

# THE ORDERBOARD

News from Houston N'Crowd



November/December 2012



## It's time for N'Crowd elections again!

The official slate for 2013 officers and board members was presented at the October membership meeting and is shown below. Per the club's bylaws, nominations will also be taken from the floor before the official vote at the Nov. 21 meeting. The meeting will convene at 7 p.m. at Papa Ben's Train Place, 4007-E Bellaire Blvd., Houston. You must be present to vote; per the bylaws, no proxies are allowed. President, vice president, secretary and treasurer serve one year terms. At-large board members serve three year terms.

### N'Crowd Model Railroad Society 2013 Officer/Board Nominations

#### *For President:*

Gordon Bliss  
Ted Davis

#### *For Vice President:*

Richard Bartlett  
Leslie Bodak  
Mike Bodak  
Steve Lancaster  
Harvey Stalarow

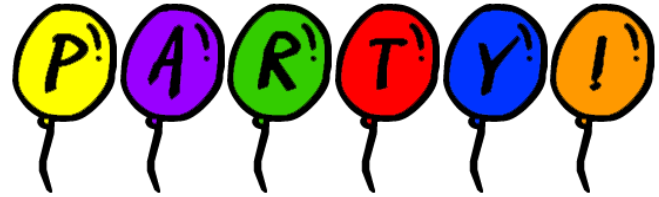
#### *For Secretary:*

Tom Marsh

#### *For Treasurer:*

Eddie Aycock

*For 2013-2015 At-Large Board Member:*  
Gordon Bliss



## If it's time for N'Crowd elections again, the annual holiday bash can't be too far behind!

This year, thanks to the generosity of long-time member Vince Walker and his wonderful family, we will be gathering at their place for the 2012 party on Saturday, Dec. 8.

Plan to arrive between 6:30 and 7 p.m.

Somehow Vince has convinced his wife Ingrid that they will do most of the work. All they ask is we provide an approximate head count.

Please email N'Crowd Secretary Richard Bartlett at [generepair2@yahoo.com](mailto:generepair2@yahoo.com) with your count. You can also take this opportunity to update your birthdays (month and day) and other contact information with Richard as well.

Ingrid will send out an "e-vite" with more information as the date approaches. The Walkers' address is 2208 Sandlebrook St., Pearland 77584.

And don't forget, this is the venue for the **Combat Gift Exchange!** Railroaders who want to participate should bring a wrapped gift valued around \$10 to \$15. Non-rails should bring a similar value gift geared to the other half.

The rules are unchanged. Pick a gift, if you don't like it, make someone else give you theirs. This can only go so long, but it can get exciting.

Don't miss the action: See you there!

# "GREEN EYE" - CLEAR BLOCK

by Ted Davis, President

## End one, begin one

The end of another year of model railroading is quickly approaching and with it the club will be holding elections for officers. The officers and other volunteers are the people we entrust with the responsibility to keep our organization "on track." They do a job which can be thankless at times. We should remember to thank them for their time and dedication.

In this issue you will find details of the upcoming annual holiday party, which the Walker family has so graciously agreed to host. It has been a long time since our party was held at a member's home; if I recall correctly the last time was when Ben and Irene Pearlman hosted the party a number of years ago.

This month, the annual San Jacinto Model Railroad Club fall layout tour season has been in full swing. I hope you have managed to visit some of the tour layouts. On that note, at the next meeting we need to finalize the schedule of volunteers to man our open

house, which will take place on Dec. 1-2 in conjunction with the San Jac layout tours.

This is the last issue of *The Orderboard* for the year and I hope you have enjoyed it as much as I have. It is your contributions and our skilled editor which have provided such a quality publication.

We would like to wish Amy Wayburn, Marty Giesecke, Bob Folser, Jason Valdez and Vince Walker happy November birthdays, and to Tom Marsh a happy December birthday. (If we don't know your birthday, we can't wish you a happy one. Please email your month and day to Secretary Richard Bartlett at [generepair2@yahoo.com](mailto:generepair2@yahoo.com).)

In keeping with the spirit of the season, happy holidays and happy new year to all! As we end one year and begin a new one, I hope we can continue to grow and improve so we can have a bright future as one of the best railroad clubs in Houston!

