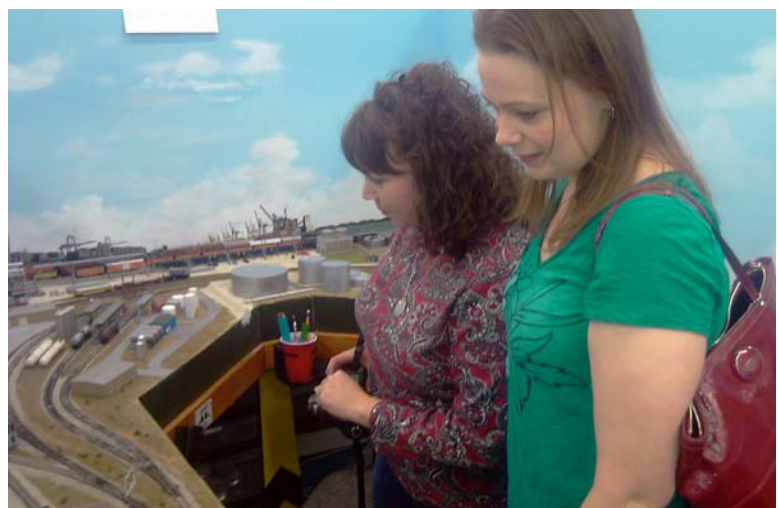
Other announced 2012 events include:

Feb. 11-12: Great Train Expo, Reliant Arena, Houston; Feb. 18: Greater Houston Train Show, Stafford Centre, Stafford; June 6-10: LSR NMRA 61st Annual Convention, Houston; June 19-24: Santa Fe Railway Historical & Modeling Society Annual Convention, Temple. Houston Railroad Museum will not hold a Big Texas Train Show in 2012.

Vince promised that the BC&G Alco PAs

## **N'Crowd draws a crowd at annual Open House**

More than 70 people visited the club's Bayou City & Gulf Railroad during the annual Open House, which took place this year over the first weekend in December. The N'Crowd Open House is held every year in conjunction with the San Jacinto Model Railroad Club's fall layout tour schedule. However, almost every Saturday is open house at the BC&G - have you visited lately? *Photos by Ted Davis*



# Superb prototype tours highlight 2011 Southern Plains N-Scale Convention

by Tom Marsh

I have attended the Southern Plains N-Scale Convention in Oklahoma City each year for the last eight years. This excellent mini-convention, sponsored by the Oklahoma N-Rail club, is held in early December in conjunction with the Oklahoma City Train Show, one of the best train shows in the country.

The convention organizers always deliver a fine event centered around multiple prototype tours, but they outdid themselves in 2011 with some superb tours. The tours included the Producers Cooperative Oil Mill, the Stillwater Central Railroad's North Yard (ex-Frisco, leased from BNSF) and the Oklahoma National Stock Yards. Top it off with an excellent OKC Train Show, and you have an event to write home about, or at least one to share with others in *The Orderboard*!



*Producers Co-Op processes cotton and other seeds into oil; most of the by-products of the oil processing are used to make other products for sale. Raw materials come into the plant in boxcars, hoppers and trucks, depending on the commodity. Finished products are shipped out in tank cars, boxcars and trucks. Gondolas are used occasionally for storage of overflow materials and to haul some commodities to other facilities for "turning" to prevent moisture build-up. Tarps are used to cover the product stored or moved in gondolas. Boxcars are unloaded with small front-end loaders augmented by an older method, as evidenced by the shovels hanging here.*







*Cars are moved on the co-op's track by a Rail King SS 4600 built in Houston by Stewart & Stevenson.*

*Trucks bring in a lot of the raw materials processed at the plant; this unloader keeps the process moving quickly.*

*A former BN SD-40 was working the Stillwater Central yard, but the yard's old Frisco turntable is out of service.*



*At the OKC Train Show, Intermountain showed new variations on its N-scale mechanical refrigerator car, and modular modelers showed off their latest work as well. The OKC show is well worth a visit!*





Waste not, want not... *the series continues*

# Real aluminum scrap load for a weathered Railgon gondola

by Richard Bartlett, PhD - Secretary, N'Crowd Model Railroad Society and William Bartlett

My son and I are installing wireless video cameras in N and HO gauge engines. In many cases, we have to mill the engine chassis to fit the camera within the shell of the engine. To do this, I purchased a small precision mill from Harbor Freight, and my son Will has been the expert at removing just enough metal to clear the necessary drive mechanisms, engine electronics, and leave room for the camera electronics.