## Layout Committee, N'Crowd members approve mainline change

The Layout Committee has considered several proposed changes to the mainline arrangement on the Bayou City & Gulf. At the October meeting, the committee recommended that a proposal by Gordon Bliss to effectively double track the main between the Union Station and Bayou City Yard leads be implemented. The members present at the meeting agreed to the proposal.

Gordon will start the work some time after our December open house. The photo shows a mockup of the change to be made, which will enable operation of the full main line as a show loop requiring minimal attention.



**N'Crowd Wednesday Membership Meetings:**  
November 21 / December 19 / January 16

**Holiday Party:** Saturday, December 8

**BC&G Operating Sessions:** TBA

Meetings start at 7 p.m. at Papa Ben's Train Place,  
4007-E Bellaire Blvd

**Houston N'Crowd  
Membership Meeting Report  
October 17, 2012**

**Prepared by Richard Bartlett, Secretary**

**President's Report:** President Ted Davis called the meeting to order at 7:11 p.m. The next meeting is Nov. 21, 2012, at Papa Ben's Train Place at 7:00 p.m. when we will have election of officers for 2013.

**Vice President's Report:** The door prize was a Big Boy poster donated by Richard Bartlett and won by Ray Byer.

**Treasurer's Report:** Treasurer Eddie Aycock was absent, but sent the treasurer's report via email. The club account has \$11,450.68 plus a CD still at \$4804.08, gift certificates totaling \$99.72 and donations totaling \$110.00.

**Secretary's Report:** We had 13 members attending today's meeting: Dejan Suskavcevic, Ray Byer, Tom Wayburn, Tom Marsh, Richard Bartlett, James Senneff, Ted Davis, Steve Lancaster, Justin Coder, Dan Gutierrez, Hugh Boyd, Gordon Bliss and Amy Wayburn. A brief discussion of the birthday list by Ted led to Richard volunteering to recompile a more current list via email to members.

**Layout Master's Report:** The Layout Committee met on October 10 and decided to move forward only with the proposal presented by Gordon Bliss. Gordon agreed to coordinate the project, but will not start until after our Dec. 1-2 open house. This change will permit running the entire layout as a single loop, but retaining the existing show loop as well. Ted offered the proposal up for vote and a brief discussion followed. Dan moved for accepting and Richard moved to second. Unanimous approval was provided.

**New Business:** Tom Marsh had just finished the most recent issue of *The Orderboard* and copies were both emailed to members as well as made available at the meeting.

Brief discussion of the potential for a holiday party ensued. As Vince Walker last year had volunteered to host this year's party, Ted agreed to contact him regarding the second weekend in December. If Vince agrees, it was proposed that the club would pay for a main dish such as turkey or ham that could be prepared at Vince's place, while members would provide a covered dish. Richard offered to make holiday chili. If Vince cannot host, then discussion of other arrangements would be made at the November meeting.

Ted asked for volunteers for the Dec. 1-2 open house, which marks our participation in the annual San Jacinto Model Railroad Club Fall Layout Tours. Dejan, Richard and Justin volunteered. Gordon announced he will have an open house Oct. 20 as part of the San Jac Club tour. He also will be part of the HOOTERS (Houston Operators Of Tiny Electric Railway Systems) operating session on Nov. 2-3.

Tom Marsh mentioned Gary Strouz's layout on the San Jac Tour was a must see, and Dejan also recommended Bill Frank's layout. Eddie Carroll's layout has had a two-fold expansion. Ray recommended Chuck Lind's layout in Navasota. Tom announced the first weekend in November as having several good railfan opportunities: Texas State Railroad Railfan Special celebration of T&P engine 201's 100th anniversary; the annual George Bush Library Railroad in Texas presentation; and the Fall Flatonia Rail Pavilion event. Others noted that UP steamer 844 will be in Houston Oct. 26-28 at the Amtrak station, and on Nov. 10 the Galveston Railroad Museum will operate its Galveston Chief from Houston to Galveston and return for the museum's post-Hurricane Ike grand reopening.

**Old Business:** The upcoming election of officers for 2013 will take place at the Nov. 21 meeting, so please attend. The nominated slate was published in the most recent newsletter and presented at the October meeting. At the next meeting, nominees may withdraw their names prior to the election or any member present may place his or her name on the ballot prior to the vote.

In a related discussion, Tom Marsh noted that the club by-laws need to be updated as soon as the election is over.

Motion to adjourn was put forth by Gordon and the meeting adjourned at 8:00 p.m.

***Happy Holidays from Houston N'Crowd!***





# N scale at last!

by Steve Lancaster

As you know from past issues of *The Orderboard*, I've built a few layouts. It's always a fun experience, and the extra income keeps me comfortably above the poverty line, but speaking first and foremost as a model railroader, the most valuable part of the job is the experience and knowledge I've gained.

In a way I'm one of the fortunate few in this hobby. Most modelers I know have burned through two, three, or more layouts learning valuable and costly lessons. Not only are my projects fully funded, but they have to work flawlessly on delivery day or I don't get paid. The lessons must be learned and implemented, and corrections made, before I can call it complete.

For all the layouts I've built, getting one in N scale is rare, and that is, of course, the experience I need the most. This latest one, a u-shaped layout, had a few lessons of its own to offer. The customer wanted it to be lightweight and portable, and as I

carried it up to his third floor apartment I totally saw the wisdom in that.

My method for "lightweight and portable" is a frame of 1x3 boards, 1/8th-inch underlayment plywood, and two sheets of foam insulation. The customer didn't want the foam, which left me with a pretty flimsy base on which to lay track.

I couldn't use heavy plywood, and 1/4-inch plywood is still fairly heavy, but will warp if you breathe on it, so I stuck with the underlayment and braced it from below with a sub-sub-roadbed of 1x4s screwed and glued beneath the mainline. This eliminated the roller coaster effect, or at least brought it into line with prototypical practice.

Next on the agenda, barring any earth shattering offers in the next few weeks, I'll be building a layout or two to sell on consignment, and I plan to build a layout for the club to use at shows. I'll also be starting on my own new layout just as soon as I figure out what I want. So probably... never.



Steve's latest project, a U-shaped N-scale layout, takes shape. Photos by Steve Lancaster





N'Crowd member Gordon Biss recently hosted the HOOTERS group on his Santa Fe All the Way. Photo by Tom Marsh

## Local railroaders host HOOTERS

by Gordon Bliss

*Editors note: Groups of operating enthusiasts from Houston, Dallas and Tulsa meet once each year in one of the cities to run trains. The Houston event is known as HOOTERS (Houston Operators of Tiny Electric Railway Systems). Gordon Bliss reports on this year's event.*

Over the first weekend of November, Houston layout owners hosted the HOOTERS operating sessions with operating groups from Dallas and Tulsa. Sixteen layouts hosted sessions on Friday, two on Saturday with dinner and one on Sunday morning before guests returned home.

From Tulsa, N-scalers Dave Salamon, Richard Dixon and Steve Gillett made it for the sessions. Richard and Steve ran on my Santa Fe All the Way layout on Saturday. N'Crowd member Justin Coder was my helper; his dad flew in so we had Rick out as well. In addition, about two months ago N-scaler Dirk Warvel from Germany emailed to say he would be in town for a business trip on the same weekend: What a deal!

Later, I took Dirk to Gil Freitag's layout and then we drove by a couple of rail yards on the way home. A lot of trains were run and a great time was had by all!



# An embarrassment of railfan riches!

October and November found many N'Crowd members chasing - or riding - prototype instead of model trains, as specials were run over local BNSF and Union Pacific lines.

## UP 844

*Gordon Bliss reports on the late October visit of UP 4-8-4 No. 844:*

Union Pacific sent steam locomotive No. 844 on a wide-ranging tour to celebrate the railroad's 150th anniversary. Jason Smith, Jeff Clodfelter, Brandon Bliss and I drove to Livingston to chase the locomotive to Houston. The day was cloudy and cool, and hoping for no rain we caught the 844 just north of Livingston and followed the train into town for its stop. At Cleveland the rain caught up with us, and here Jason somehow talked his way into a cab ride to Humble!

At Humble, local television news icon Dave Ward boarded for the trip into Houston. We caught

up with 844 at Tower 26, where it met Amtrak's eastbound *Sunset Limited* at the diamonds.