The aluminum scrap that the mill bit removes from the chassis, in another's hands, might be discarded. As soon as I saw this scrap, I knew it was an obvious choice for gondola and/or hopper loads.

After collecting roughly a cup of the scrap metal, the cutting oil used to lubricate the bit during milling must be removed. In a stainless steel measuring cup (my wife was not happy about this!), a portion of the scrap was rinsed with mineral spirits three times. In between washes, the scrap was laid on several layers of paper towel to blot the excess off. The mineral spirit washes were followed by three additional washes with rubbing alcohol, again blotting with paper towels.

The final "blot" was left in the sun for several days to allow evaporation. The measuring cup was cleaned thoroughly and returned to its rightful owner!

An N-scale Railgon gondola from Roundhouse in new condition was selected to carry the load. For stability, the unpainted metal bottom provided sufficient weight to preclude adding additional weight to the car. The couplers were removed, and the bottom painted with Floquil Weathered Black. The interior of the car as well as the side ribs and rails were also painted this color. The yellow paint on the car was also dabbed with the Weathered Black and wiped off to weather the exterior of the car. A little smeared paint adds to the "used" look of the car.

The Rapido-style trucks and couplers were exchanged for Micro-

Trains Barber roller bearing trucks with short extension couplers; brown Micro-Trains wheel sets were exchanged for the black ones. Floquil Oxide Red was used to tint the truck frames and the air tank underneath the car. The coupler and magnetic trip pin were painted with Weathered Black.

To glue the scrap metal into the interior of the gondola, I used both Super Glue gel as well as Mod Podge Satin. The Super Glue is a little less forgiving of the placement of the scrap load, but works if you take care to compress the scrap into the dabs of glue, thus sticking the scrap together and to the bottom of the car. The finished product may be seen in the Spike's Salvage yard in Bennett on the N'Crowd's Bayou City & Gulf layout.

Details on our Engineer's View Wireless Video Camera installations will be covered in a future article.

*One man's trash is another's treasure, according to Richard Bartlett. He and his son Will have found a good use for scrap aluminum generated by another model railroading project. Here is a Railgon loaded with the scrap aluminum at one of the industries served by the N'Crowd's Bayou City & Gulf Railroad. Photo by Richard Bartlett*





## N'Crowd 2011 Holiday Party

A good time was had by all! The 2011 N'Crowd holiday feast and combat gift exchange took place Sunday, Dec. 11, at the Golden Corral Buffet & Grill on the South Loop near Main St. If you missed this year's party, plan better for 2012! *Photos by Ted Davis*





## Scouts visit BC&G for merit badge program

by Ted Davis; photo by Caleb Walker

Boy Scouts from Troop 549 pursuing the Railroading Merit Badge visited the club layout on Dec. 21. The session went fairly well considering the limited space and number of people attending. In addition to the scouts, we had many parents accompanying the scouts, plus our members who were there to help. For more information about the Boy Scout Railroading Merit Badge, go online to: [www.scouting.org/scoutsource/BoyScouts/AdvancementandAwards/MeritBadges.aspx](http://www.scouting.org/scoutsource/BoyScouts/AdvancementandAwards/MeritBadges.aspx) and click on the Railroading link. *Photo by Ted Davis*



## TIME TABLE

2012

### January 18

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

### January 21-22

Amtrak 40th Anniversary Train, San Antonio Amtrak Station

### January 21-22

Dallas Area Train Show, Plano

### January 28-29

San Antonio Model Railroad Association 36th Annual Jamboree, Live Oak Civic Center

### February 1

BC&G operating session

### February 11-12

Great Train Expo, Reliant Arena, Houston

### February 15

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

### February 18

Greater Houston Train Show, Stafford Centre, Stafford

## THE ORDERBOARD *from Houston N'Crowd*

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### Tom Marsh, Editor

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

### Visit our Web site:

[www.houstonNcrowd.org](http://www.houstonNcrowd.org)

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