844 crossed I-45 and I-10 and backed into the Amtrak station, where it was on display for two days with the railroad's Missouri Pacific, Southern Pacific and Katy heritage engines.

On Monday, "the crew" was able to "ride" the train to Hearne, and Scott Delaney and myself chased the train up US 290. The only stop was Navasota. The train rolled through Bryan/College Station and then ran on the former MoPac line thru Mumford, site of a planned new hump yard for the Union Pacific.

After the train arrived at Hearne, we talked our way into the cab for some photos before we headed home.



Above, 844 rumbles over the diamond at Houston's Eureka Jct. Below left, Gordon Bliss gets up close while pacing 844. At right, Gordon's looking the part in 844's cab. Photos above and below left by Gordon Bliss, below right by Scott Delaney





## Galveston Chief

*While others rode, your editor chased the Galveston Railroad Museum's special Galveston Chief, a task that proved easier said than done:*

To celebrate its official post-Hurricane Ike grand reopening, the Galveston Railroad Museum operated a special passenger train from New Orleans to Houston and Galveston on November 9-10. The purpose was two-fold: In addition to marking the reopening of the museum, the special brought five new pieces of equipment to the museum, two former SP F-units decked out in Santa Fe's famous Warbonnet scheme, and three passenger cars set up for possible excursion service.

The Saturday *Galveston Chief* run was a round trip from Houston's Amtrak station to the Galveston museum's facility in Santa Fe's former Galveston Union Station, and tickets were sold to the public for this train.

The consist included the two "new" F-units, Amtrak P40 No. 18, Amtrak Amfleet coach No. 25066, the museum's three newly-acquired Budd cars (two coaches and a diner), two private cars owned by Creative Charters, Amfleet cafe No. 43347 and BNSF business car No. 7 *Santa Fe*.

As many chasers found out, the train ran at a fast clip on much of the route, making it difficult to catch.

## UP Heritage Units

*Three UP heritage locos and a three-car train were in the area for Operation Lifesaver duties in late October.*

N'Crowd's own Richard Bartlett checked out the UP heritage units at the Houston Amtrak station on Oct. 21. The UP Boy Scouts engine was on the house track at the station as well.

Gordon Bliss caught the train in action earlier in the week, and sent out some photos in memory of Tom Cobb, who could be counted on to spread the word about special train movements in the area (see page 8).



*Above, the Galveston Chief awaiting the next day's departure from Houston's Amtrak station. Below, the train accelerates past the Alvin Santa Fe station. Above, Gordon Bliss; below, Tom Marsh*



*Above, Richard Bartlett compares N-scale and the real thing. Below, Gordon Bliss captured this view of the heritage units heading out with an Operation Lifesaver train.*



## Tom Cobb

N'Crowd friend and Papa Ben's employee Tom Cobb passed away on Oct. 16.

Tom was an invaluable source for information on railroad and architecture-related topics, and on many occasions he supplied information or notes for articles that appeared in *The Orderboard* and the NMRA LSR Division 8 newsletter, *The Waybill*.

Tom, a graduate of Bellaire High School and the University of Houston, worked as an HISD librarian for most of his professional career, and joined the staff of Papa Ben's after retiring. His layout, which was often on the fall tour schedule, was based on local SP switching operations in the 1970s. He was always a gracious host to visitors to the Houston Spur & Spot.

We extend our sympathies to Tom's family.



Tom Cobb aboard a UP special train. Photo by Gordon Bliss



## TIME TABLE 2012

### November 21

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

### December 8

Annual N'Crowd Holiday Bash and Combat Gift Exchange, hosted by the Walkers - thanks!

### December 19

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

## 2013

### January 5-6

World's Greatest Hobby on Tour, Will Rogers Memorial Center, Fort Worth

### January 16

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

### January 26-27

San Antonio Model Railroad Association 37th Annual Model Railroad Jamboree, Live Oak Civic Center

### February 11-12

Great Train Expo, Reliant Arena, Houston

### February 18

Greater Houston Train Show, Stafford Centre

### February 20

N'Crowd Membership Meeting at Papa Ben's

## 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:

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Please note: 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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